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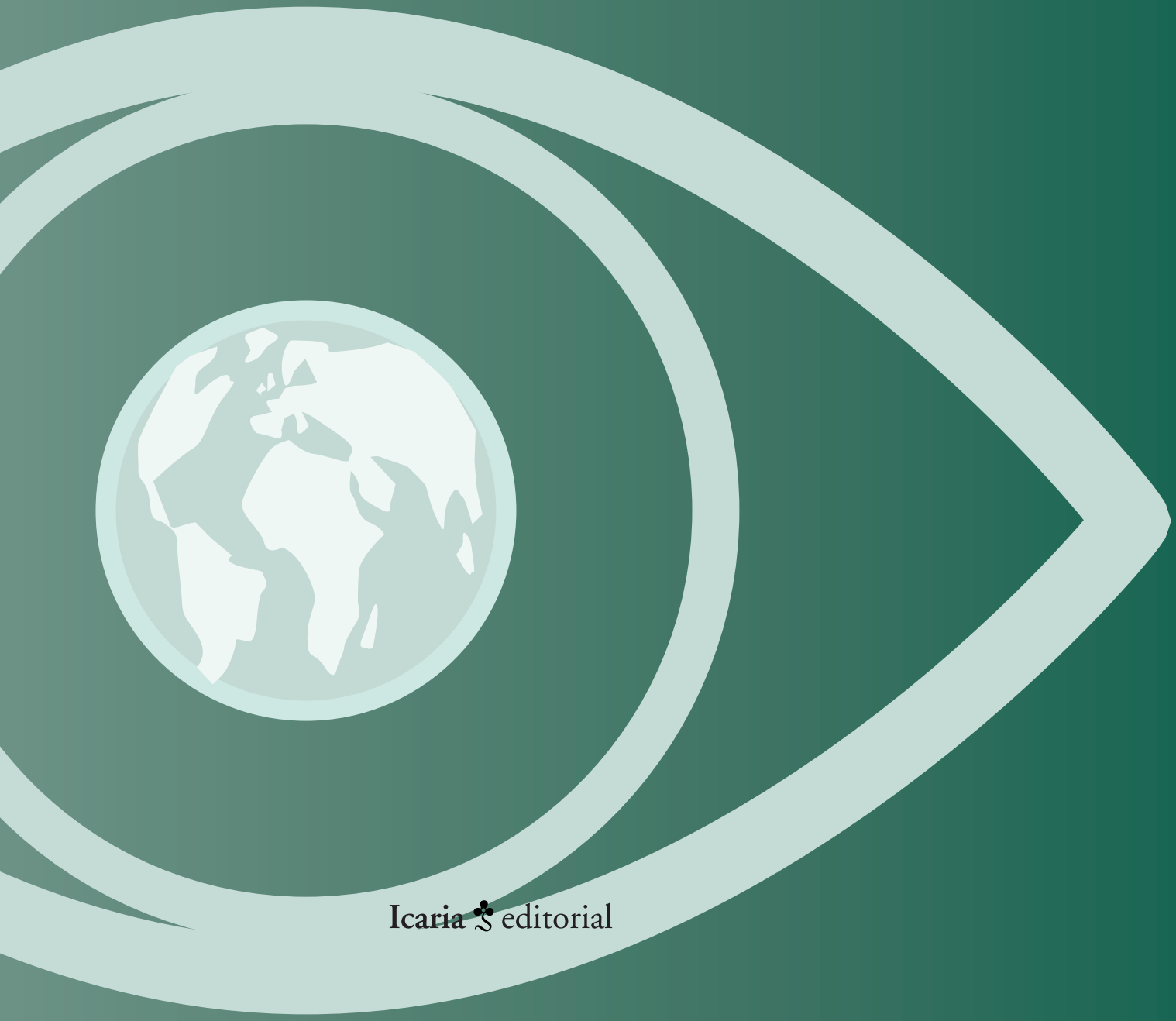
alert 2016!

Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding



Icaria editorial

Alert 2016! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding

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Foreword

Martin Griffiths
Executive Director of the European Institute of Peace (EIP)

Today's conflicts cannot be solved with yesterday's ideas. Conflicts are changing. But our ways of analysing and resolving conflicts are stuck in the past. We need to make mediation, diplomacy and conflict prevention fit for the 21st century.

The challenges for mediators could not be greater. Armed conflicts have reached new levels of complexity. New technologies allow for hybrid warfare that challenge our understanding of how to build peace. We are seeing regional proxy wars in which state actors and armed groups are equally skilled in using new communication tools for propaganda purposes. Ac-tors like ISIS and Al-Qa'ida move conflicts beyond the nation state. Jihadist movements not only destabilise the Middle East they also change discourses around the world. Are media-tors and peace builders ready to resolve these conflicts?

This report is yet another reminder of why mediators and peace makers need to reinvent their approaches. The list on 'opportunities for peace' is relatively short. Peace processes in Cyprus, Burkina Faso, Myanmar and Thailand are slowly developing into success stories. Of course we should be proud these developments. Years – sometimes even decades - of hard work and difficult negotiations have transformed these countries and created more peaceful societies. However, we also have to acknowledge that these are just a few cases. The list of ongoing conflicts and unresolved disputes is getting longer and more complex. In Syria, Libya or Yemen we see brutal wars that pose huge challenges to mediators and peace builders.

Europe can offer a 'new way' to solve conflicts. But this requires political will – and creativity to think outside the box. We need to reinvent how to build peace in the 21st century

A new role for Europe

Resolving these new conflicts is a challenge and an opportunity for Europe. As the director of the newly established European Institute of Peace (EIP) I work hard to make sure we draw the right conclusions from what happened last year. 2015 was special year. It offered Europe a glimpse of the terrible costs of conflict. We saw this both in the pain and the human needs of refugees fleeing conflict, we saw it in the involvement of European citizens in the terror that is destroying the Middle East; and we saw several terrorist attacks in European cities.

We finally face the brutal truth that war has no borders. What happens in one part of the world has implications in other parts of the world. It is no longer the case that Europe can play the game of looking beyond its serene and prosperous borders to share its boons of peace and development with the less fortunate beyond. Instead, Europeans must recognize we they are part of the problem and becoming increasingly the theatre.

We need to use the lessons of Europe's history. A history of war and peace. A history of reconciliation, comprise and vision. Europe can offer a 'new way' to solve conflicts. But this requires political will – and creativity to think outside the box. We need to reinvent how to build peace in the 21st century. We need to get better in preventing conflicts. We need to increase the quality of mediation. And we need reinvent our diplomacy.

Mediation and peace building

Peace-making has never been so important. It has never been so examined, so scrutinised and so discussed. However, we – the community of peacemakers and mediators - have been unable to meet the anguished demands of people in conflicts around the world. Of course no peace process is a perfectly designed operation. Peace processes are based on compromises and have been skilfully shaped by mediators. However, as this report shows, many peace processes fail to build peace. Understanding the reasons for failure is key step towards making mediation and peacebuilding more effective.

Those who are privileged enough to spend their days in mediating solutions to conflict are a small group, mostly men and mostly from the north. This does not take anything away from their commitment and passion for peace. But it is a privileged group. In the past two decades mediation has been brought into the public world. It is no longer, as it was for centuries, the preserve of the official world. It is now a community of actors from a range of bodies - some private, some public. There is little doubt that this opening of the door, this 'deregulation' has been generally a positive development. Warring parties have choices of mediators. State-centric bodies no longer dominate. But it needs to move a great deal further.

Mediation is still operating on the old model of two parties coming together in a smart room in a third country under the auspices of a disinterested third party to reach

a written agreement, finalised by a public handshake. Is this really how peace is built? For most families in Syria the issue is not whether Bashar al-Assad will be President or not (which is central to the diplomatic process) but whether they can eat tomorrow and whether their children can go to school. Stopping the war and building peace are two separate yet interconnected issues.

The absence of violence is not peace. Sustainable peace is the condition produced by an accountable government, systems that ensure the rule of law, no more random arrest or executions, a fair economy and a future for the next generation. The role of mediators in this process is to plant the seeds for sustainable peace. Too often, mediators leave the responsibility for sustainable peace to those who make war. But people who can agree to stop a war are not necessarily the same people who can imagine and create a just society. Peace agreements should be frameworks for the actions of those who really create a peaceful and just society. In other words, we should not make the mistake to confuse peace agreements with conflict settlements.

Mediators are well advised to listen carefully to peace builders. During negotiations they are often observers (usually at a good distance) which can result in dangerous imbalances. Their insistence on peace is still missing from the calculations during negotiations. Mediators can plant the seeds for peace, peace builders are the guardians for a sustainable peaceful society.

Quality and accountability in mediation

Resolving conflicts in the 21st century also requires us to rethink our ideas of accountability, transparency and democracy. Over time, many professions –law, medicine and teaching– have evolved from informal bodies of knowledge and skills passed down from one practitioner to another, into recognized vocations. In order to make mediation more effective we need to invest time and energy to develop a common understanding of formal and informal rules and standards in mediation. But a professionalization of our mediation must go hand in hand with a debate about accountability and quality. How can we open up mediation?

The challenge is nothing less than the democratisation of peace making, the irrevocable inclusion of the public voice in the chambers of the diplomats who represent us. We need to encourage our leaders to open the doors to the people whose deepest and most profound desire is peace.

For example, we could make peace negotiations open to virtual participation. Avoid secrecy whenever possible. People involved in difficult negotiations will always argue for a confidential space to allow them to examine concessions before they can be publicly assessed. This is reasonable. But it is also reasonable that the product of diplomacy and clarity on who is pushing what position and why is a matter of public interest. People have the right to know. We now have the online tools that allow us to make negotiations more accessible and participatory. This is not only a step towards greater democracy; it is also a step towards greater effectiveness.

Only if we manage to increase ownership of peace processes will we have a chance to resolve the conflicts of the 21st century

Transparency and diplomacy

Changing the way we think about how to build peace is also linked to the nature of foreign policy and diplomacy. For a long time accountability and transparency were not part of our foreign policy discourses. Diplomacy is an art refined through generations and of incalculable value. It is the grease that enables agreements to be made between opponents. It is the subtle art of agreement. Diplomacy has always been an elite sport. Diplomats usually resemble each other more than they represent their countrymen and women. And this continues in peace negotiations: The one thing many warring parties can quickly agree on is the need to keep the ordinary people out of the room.

Diplomats share an unstated view of the world that serious differences are best managed by people who know how to talk to each other, who share a common language. But this is changing. The public wants to know what is being done in their name. People want a say in foreign policy. They want to be heard. And they couldn't be more right. Reinventing diplomacy means including the excluded - and developing participatory platforms needed to open peace-making to the public.

Peace-making is too important to be left to the few. It needs to become the responsibility of the many. Only if we manage to increase ownership of peace processes will we have a chance to resolve the conflicts of the 21st century.

Executive Summary

Alert 2016! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding is a yearbook providing an analysis of the state of the world in terms of conflict and peacebuilding from four perspectives: armed conflicts, socio-political crises, peace processes and gender, peace and security. By analysing the most significant events in 2015 and the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main flashpoints of armed conflict and socio-political crisis throughout the world, we are able to offer a regional comparison and identify global trends, making it possible to highlight areas of risk and provide early warnings for the future. Similarly, the report also identifies opportunities for peacebuilding and for reducing, preventing and resolving conflicts. In both cases, one of the main aims of this report is to place data, analyses and the identified warning signs and opportunities for peace in the hands of those actors responsible for making policy decisions or those who participate in peacefully resolving conflicts or in raising political, media and academic awareness of the many situations of political and social violence taking place around the world.

As regards methodology, the report is largely produced on the basis of the qualitative analysis of studies and data provided by numerous sources –the United Nations, international bodies, research centres, media outlets and NGOs, among others– as well as experience drawn from research on the ground.

Some of the most important conclusions and information contained in the report include:

- Thirty-five armed conflicts were reported in 2015, most of them in Africa (13) and Asia (12), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (three) and the Americas (one).
- Two new armed conflicts were accounted for in 2015: in Burundi, due to the escalation of instability and political violence amidst a climate marked by popular demonstrations, repression of dissidents and an attempted coup d'état; and in the Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF) as the result of intensified clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and the armed group BIFF.
- At the end of 2015, only 34 of the 35 cases were active, since the situation in India (Assam) ceased to be considered an active armed conflict due to the decrease in violence, in keeping with a pattern of reduced hostilities in recent years.
- Eleven conflicts reported a higher intensity during the year, with a death toll in many cases well above the threshold of 1,000 fatalities per year: Libya, Nigeria (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ukraine, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).
- In 2015, many of the contexts of conflict (43%) reported dynamics and levels of violence similar to those of the previous year, while a decrease in the levels of confrontation was observed in nearly one third, including the case of India (Assam), which stopped being considered an armed conflict. A worsening of the situation was observed in another third of the cases, resulting from the intensification of hostilities and levels of violence. Though worse, this situation was not as bad as reported in 2014.
- Beyond their multi-dimensional nature, the main causes of two thirds of the armed conflicts in 2015 (24 cases, equivalent to 69%) included opposition to the government (whether due to its internal or international policies) and the struggle to achieve or erode power, or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the state. The underlying motivations of over half (19 cases, or 54%) included demands for self-determination or self-government and identity-related aspirations.
- During 2015, armed conflicts around the world continued to have a serious impact on civilians. As detailed in the analysis of cases from each context, the consequences are not limited to mortal victims resulting from fighting, but also include massacres and summary executions, arbitrary detention, torture and many other forms of physical and psychological abuse, the forced displacement of populations, the use of sexual violence, the recruitment of children and many other forms of abuse against boys and girls, in addition to other dynamics.
- Throughout 2015, the deliberate use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in contexts of armed conflict was observed by armed groups in countries like Iraq, Mali, CAR, DRC, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.
- Forced displacement was one of the most visible consequences of armed conflict in 2015, a period that confirmed the trend observed in previous years regarding a significant rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced people around the world.
- At the end of 2015, UNHCR's figures based on data corresponding to the first quarter of the year noted that the total number of displaced people and refugees reached 60 million people.
- At the close of 2015, 37 weapons embargoes were being imposed on a total of 24 states and non-state armed groups by the UN, the EU, the Arab League and the OSCE. This was one more than the previous year due to the inclusion of Yemen.
- Twenty armed conflicts and 52 active situations

of tension were reported in 2015 in which neither the UN nor other regional organisations imposed weapons embargoes.

- Eighty-three scenarios of socio-political crisis were reported around the world in 2015. The cases were primarily concentrated in Africa (36) and Asia (20), while the rest of the situations of tension took place in Europe (11), the Middle East (11) and the Americas (five).
- The most serious socio-political crises in 2015 took place in Central Africa (LRA), Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia, Bangladesh, North Korea-South Korea, the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Manipur), India-Pakistan, Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria), Egypt, Israel-Syria-Lebanon and Lebanon.
- In line with previous years, over half the socio-political crises were of an internal nature (43 cases), more than one fourth were internationalised internal tensions (22 cases) and a fifth were international (18 cases).
- Regarding the evolution of the tensions, two fifths (34 cases) reported a worsening of the situation compared to 2014, while one third (29 cases) experience no significant change and one fourth improved to some extent (20 cases).
- In line with data from previous years, the different main causes of 67% of the tensions included opposition to the internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments, which led to conflict to achieve or erode power, or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective states.
- Four peace negotiations were resolved satisfactorily during the year: CAR, Sudan (Darfur – SLM-MM), Mali (CMA-Platform) and South Sudan.
- Explorations were conducted in three conflicts for the purpose of opening a formal negotiating process: Colombia (ELN), Pakistan (Balochistan) and Syria.
- Of these negotiations, 17.9% ran smoothly or were resolved (seven cases), 30.7% had significant difficulties (12 cases) and 43.6% failed (17 cases).
- Seventy per cent of the active armed conflicts in 2015 for which data on gender equality are available took place in contexts with serious or very serious gender inequalities.
- The refugee crisis in the EU was marked by the gender dimension and showed serious human rights violations against the population fleeing the wars.
- In 2015, a high-level review was conducted on the 15 years of implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- Peace negotiations in Colombia, Cyprus and Afghanistan demonstrated the importance of the gender dimension in peace processes.
- The report identifies five opportunities for peace for 2016: the restart of peace negotiations in Cyprus; the new political situation in Burkina Faso after the end of the transition process; the exploration of scenarios of peace in Thailand; the transition towards democracy and peace in Myanmar; and the positive impact of the introduction of the gender perspective in peace processes in terms of inclusiveness and sustainability.
- The report highlights another 10 alarming scenarios ahead of 2016: the rise in violence and instability in Burundi, pushing the country to the brink of civil war; the risk for stability in Mali posed by the activities of jihadist groups; the prospects of rising violence and political upheaval in DRC; the fragility of the peace agreement in Sudan and the risks for its implementation; the polarisation of powers in the new political scenario in Venezuela; the impact of the lack of legitimacy of the Taliban leadership in the peace process in Afghanistan; the difficulties of the peace process in Mindanao; the risks of further drift in the conflict between Turkey and the PKK; the serious worsening of the situation in Yemen following the intensification of the dynamics of violence in the country; and the destabilising international effects of the jihadist threat.

Structure

The report consists of six chapters. In the first two, the confrontations are analysed globally, with reference to causes, types, dynamics, evolution and actors in the armed conflicts and socio-political crises. The third chapter deals with peace processes, while the fourth analyses the different initiatives carried out by the United Nations and different local and international organisations and movements concerning peacebuilding from a gender perspective. The fifth chapter identifies opportunities for peace, settings where there is a climate that could favour conflict resolution or movement towards or the establishment of peace initiatives in the coming year. The last chapter discusses risk scenarios for the future. In addition to the six chapters, the report also includes a fold-out map indicating the location of the armed conflicts, socio-political crises and negotiating processes; weapons embargoes imposed by major international organisations; and the number and location of the people displaced by violent conflicts.

Armed conflicts

In the first chapter (**Armed conflicts**)[1] we describe the evolution, types, causes and dynamics of the armed conflicts active throughout the year. We also examine global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2015 and other issues related to international conflicts, as well as weapons embargoes and international missions.

Throughout 2015, the number of armed conflicts followed the trend of previous years, with a total of 35 cases (36 in 2014, 35 in 2013 and 38 in 2012). Two news cases were accounted for during the year: Burundi, due to the escalation of instability and political violence in the country amidst a climate marked by popular demonstrations, repression of dissidents and an attempted coup d'état; and the Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF), as the result of intensified clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and the armed group BIFF, which has been very active in its opposition to the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF in recent years. At the end of 2015, only 34 of the 35 cases were active, since the situation in India (Assam) stopped being considered an active armed conflict because of the drop in violence, in keeping with a pattern of reduced hostilities in recent years.

Thirty-five armed conflicts were reported in 2015, 34 of which remained active at the end of the year

Regarding the geographic distribution of the armed conflicts, most were concentrated in Africa (13) and Asia (12), in line with previous years. Six of the remaining cases took place in the Middle East, three in Europe and one in the Americas (Colombia). With respect to the scenario of the conflict and the actors involved, in 2015 only one of the contexts was catalogued as an international armed conflict (Israel-Palestine), while eight others were eminently internal in nature and **the vast majority were internationalised internal conflicts (26 of the 35 cases, equivalent to 74%).**

Moreover, the internationalisation factor was also determined by the action of different armed groups beyond the state borders of their countries of origin. This aspect was particularly paradigmatic in the case of groups like Boko Haram, which crossed Nigeria's borders to act in Chad, Niger and Cameroon in response to those countries' participation in a regional multinational force devoted to fighting the armed group, and ISIS, which continued operating in and controlling land in Syria and Iraq and claiming responsibility for actions outside those countries, most of which were perpetrated by branches that have pledged allegiance to the organisation in recent years, though the level of cooperation between the organisation led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and these factions remains unclear. In any event, it should be noted that most of today's armed conflicts have an international dimension or regional influence linked to factors such as flows of refugees, the arms trade, the participation of foreign fighters, logistical or military support provided by other states to one of the parties to the conflict or the political or economic interests of countries neighbouring the country in conflict, like with regard to legal and illegal resource exploitation, for example.

Armed conflicts in 2015*

AFRICA (13)	ASIA (12)	MIDDLE EAST (6)
Algeria (AQIM) -1992-	Afghanistan -2001-	Egypt (Sinai) -2014-
Burundi -2015-	China (East Turkestan) -2014-	Iraq -2003-
CAR -2006-	*India (Assam) -1983-*	Israel-Palestine -2000-
DRC (east) -1998-	India (CPI-M) -1967-	Syria -2011-
DRC (east-ADF) -2014-	India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Yemen (Houthis) -2004-
Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-	Myanmar -1948-	Yemen (AQAP) - 2011-
Libya -2011-	Pakistan -2001-	**EUROPE (3)**
Mali (north) -2012-	Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Russia (Dagestan) -2010-
Nigeria (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Philippines (Mindanao-Abu Sayyaf) -1991-	Turkey (southeast) -1984-
Somalia -1988-	Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF) -2015-	Ukraine -2014-
South Sudan -2009-	Philippines (NPA) -1969-	**THE AMERICAS (1)**
Sudan (Darfur) -2003-	Thailand (south) -2004-	Colombia -1964-
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) -2011-		

*The start date of the armed conflict is shown between hyphens. Conflicts that ended in 2015 appear in italics.

1. In this report, an armed conflict is understood as any confrontation between regular or irregular armed groups with objectives that are perceived as incompatible, in which the continuous and organised use of violence: a) causes a minimum of 100 fatalities in a year and/or has a serious impact on the territory (destruction of infrastructure or of natural resources) and on human safety (e.g., injured or displaced people, sexual violence, food insecurity, impact on mental health and on the social fabric or the disruption of basic services); and b) aims to achieve objectives different from those of common crime normally related to:
   - demands for self-determination and self-government or identity-related aspirations;
   - opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state or the internal or international policy of a government, which in both triggers a struggle to seize or undermine power;
   - the control of resources or land.

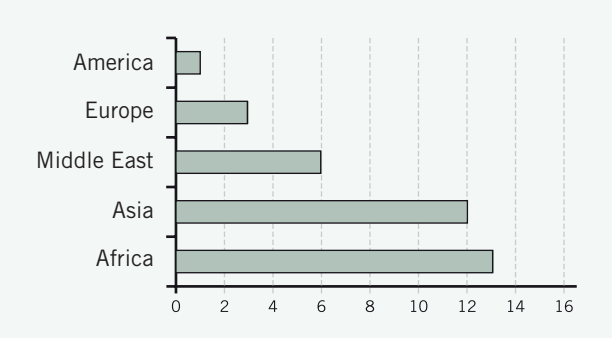
The main causes of two thirds of the armed conflicts in 2015 (24 cases) included opposition to the government's internal or international policies and the fight to achieve or erode power, as well as opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the state. From this subtotal, the factor of opposition to the government was present in 10 cases and was an especially prominent motivation in armed conflicts taking place in Africa. Of the subtotal of the aforementioned cases (24), a total of 19 were related to the search for changes to the political, ideological or economic system of the state. Among them, we must distinguish the cases involving armed actors mobilised for an socialist-inspired ideological agenda (like the FARC-EP and the ELN in Colombia, the CPI-M in India and the NPA in the Philippines, for example) and those involving insurgent groups with an agenda aimed at applying their particular interpretation of Islamic precepts, such as AQIM in Algeria, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Taliban militias in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the insurgency in the republic of Dagestan in the Russian Federation, ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the different armed groups that have pledged allegiance to it.

Of the 35 total armed conflicts in 2015, the underlying motivations of over half (19) were demands for self-determination or self-government and identity-based aspirations. As in previous years, these types of contexts were especially prevalent in Asia and in Europe. In some cases, actors with agendas based on identity or self-government coexisted with other organisations with demands more focused on a change of system, as in the case of Mali (north). In other cases, both motivations were present in the aspirations of the armed non-state actors. This occurred with Abu Sayyaf in the region of Mindanao, in the Philippines, and with the organisations operating in East Turkestan, in China.

Nearly one third of the armed conflicts in 2015 were of high intensity

Regarding the evolution of the armed conflicts in 2015, many of the cases (15 contexts, equivalent to 43%) reported dynamics and levels of violence similar to those in the previous year, while a drop was observed in the levels of confrontation in nearly one third of the contexts (nine, representing 26%), including in the case of India (Assam), which ceased to be considered an armed conflict. In another third of the cases (11, accounting for 31% of the total), the situation worsened as a result of intensifying hostilities and levels of violence. This negative development was lower than in 2014, when most of the armed conflicts worldwide (55%) deteriorated. However, this general statement is not valid for all regions. In 2015, the vast majority of the cases in the Middle East worsened compared to the previous year and some cases that worsened in other regions did so significantly, like Burundi in Africa, Afghanistan in Asia (which in 2015 presented the worst levels of violence since 2001) and Turkey (southeast) in Europe, where the dynamics of war between the Turkish government and the PKK were revived with serious impacts on the population.

Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2015



In terms of the intensity of the armed conflicts, most were considered low-intensity (14 or 40%) and nearly one third of the cases (10 or 29%) were of medium intensity, while the number of serious contexts was similar to what it was in 2014 (11 cases, equivalent to 31% in 2015 and compared to 33% in 2014). High-intensity conflicts in 2015 raged in Libya, Nigeria (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ukraine, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

During 2015, armed conflicts around the world continued to cause destruction, suffering and a very serious impact on the civilian population. As detailed in the analysis of cases in each context, the consequences of these armed conflicts were not limited to those killed in fighting between state armed forces and armed insurgent groups or as a result of indiscriminate acts of violence with devastating impacts on civilians in many conflicts. The consequences also included massacres and summary executions, arbitrary detentions, torture and many other forms of physical and psychological abuse, forced displacement of populations, the use of sexual violence, the recruitment of children and many other forms of abuse against boys and girls, in addition to other dynamics. In 2015, armed groups deliberately used sexual violence as a weapon of war in countries such as Iraq, Mali, CAR, DRC, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.

The impact of the armed conflicts on children continued to cause great concern. In 2015 the UN Secretary-General warned of the unprecedented difficulties of protecting children in contexts of conflict and underscored the very serious violations against boys and girls in major crises like in Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Nigeria, Syria, CAR and South Sudan, as well as in prolonged conflicts like in Afghanistan, DRC and Somalia and other more recent conflicts like in Yemen.

The forced displacement of populations was one of the most visible consequences of the armed conflicts in 2015, when the trend observed in previous years of a significant rise in the number of refugees or internally

displaced people around the world was confirmed. According to data published by UNHCR at the end of the year, which show a partial assessment of the situation based on data for the first half of the year, in 2015 over 60 million people were displaced inside and outside the borders of their countries due to armed conflicts, situations of violence and persecution, the highest total since data have been collected. This means that one out of every 122 people in the world has had to leave their homes due to situations of conflict and violence. While 59.5 million people in this situation were counted at the end of 2014, during the first six months of 2015 the United Nations agency had identified new forced displacements of nearly five million people, most of them internally. By mid-2015, the total number of refugees in the world, which at the end of 2014 had reached 19.5 million, crossed the threshold of 20 million for the first time since 1992.

The trend observed in previous years of a significant rise in the number of refugees or internally displaced people around the world was confirmed in 2015

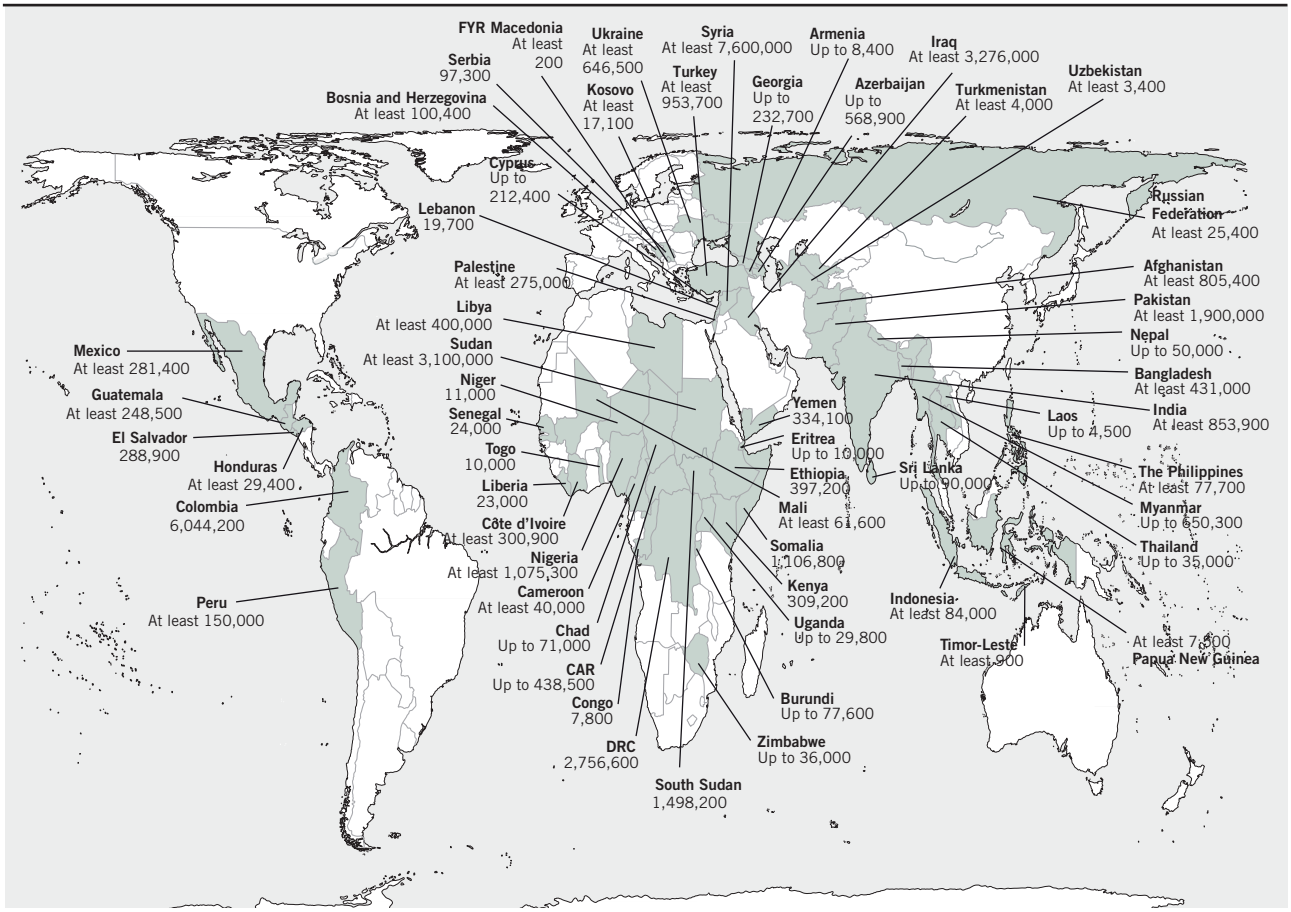
The leading country of origin of the refugee population and the main cause of the abrupt rise in the cases of forced displacement around the world in recent years was Syria, although the outbreak or worsening of other armed conflicts like in Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Ukraine also contributed to the trend.

The report also analyses two of the main instruments available to the international community to try to address threats to peace and security: weapons embargoes and international missions. Embargoes are one of the main coercive measures listed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

At the end of 2015, there were 37 weapons embargoes against a total of 24 states and non-state armed groups, one more than the previous year due to the inclusion of Yemen. Thirteen of the 22 embargoes established by the EU responded to UN Security Council embargoes. The nine remaining embargoes corresponded to European initiatives: Belarus, China, Egypt, Myanmar, Russia, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Of the 24 states and non-state armed groups indicated by the UN, EU, Arab League and OSCE, 12 referred to actors in armed conflicts active in late 2015: China, Egypt, Libya, Myanmar, CAR, Syria, Sudan and South Sudan, as well as armed groups in Iraq, Somalia, DRC and Yemen. The embargoes affect both conflicts in Sudan and DRC, meaning that there are 12 embargoes affecting 14 situations of armed conflict. There is also an embargo against al-Qaeda and the Taliban militias, but even though a large part of both organisations is based and operates in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the weapons embargo does not cover to any specific territory, according to the provisions of Resolution 1390.

Number of people internally displaced in 2014



Source: IDMC, *Global Overview 2015: People internally displaced by conflict and violence,* IDMC, May 2015.

Arms embargoes by the UN, EU, OSCE and the Arab League in 2015

Country*	Coming into effect	Country	Coming into effect
Embargoes declared by the United Nations (14)		**Embargoes declared by the EU (22)**	
Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities, Taliban militias **	2002	**Al-Qaeda and Taliban militias****	2002
CAR	2013	Belarus	2011
Côte d'Ivoire	2004	**CAR**	2013
DPR Korea	2006	China	1989
DRC (NGF since 2008)	2003	Côte d'Ivoire	2004
Eritrea	2009	**DRC (NGF since 2003)**	1993
Iran	2006	Egypt	2013
Iraq (NGF* since 2004)**	1990	Eritrea	2010
Lebanon (NGF)	2006	Iran	2007
Liberia (NGF since 2009)	1992	**Iraq (NGF since 2004)**	1990
Libya	2011	Lebanon (NGF)	2006
Somalia (NGF since 2007)	1992	Liberia (NGF since 2008)	2001
Sudan (Darfur) (NGF)	2004	**Libya**	2011
Yemen (NGF)	2015	**Myanmar**	1991
		North Korea	2006
Embargoes declared by the Arab League (1)		Russia****	2014
Syria	2011	**Somalia**	2002
		South Sudan	2011
Embargoes declared by the OSCE (1)		**Sudan**	1994
Armenia - Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	1992	**Syria**	2011
		Yemen (NGF)	2015
		Zimbabwe	2002

* In bold, country or group in armed conflict subject to embargo.
** Embargo not linked to a specific country or territory.
*** NGF: Non-Governmental forces
**** In the case of Russia, the embargo is related to the issue of Crimea and not to the conflicts affecting the northern Caucasus.
Source: Own work based on the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes and the European Commission, http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/index_en.htm.

Ten of the other 12 states subjected to embargoes witnessed scenarios of socio-political crisis of variable intensity (Armenia-Azerbaijan, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Iran, Lebanon, North Korea, Russia, Sudan and Zimbabwe). Most of these countries are affected by different scenarios of tension at the same time, which are affected by the same embargo. In conclusion, neither the UN nor the EU, the Arab League or the OSCE suggested imposing an arms embargo as a penalising measure in 21 of the 35 armed conflicts active at the end of 2015. Furthermore, **52 of the 83 situations of socio-political crisis identified in 2015** were not subject to embargoes either, even though in many cases their preventive nature might help to reduce violence.

At the end of 2015, there were 37 weapons embargoes issued against a total of 24 states and non-state armed groups by the UN and other regional organisations

Socio-political crises

In the second chapter (**Socio-political crises**)[2] we examine the nature and the most important events related to the socio-political crises reported during the year and take a comparative look at global and regional trends. During 2015, 83 socio-political crises were identified worldwide. As in previous years, the largest number was found in Africa, with 36 cases (44%), followed by Asia, where 20 cases were reported (24%). The Middle East and Europe contained 11 cases of socio-political crisis each (13% in both cases), while five were identified in the Americas (6%).

There were six new scenarios of socio-political crisis, including Cameroon, due to the actions of the Nigerian

2. A socio-political crisis is defined as that in which the pursuit of certain objectives or the failure to satisfy certain demands made by a range of actors leads to high levels of political, social or military mobilisation and/or the use of violence with a level of intensity that does not reach that of an armed conflict and that may include clashes, repression, coups d'état and bombings or attacks of other kinds, and whose escalation may lead to an armed conflict under certain circumstances. Socio-political crises are normally related to: a) demands for self-determination and self-government, or identity aspirations; b) opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state, or the internal or international policies of a government, which in both cases produces a struggle to take or undermine power; or c) control of resources or territory.

armed group Boko Haram on its soil, with more than 200 fatalities, many of them civilians; Lesotho, due to the political crisis in 2015 and the struggles between parts of the military following the general elections in February; and Mexico, because of the increase of the human security crisis and multiple forms of violence in recent years, including repression against political and social opposition groups (peasant organisations, indigenous organisations, trade unions and student organisations, among others). Moreover, the cases from Central Africa (LRA), India (Manipur) and Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria), which were considered armed conflicts in previous years, ended up being considered situations of tension because of the lower levels of violence they produced. Despite the de-escalation, all three cases involve active armed insurgencies. In turn, several situations of socio-political crisis were no longer considered as such due to the lowering of tension in recent years. Furthermore, two cases considered socio-political crises in previous years were described as armed conflicts in 2015 due to the rise in violence: Burundi and the conflict between the Philippine government and the armed group BIFF.

There were many causes of the situations of tension, with more than one major factor in most cases. An analysis of the crisis landscape in 2015 identifies trends in their causes and motivations. In line with the data observed in previous years, the different main causes of 67% of the tensions included **opposition to the internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments** (which led to conflicts to achieve or erode power) or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective states. Secondly, demands for self-government and/or identity-related demands were one of the causes of nearly half the crises (49%). This average was easily topped in Europe (91% of the cases). Thirdly, it should be noted that dispute over control of land and/or resources was an especially important main cause of more than one third of the crises in the world (34% or 28 cases), with a greater presence in the Americas and Africa (40% and 39%, respectively). However, this is an element that directly or indirectly feeds many crisis situations to various degrees.

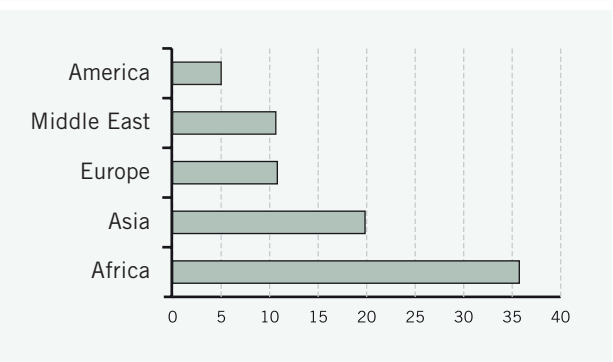
In line with previous years, slightly over half the crises in the world were domestic in nature (43 cases or 52%), more than one fourth were internal internationalised (22 cases or 26%) and one fifth were international (18 cases or 22%). Regarding the evolution of the crises, two fifths (34 cases) reported a deterioration in the situation compared to 2014, while one third (29 cases) experienced no significant changes and around one fourth improved somewhat (20 cases).

In terms of intensity, during 2015 close to half the crises were of low intensity (48% or 40 cases), while nearly one third were of medium intensity (30% or 25 cases) and just over one fifth were characterised by high levels of instability and/or violence (22% or 18 cases). **The most serious crises in 2015 were in Central Africa (LRA), Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia, Bangladesh, North Korea-South Korea, the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Manipur), India-Pakistan, Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria), Egypt, Israel-Syria-Lebanon and Lebanon.**

The highest number of socio-political crises took place in Africa, with 36 cases (44%), followed by Asia, which reported 20 cases (24%)

In addition to their lethality, the crisis situations had other serious impacts on human security. For instance, there were new forced displacements (with cases like Eritrea, where around 400,000 people have fled in recent years, according to the UN, in a context of repression and poverty; Niger, with around 66,000 people internally displaced by Boko Haram's violence on its soil; and the forced flight of over 10,000 people from the Rohingya community in Myanmar, only in the first quarter of 2015 due to violence against it). Other impacts include kidnapping (cases like the more than 400 people abducted by the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA in the first eight months of 2015, with a 60% increase compared to the same period in 2014), disappearances (in Kenya and Mexico, among others), executions (around 300 in Pakistan following the new anti-terrorism plan and around 20 in Kenya) and sexual violence (like in Haiti, one of the top five countries in terms of accusations of sexual abuse and exploitation levelled at UN mission personnel, according to data from 2015). There were also daily impacts like restrictions on the freedom of movement and the militarisation of territory, restrictions on or the denial of displaced populations' right to return (like in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia) and the repression of human rights and freedoms (like in Eritrea or Ethiopia). The impact of anti-terrorist laws and measures with indiscriminate effects was especially worrying, as was the persecution of Islam in the public sphere partially under cover of the so-called global war on terrorism, which risks aggravating conflicts with a sectarian dimension.

Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2015



Conflict overview 2015

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	
Africa	*Libya* Nigeria (Boko Haram) Somalia *South Sudan*	*Burundi* *CAR* *DR Congo (east)* DR Congo (east-ADF) *Mali (north)* *Sudan (Darfur)* *Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)*	Algeria *Ethiopia (Ogaden)*	Cameroon Central Africa (LRA) Chad Kenya Niger Nigeria Tunisia	Burkina Faso Côte d'Ivoire DR Congo Eritrea Ethiopia Ethiopia (Oromia) Lesotho *Mozambique* Nigeria (Delta Niger) *Sudan* *Sudan – South Sudan*	Angola (Cabinda) Congo Djibouti DR Congo – Rwanda DR Congo – Uganda Equatorial Guinea *Eritrea – Ethiopia* Gambia Guinea Guinea-Bissau Madagascar *Morocco – Western Sahara* Mauritania Rwanda *Senegal (Casamance)* Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland) Uganda Zimbabwe	
SUBTOTAL	**4**	**7**	**2**	**7**	**11**	**18**	**49**
America			*Colombia*		Haiti Peru Venezuela	Bolivia Mexico	
SUBTOTAL			**1**		**3**	**2**	**6**
Asia and Pacific	*Afghanistan* Pakistan *Pakistan (Baluchistan)*		China (East Turkestan) *India (Assam)** India (Jammu and Kashmir) India (CPI-M) *Myanmar* Philippines (Mindanao – BIFF) Philippines (Mindanao – Abu Sayyaf) *Philippines (NPA)* *Thailand (south)*	Bangladesh India (Manipur) India – Pakistan Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea Pakistan *Philippines (Mindanao)*	China - Japan *India (Nagaland)* Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea *Myanmar* Nepal Thailand Tajikistan	China (Tibet) Indonesia (Aceh) Indonesia (West Papua) Kyrgyzstan Sri Lanka Thailand – Cambodia Uzbekistan	
SUBTOTAL	**3**		**9**	**6**	**7**	**7**	**32**
Europe	*Ukraine*	*Turkey (southeast)*	Russia (Dagestan)	*Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)* Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria)	Russia (Chechenia) Russia (Ingushetia)	Bosnia y Herzegovina *Cyprus* *Georgia (Abkhazia)* *Georgia (South Ossetia)* Macedonia *Moldova, Rep. of (Transdniestria)* *Serbia – Kosovo*	
SUBTOTAL	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**7**	**14**
Middle East	Egypt (Sinai) Iraq *Syria* *Yemen (Houthis)*	Yemen (AQAP)	*Israel – Palestine*	Egypt Israel – Syria – Lebanon Lebanon	Iran (Sistan Baluchistan) Saudi Arabia Yemen (south)	Bahrein Iran (northeast) Iran – USA, Israel Iraq (Kurdistan) Palestine	
SUBTOTAL	**4**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**5**	**17**
TOTAL	**12**	**9**	**14**	**18**	**26**	**39**	**118**

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics. With asterisk, armed conflicts ended during 2015.

Peace processes

In the third chapter (**Peace processes**),[3] we examine 39 cases of peace negotiation and exploration. We also monitor the peace agreements with the MILF and the MNLF (Philippines) for having encountered serious difficulties in their implementation. In the cases of Balochistan (Pakistan), the armed group ELN in Colombia and Syria, exploratory talks and meetings took place that could become further established in 2016. Between 2008 and 2013, only 17.3% of the negotiations ended badly at the close of the year. Some of the most important events of the year in relation to the peace processes included:

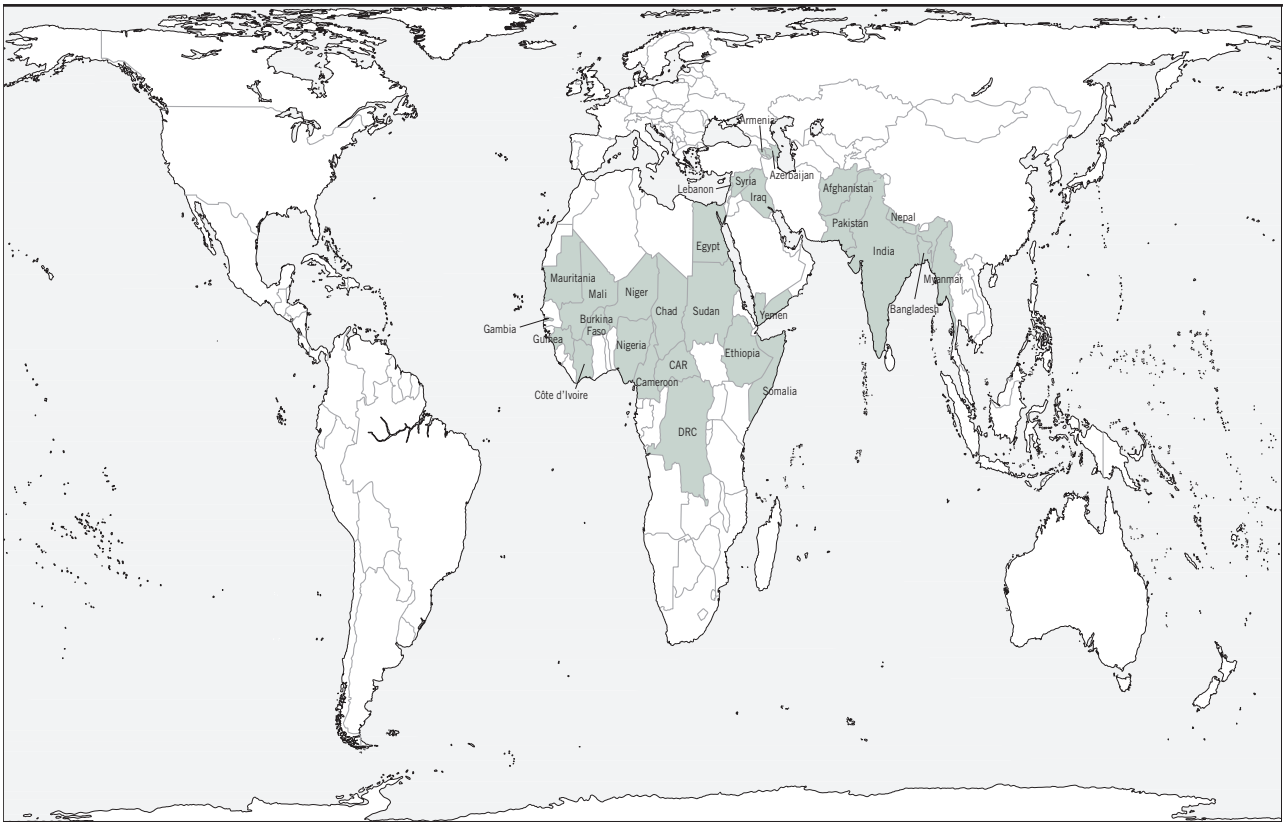
- **Four peace negotiations were resolved satisfactorily** during the year: CAR, Sudan (Darfur) SLM-MM, Mali (CMA-Platform) and South Sudan.
- In three conflicts, **there were explorations** to open a formal negotiating process: Colombia (ELN), Pakistan (Balochistan) and Syria.
- The negotiations worked well or were resolved in seven cases (17.9%), had significant difficulties in 12 cases (30.7%) and were unsuccessful in 17 cases (43.6%).
- The government of **Mali** signed a draft preliminary peace agreement created as part of the mediating process led by Algeria. The first Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation was signed on 15 May..
- Regarding the conflict in the **Central African Republic**, the Forum for National Reconciliation was held successfully and the presidential election was held at the end of the year, though the country remained mired in a climate of fragility..
- In **South Sudan**, the peace agreement promoted by IGAD-Plus was ratified by all the parties involved in the conflict. The parties agreed to a permanent ceasefire and signed a transitional security agreement in which the government and the SPLA-IO rebels agreed on the terms to partially demilitarise the capital, Juba. At the end of the year, however, both sides continued to trade blame for violating the ceasefire.
- In **Colombia**, negotiations continued with the **FARC**. On 15 December, the full contents of the Agreement on Victims of the Conflict were made public after its general outlines had already been revealed in September. Furthermore, the president and "Timochenko" promised to end the negotiations before 23 March 2016. Meanwhile, the **ELN** guerrilla group ended its exploratory stage, agreeing with the government on an agenda for early 2016.
- In **India**, there was a first round of talks between the Indian government and the faction of the Assamese armed opposition group **ULFA** that supports negotiations. The leader of ULFA-Pro Talk, Anup Kumar Chetia, was released..
- In **Thailand (south)**, talks were held between the government and a platform known as Majlis Syura Patani (Mara Patani, Patani Consultative Council), which brings together six insurgent organisations. A series of informal meetings were begun between both parties in Kuala Lumpur, with the facilitation of the government of Malaysia.
- In **Cyprus**, the peace process was resumed in May after seven months of impasse. Confidence-building measures and technical committees were also implemented.

Status of the negotiations at the end of 2015

Good (3)	In difficulties (12)	Bad (17)	At an exploratory stage (3)	Resolved (4)
Cyprus India ([Nagaland] [NSCN-IM]) India – Pakistan	Colombia (FARC) India (Assam) (ULFA) Moldova (Transdniestria) Myanmar Philippines (MILF) Senegal (MFDC) Serbia – Kosovo Sudan (Darfur) Sudan (Kordofan & Blue Nile [SPLM-N]) Sudan (National Dialogue) Thailand (south) Ukraine (Donbas)	Afghanistan (Taliban) Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno Karabakh) Burundi DR Congo (FDLR) Ethiopia – Eritrea Ethiopia (ONLF) Georgia (Abkhazia & South Ossetia) India (Nagaland) (NSCN-K) Israel – Palestine Libya Morocco – Western Sahara Mozambique (RENAMO) Philippines (NDF) Philippines (MNLF) Sudan – South Sudan Turkey (PKK) Yemen (Houthis)	Colombia (ELN) Pakistan (Baluchistan) Syria	CAR Mali (CMA-Platform) South Sudan Sudan ([Darfur] SLM-MM dissidents)

3. Negotiation is understood to be the process by which two or more opposing parties (either countries or internal actors within a country) agree to discuss their differences in a concerted effort to find a satisfactory solution to their demands. This negotiation can be direct or performed through a third-party facilitator. Normally, formal negotiations involve a preliminary or exploratory phase to define the framework (format, venue, conditions, guarantees, etc.) for future negotiations. A peace process is understood to be the formalisation of a negotiating framework, once the agenda, the procedures to be followed, the calendar and the facilitators have been defined. Negotiation is therefore one of the stages in a peace process.

Countries in armed conflict and socio-political crises with serious gender inequalities



Gender, peace and security

In the fourth chapter (**Gender, peace and security**) we employ a gender perspective to examine the different initiatives that are being carried out by the United Nations and different local and international organisations and movements in the area of peacebuilding from a gender perspective.[5] This perspective brings to light the various effects of armed conflicts on women and men, but also to what extent and in what way both women and men are participating in peacebuilding and the contributions that women are making to it. The chapter is structured into three main sections: the first provides an assessment of the global situation with regard to gender inequalities by analysing the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI); the second analyses the gender dimension in armed conflicts and socio-political crises; and the final section is devoted to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. A map appears at the beginning of the chapter showing the countries with serious gender inequalities according to the SIGI. The chapter specifically monitors the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, which was established after Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was approved by the UN Security Council.

33 of the 83 socio-political crises active in 2015 took place in countries with serious gender inequalities

In accordance with the SIGI, the levels of gender discrimination against women were high or very high in 38 countries, concentrated mainly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The analysis obtained by cross-referencing the data from this indicator with the indicator of countries in a situation of armed conflict shows that 21 of the 35 armed conflicts that took place in 2015 were in countries with serious gender inequalities and high or very high levels of discrimination. Moreover, five armed conflicts occurred in countries where

5. As an analytical category, gender makes it clear that inequalities between men and women are the product of social norms rather than a result of nature, and sets out to underline this social and cultural construction to distinguish it from the biological differences of the sexes. The gender perspective aims to highlight the social construction of sexual difference and the sexual division of work and power. It also attempts to show that the differences between men and women are a social construction resulting from unequal power relations that have historically been established in the patriarchal system. The goal of gender as an analytical category is to demonstrate the historical and situated nature of sexual differences.

Countries in armed conflict and socio-political crises with high or very high levels of gender discrimination

	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination
Armed conflicts*	Afghanistan CAR Ethiopia India (3) Iraq Myanmar Pakistan (2)	DRC (2) Egypt Mali Nigeria Somalia Sudan (2) Syria Yemen (2)
Socio-political crises	Armenia*** Azerbaijan Burkina Faso Cameroon Côte d'Ivoire Ethiopia (3) Guinea India (3)** Iraq Lebanon (2)**** Myanmar Nepal Pakistan (2)	Bangladesh Central Africa (LRA) Chad DRC (3) Egypt Gambia Mauritania Niger Nigeria (2) Somalia Sudan (2) Syria Yemen

* In brackets the number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in that country.
** One of the crises involving India refers to the dispute it has with Pakistan.
*** Armenia and Azerbaijan are involved in a single international crisis, related to the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh.
**** One of the crises in Lebanon refers to the tension it maintains with Israel and Syria.
Source: Table created from data on the levels of gender discrimination according to the SIGI (OECD) and the classifications of armed conflict and socio-political crises of the Escola de Cultura de Pau. The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

there are no data available (Algeria, Libya, Israel-Palestine, Russia and South Sudan). Thus, **70% of the armed conflicts for which data on gender equality are available took place in contexts with serious or very serious gender inequalities.** Furthermore, in seven other countries experiencing one or more armed conflicts, the levels of discrimination were lower. In some cases they were at medium levels (China, Burundi, Philippines), and in others they were at low levels (Ukraine, Colombia, Thailand and Turkey). The high percentage seems to coincide with some authors' theories that gender inequality in a country raises its chances of experiencing an internal armed conflict. With regard to socio-political crises, at least 33 of the 83 situations of tension active in 2015 took place in countries with serious gender inequalities (high or very high levels according to the SIGI), which amounts to 51% of the socio-political crises for which data are available.

Sexual violence was reported in different places affected by armed conflicts, socio-political crises or post-war situations throughout the year

Sexual violence was present in many armed conflicts active in 2015. Its use, which in some cases formed part of armed groups' deliberate war strategies, was documented in various reports. In March, the UN Secretary-General presented his annual report monitoring the impact of this form of violence in armed conflicts that covered the period from January to December 2014, identifying the armed groups responsible for committing systematic acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also documents the patterns and trends in the use of sexual violence in conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur (Sudan), Syria and Yemen and in post-conflict cases like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, in addition to the situation in Nigeria. The report also collects different response initiatives undertaken by governments or other bodies like the United Nations or civil society.

Many cases of sexual violence were reported in different places affected by armed conflicts, socio-political crises or post-war situations throughout the year. One of the most serious cases was in the Darfur region in Sudan, where various organisations reported the impact of sexual violence in recent years. Especially serious were the cases of sexual violence committed by United Nations personnel reported at different times during the year. The situation in the **CAR** became especially prominent after the organisation acknowledged that the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSCA) had been accused of sexually abusing minors in the capital, Bangui. Other cases of special importance included **Myanmar, Egypt and Sri Lanka.**

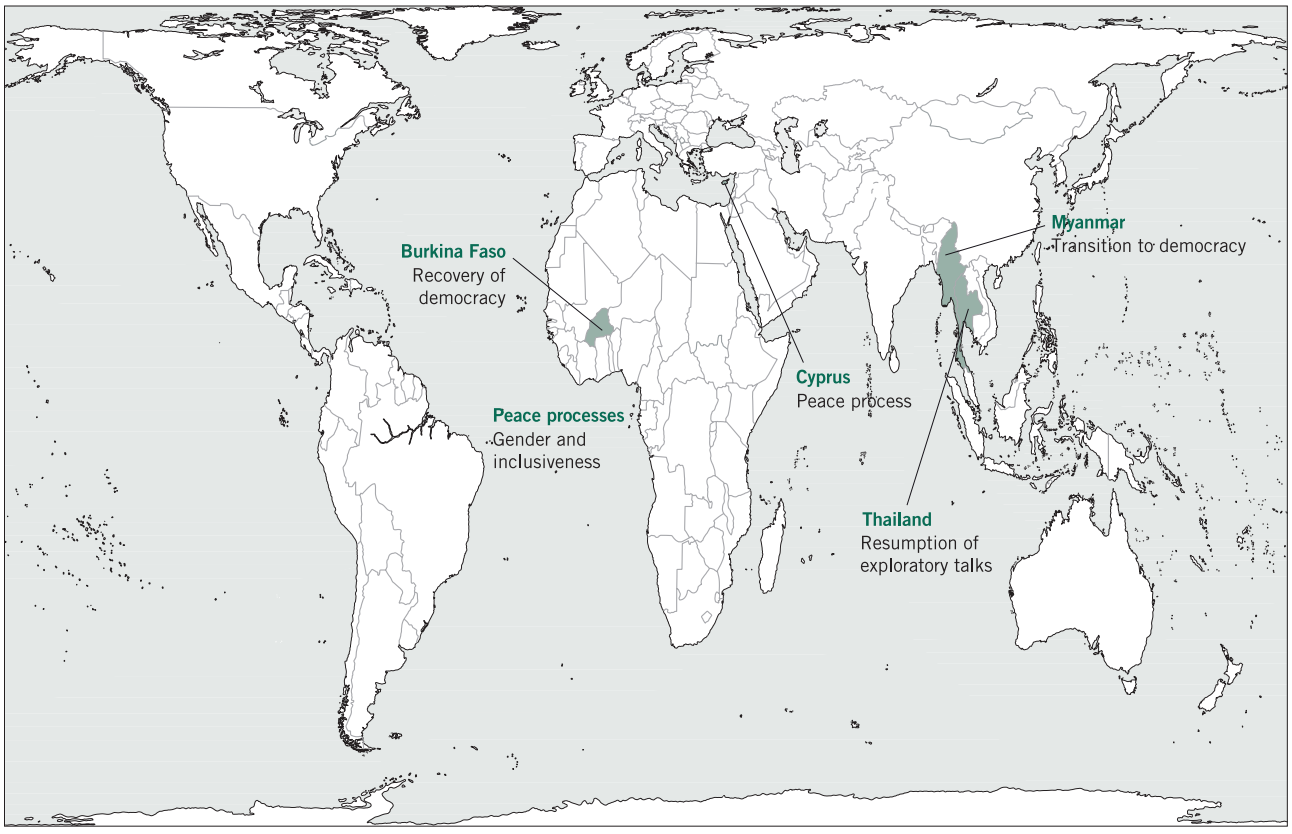
Regarding peacebuilding from a gender perspective, it should be noted that 2015 marked the 15th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security by the United Nations Security Council. Coinciding with this event, an extensive review of its implementation over the course of the last 15 years was conducted by the United Nations, governments and civil society. Various assessment reports were issued to that effect and an open debate was held in the Security Council. In addition to the UN Secretary-General's annual report, submitted to the Security Council in compliance with the provisions of the resolution, the United Nations issued *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: a Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,* created independently by expert Radhika Coomaraswamy. Furthermore, the Security Council approved a new resolution, 2242 (2015), which joins the seven previous resolutions dealing with the women, peace and security agenda (1325 in 2000, 1820 in 2008, 1888 and 1889 in 2009, 1960 in 2010 and 2106 and 2122 in 2013).

The *Global Study* conducted by Radhika Coomaraswamy is the most exhaustive review carried out on the implementation of Resolution 1325 thus far. It is based on a comprehensive review of its implementation, including specific research into the different subjects addressed and many consultations with the different actors involved (civil society, governments, regional bodies and the United Nations) to provide relevant conclusions. The study, which stresses that Resolution 1325 must be interpreted as a human rights mandate for the international community, presents evidence about the importance and the positive impact of including the gender dimension in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (and especially in peace processes and agreements), emphasising the importance of enhancing prevention against the use of force and the securitisation of conflicts. It also confirms the many challenges remaining for its implementation.

21 of the 35 armed conflicts that took place during 2015 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities

Finally, various peace negotiations had a significant gender perspective in 2015. Several recent investigations have shown how the presence of actors outside the parties to the conflict, especially from civil society, increases the sustainability of peace processes. Moreover, the inclusion of civil society, and specifically of women's groups, has positive effects on the possibilities of reaching and sustaining peace agreements. Notable in this respect is the remarkable progress made in terms of gender in peace processes in countries like Afghanistan, Cyprus, Colombia and Turkey.

Opportunities for peace in 2016



Opportunities for peace in 2016

In the fifth chapter (**Opportunities for peace in 2016**), the report identifies and examines five areas likely to see positive steps towards peacebuilding in 2016. The opportunities identified in 2015 concern a number of different regions and issues.

- **Cyprus:** The resumption of peace negotiations in 2015 and the confluence of factors linked to them (the commitment of local leaders, international support and the mobilisation of non-governmental actors from both communities of the island in favour of dialogue, as well as tangible results including but not limited to significant confidence-building measures) provide a historic window of opportunity to achieve a definitive agreement despite obstacles related to the circumstances and the background of the dispute.
- **Burkina Faso:** The country has put an end to the transition begun after the fall of the regime of Blaise Compaoré by holding the presidential and legislative elections that had been postponed following the failed coup d'état in September 2015. The elections returned control of the country's political institutions to the Burkinabe people after an 18-month interim government, ushering in a new period of democracy for Burkinabe society.

Alert! identifies and examines five areas likely to see positive steps towards peacebuilding in 2016

- **Myanmar:** The results of the general elections, which gave an overwhelming majority to Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party (NLD) and will lead to the formation of a new government without military guardianship, together with the ceasefire agreement signed with eight insurgent organisations, portends progress on the path to democracy and peace in the country during 2016.
- **Thailand:** Exploratory talks were resumed in 2015 between the military junta and Mara Patani, an organisation uniting the main armed groups operating in the southern part of the country. The unification of the insurgent movement's demands and the state's recognition that dialogue is necessary to resolve the armed conflict are two mandatory conditions for building trust between the parties.
- **Gender and Peace processes:** Recent research shows that peace processes that are inclusive and incorporate a gender and civil society perspective are more sustainable and more likely to result in the signing of a peace agreement than those that do not. Moreover, the participation of women could also help to draft agreements that address equality-related issues.

Risk scenarios in 2016

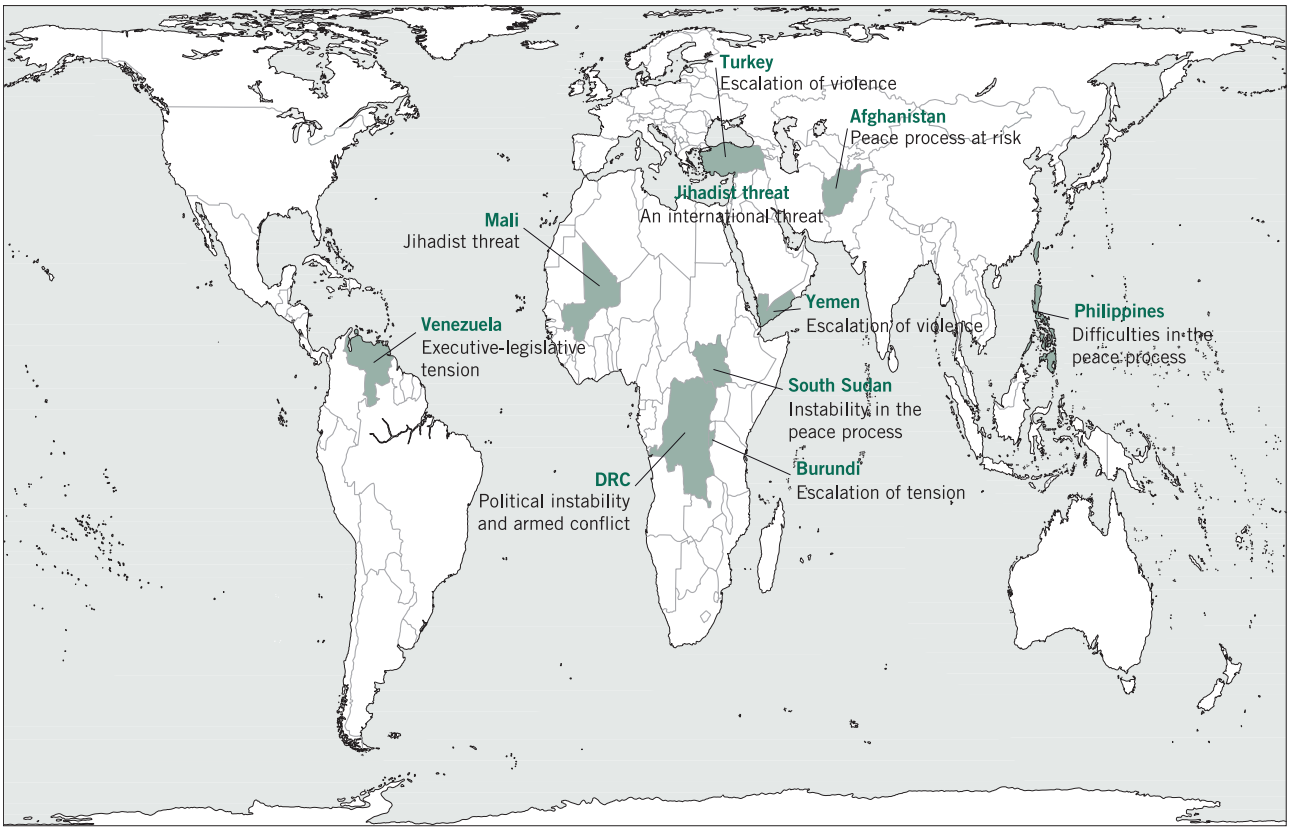
In the sixth chapter (**Risk scenarios for 2016**), the report identifies and examines 10 cases of armed conflict and socio-political crisis that may worsen in light of their current conditions and become sources of even greater instability and violence during 2016.

- **Burundi:** There has been a significant deterioration of governance in the country in recent years. Growing authoritarianism and the controversial candidacy of President Pierre Nkurunziza, along with the atmosphere of political violence and human rights violations, are different aspects that reveal the seriousness of the situation and have pushed the country to the brink of armed conflict in recent months.
- **Mali:** In June 2015, a peace agreement was achieved between the government and the Arab and Tuareg rebel movements operating in the northern region after three and a half years of armed conflict. However, the exclusion of the jihadist movements from the negotiations and the ineffectiveness of securitization measures to contain their presence pose serious obstacles to ending to the violence and may even jeopardise implementation of the peace agreements.

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK could worsen in 2016 if measures to build trust and de-escalate the violence are not urgently implemented

- **DRC:** The upcoming cycle of new elections is causing an escalation of political violence and general instability as a consequence of the attempts of President Kabila to postpone the presidential election and thereby prolong his rule, as well as the failures of the military operation against the FDLR and the amnesty for and return of the armed group M23, which could lead to a resumption of the conflict.
- **South Sudan:** After the signing of a peace agreement following 20 months of bloody civil war, the warring parties' lack of ownership of it, the government's unilateral

Risk scenarios in 2016



decisions in matters that should be the jurisdiction of the new transitional government that has yet to be created, the repeated ceasefire violations and the emergence of new armed actors are putting the prospects for peace in the country at serious risk.

- **Venezuela:** The opposition's resounding victory in the parliamentary elections has led to a new political scenario in the country marked by a polarisation of forces between the executive and legislative branches of government. This new political situation, which substantially modifies the power of Chavism after 15 years, may give rise to new tensions and disputes between the government and opposition forces that could further convulse national politics, expand social fragmentation and lead to outbreaks of violence.

The report examines 10 cases of armed conflict and socio-political crisis that may worsen during 2016 in light of their current conditions

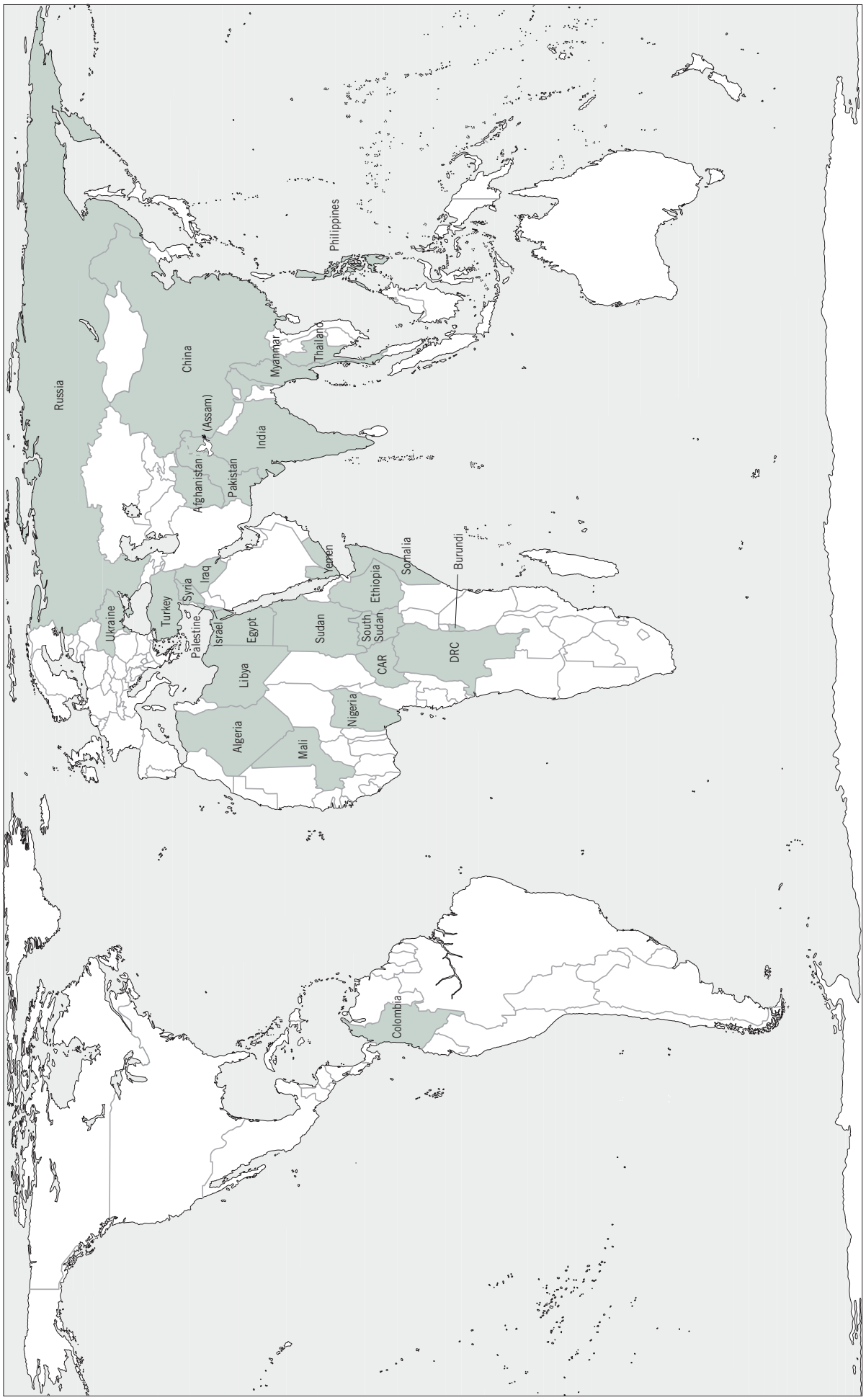
- **Afghanistan:** The negotiating process between the Taliban and the Afghan government hit a roadblock due to an internal crisis within the Taliban movement. The division within its leadership threatens the future of the negotiations. Despite the rising violence, Ashraf Ghani's commitment to the dialogue and to reaching out a hand to Pakistan, which is still providing sanctuary to Taliban leaders, is weakening the already brittle Afghan government. In addition, although Pakistan should participate in the agreement, its desire to control the process is pitting the parties against each other even more.

- **Philippines:** The problems and delays experienced by Congress to approve the Bangsamoro Basic Law, a kind of statute of autonomy governing the new autonomous entity of Bangsamoro and specifying the contents of the historic peace agreement signed by the government and the MILF in 2014, caused deadlock in the peace process and raised fears of an internal split within the MILF and a resumption of violence in Mindanao.

- **Turkey:** The conflict between Turkey and the PKK seriously worsened in 2015 due to factors such as the increasingly urban nature of the war, the "Syrianisation" of the Kurdish issue and the irruption of ISIS onto Turkish soil, the deterioration of the social atmosphere, the regression of democracy and questions about sustainable dialogue options. These dynamics could worsen in 2016 if measures to build trust and de-escalate the violence are not urgently implemented.

- **Yemen:** Violence in the country escalated significantly in March 2015, when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia decided to intervene to halt the advance of the Houthi militias that had ousted the government at the beginning of the year. Looking ahead to 2016, the situation threatens to worsen due to the growing complexity of the armed conflict, the severe impact of the violence on the civilian population and the obstacles to a political solution to the conflict.
- **Jihadist threat:** ISIS has established itself as a new model for international jihadism and a competitor with al-Qaeda, demonstrating a greater ability to act around the world. Many factors may favour the increase of jihadist violence in the future, including an intensification in the struggle between ISIS and al-Qaeda, a greater incidence of armed actions by returning militiamen or "lone wolf" attacks and the possible adverse effects of the international response to ISIS.

Map 1.1. **Armed conflicts**



1. Armed conflicts

- 35 armed conflicts were reported in 2015, most of them in Africa (13) and Asia (12), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (three) and America (one).
- Political violence and instability escalated dramatically throughout the year in Burundi, pushing the country to the brink of war.
- After 20 months of confrontation and amidst international pressure, the combatants in South Sudan signed a peace agreement establishing a transitional government for a period of 18 months.
- The internationalisation of the conflict with Boko Haram increased following the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).
- Libya was struck by high levels of violence, institutional fragmentation and political instability that had a serious impact on the population and helped ISIS to make headway in the country.
- The dynamics of violence subsided in the armed conflict in Colombia amidst a context of peace negotiations between the government and the FARC-EP.
- Violence in Afghanistan hit its highest levels since 2001, despite the significant steps taken in the peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government.
- In Mindanao, clashes increased significantly between the Philippine Armed Forces and the BIFF, a splinter group of the MILF that opposes the peace process.
- Open war resumed between Turkey and the Kurdish guerrilla group PKK, severely impacting Kurdish civilians in urban areas in southeastern Turkey.
- The armed conflict in Syria was characterised by significant complexity, the growing involvement of foreign groups and devastating impacts on the civilian population.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2015. It is organised into three sections. The first section offers a definition of armed conflict and its characteristics. The second section provides an analysis of the trends of conflicts in 2015, including global and regional trends and other issues related to international conflicts, such as the impact of conflict on civilians and arms embargoes. The third section is devoted to describing the development and key events of the year in the various contexts. Furthermore, a map is included at the start of chapter that indicates the conflicts active and those that ended in 2015.

1.1. Armed conflicts: definition

An **armed conflict** is any confrontation between regular or irregular armed groups with objectives that are perceived as incompatible in which the continuous and organised use of violence a) causes a minimum of 100 battle-related deaths in a year and/or a serious impact on the territory (destruction of infrastructures or of natural resources) and human security (e.g. wounded or displaced population, sexual violence, food insecurity, impact on mental health and on the social fabric or disruption of basic services) and b) aims to achieve objectives that are different than those of common delinquency and are normally linked to

- demands for self-determination and self-government or identity issues;
- the opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state or the internal or international policy of the government, which in both cases leads to fighting to seize or erode power;
- control over the resources or the territory.

Table 1.1. **Summary of armed conflicts in 2015**

Conflict[1] -beginning-	Type[2]	Main parties[3]	Intensity[4] / Trend[5]
Africa			
Algeria -1992-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), governments of North Africa and the Sahel	1
	System		=
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, factions of former armed groups	2
	Government		↑
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, demobilised members of the former rebel coalition Séléka (splinter groups of the former groups CPJP, UFDR and CPSK), anti-balaka militias, France (Operation Sangaris), MICOPAX/FOMAC (transformed into the AU mission MISCA, currently the UN mission MINUSCA), EUFOR, groups linked to the former government of François Bozizé, other residual forces from armed groups (former Armed Forces), Ugandan armed group LRA	2
	Government		=
DRC (east) -1998-	Internationalised internal	Government, Mai-Mai militias, FDLR, M23 (formerly CNDP), APCLS, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Rwanda, MONUSCO	2
	Government, Identity, Resources		=
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	2
	System, Resources		=
Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-	Internationalised internal	Government, ONLF, OLF, pro-government militias	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government with headquarters in Tobruk, government with headquarters in Tripoli, armed factions linked to Operation Dignity, armed groups linked to Operation Dawn, ISIS and other armed groups, Egypt and other countries	3
	Government, Resources, System		↑

1. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. This last option is used in cases involving more than one armed conflict in the same state or in the same territory within a state, for the purpose of distinguishing them.
2. This report classifies and analyses armed conflicts using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following main causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the internal or international policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or the struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). In respect of the second type, the armed conflicts may be of an internal, Internationalised internal or international nature. An internal armed conflict is defined as a conflict involving armed actors from the same state who operate exclusively within the territory of this state. Secondly, an internationalised internal armed conflict is defined as that in which at least one of the parties involved is foreign and/or in which the tension spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Another factor taken into account in order to consider an armed conflict as internationalised internal is the existence of military bases of armed groups in neighbouring countries (in connivance with these countries) from which attacks are launched. Finally, an international conflict is one in which state and non-state parties from two or more countries confront each other. It should also be taken into account that most current armed conflicts have a significant regional or international dimension and influence due, among other factors, to flows of refugees, the arms trade, economic or political interests (such as legal or illegal exploitation of resources) that the neighbouring countries have in the conflict, the participation of foreign combatants or the logistical and military support provided by other states.
3. This column shows the actors that intervene directly in the hostilities. The main actors who participate directly in the conflicts are made up of a mixture of regular or irregular armed parties. The conflicts usually involve the government, or its armed forces, fighting against one or several armed opposition groups, but can also involve other irregular groups such as clans, guerrillas, warlords, armed groups in opposition to each other or militias from ethnic or religious communities. Although they most frequently use conventional weapons, and more specifically small arms (which cause most deaths in conflicts), in many cases other methods are employed, such as suicide attacks, bombings and sexual violence and even hunger as a weapon of war. There are also other actors who do not directly participate in the armed activities but who nevertheless have a significant influence on the conflict.
4. The intensity of an armed conflict (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation of violence, reduction of violence, unchanged) are evaluated mainly on the basis of how deadly it is (number of fatalities) and according to its impact on the population and the territory. Moreover, there are other aspects worthy of consideration, such as the systematisation and frequency of the violence or the complexity of the military struggle (complexity is normally related to the number and fragmentation of the actors involved, to the level of institutionalisation and capacity of the state, and to the degree of internationalisation of the conflict, as well as to the flexibility of objectives and to the political will of the parties to reach agreements). As such, high-intensity armed conflicts are usually defined as those that cause over 1,000 fatalities per year, as well as affecting a significant proportion of the territory and population, and involving several actors (who forge alliances, confront each other or establish a tactical coexistence). Medium and low intensity conflicts, with over 100 fatalities per year, have the aforementioned characteristics but with a more limited presence and scope. An armed conflict is considered ended when a significant and sustained reduction in armed hostilities occurs, whether due to a military victory, an agreement between the actors in conflict, demobilisation by one of the parties, or because one of the parties abandons or significantly scales down the armed struggle as a strategy to achieve certain objectives. None of these options necessarily mean that the underlying causes of the armed conflict have been overcome. Nor do they exclude the possibility of new outbreaks of violence. The temporary cessation of hostilities, whether formal or tacit, does not necessarily imply the end of the armed conflict.
5. This column compares the trend of the events of 2015 with those that of 2014. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2015 has been more serious than in the previous year; the reduction of violence symbol (↓) indicates an improvement in the situation; and the unchanged (=) symbol indicates that no significant changes have taken place.

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Africa			
Mali (north) -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, MLF, MISMA, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane)	2
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Nigeria (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, Boko Haram (BH), Ansaru, Civilian Joint Task Force (pro-government militia), MNJTF regional force (Niger, Benin, Cameroon and Chad)	3
	System		=
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal government, pro-government militias and warlords, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Operation Ocean Shield, al-Shabaab, Eritrea	3
	Government, System		=
South Sudan -2009-	Internationalised internal	Government (SPLM/A), SPLM/A-in Opposition armed group (faction of former Vice President Riek Machar), dissident factions of the SPLM/A-IO led by Peter Gatdet and Gathoth Gatkuoth, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSNLM, REMNASA, community militias (SSPPF, TFN), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Sudan, Uganda	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		↓
Sudan (Darfur) -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, *janjaweed*, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), other groups	2
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		=
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group SPLM-N, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) armed coalition, PDF pro-government militias, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, South Sudan	2
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		=
America			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, FARC-EP, ELN, new paramilitary groups	1
	System		↓
Asia			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban militias, warlords, Islamic State of Khorasan	3
	System		↑
China (East Turkestan) -2014-	Internal	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition	1
	Self-government, System, Identity		↓
India (Assam) -1983-	Internationalised internal	Government, ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(S) KPLT, KLO, MULTA, HUM	1
	Self-government, Identity		End
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1
	System		↓
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, United Jihad Council, All Parties Hurriyat Conference	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Myanmar -1948-	Internal	Government, armed groups (KNU/KNLA, SSA-S, KNPP, UWSA, CNF, ALP, DKBA, KNPLAC, SSNPLO, KIO)	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, international militias, USA	3
	System		=
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura)	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		=
Philippines (Mindanao-Abu Sayyaf) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf	1
	Self-government, System, Identity		=
Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF) -2015	Internal	Government, BIFF	1
	Self-government, Identity		↑

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Asia			
Philippines (NPA) -1969-	Internal	Government, NPA	1
	System		=
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, separatist armed opposition groups	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Europe			
Russia (Dagestan) -2010-	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Dagestan, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)	1
	System		↓
Turkey (southeast) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Ukraine -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups in the eastern provinces, Russia	3
	Government, Identity, Self-government		=
Middle East			
Egypt (Sinai) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups based in Sinai, including Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) and Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), Ajnad Misr, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis and Katibat al-Rabat al-Jihadiya, Israel	3
	System		↑
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi and Kurdish (peshmerga) military and security forces, Shia militias, Sunni armed groups, Islamic State (ISIS), international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Iran	3
	System, Government, Identity		↑
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the PYD/ YPJ militias of the PYD), al-Nusra Front, ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, other armed groups	3
	System, Government		↑
Yemen (AQAP) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, tribal militias, Houthi militias	2
	System		↑
Yemen (Houthis) -2004-	Internationalised internal	Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/ Ansar Allah), tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias, armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Iran	3
	System, Government, Identity		↑

1:low intensity; 2: medium intensity; 3: high intensity;
↑: escalation of violence; ↓: decrease of violence; = : unchanged; End: no longer considered an armed conflict

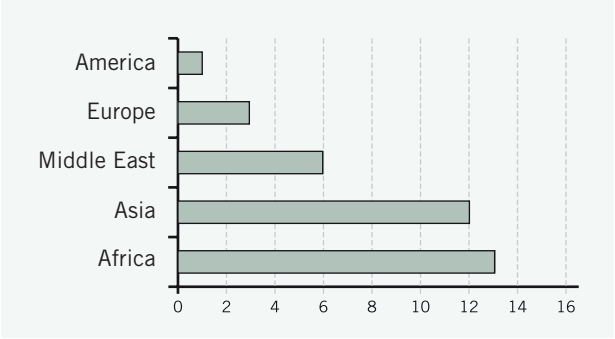
1.2. Armed conflicts: analysis of trends in 2015

This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2015, as well as other issues related to international conflict, such as the impact of conflict on civilians and arms embargoes.

1.2.1. Global trends

Throughout 2015, the number of armed conflicts followed the trend of previous years, with a total of 35 cases (36 in 2014, 35 in 2013 and 38 in 2012). Two news cases were accounted for during the year. Firstly, Burundi, due to the escalation of instability and political violence in the country amidst a climate marked by popular demonstrations, the repression of dissent and an attempted coup d'état. Secondly, the Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF), as a result of intensified clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and the armed group BIFF, which has been very active in its opposition to the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF in recent years. At the end of 2015, only 34 of the 35 cases were active, since the situation in India (Assam) was no longer considered an active armed conflict because of the drop in violence, in keeping with a pattern of de-escalating hostilities in recent years. Two cases considered armed conflicts in 2014, Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria) and Africa (LRA), were no longer considered active and were analysed

Graph 1.1. **Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2015**



as socio-political crises in 2015.[6] Regarding the geographical distribution of the armed conflicts, **most were concentrated in Africa (13) and Asia (12), in line with previous years. Of the remaining cases, six took place in the Middle East, three in Europe and one in America (Colombia).**

With respect to the scenarios of conflict and the actors involved, in 2015 only one of the contexts was catalogued as an international armed conflict (Israel-Palestine), while eight others were prominently internal in nature and **the vast majority were internationalised internal conflicts (26 of the 35 cases, equivalent to 74%)**. In these scenarios, one of the parties in dispute was foreign and/or the clashes spread to other countries, among other factors. In 2015, this dimension of "internationalisation" was evident in various dynamics. This could be seen in the armed intervention of third parties in a given conflict, including state involvement (such as Egypt against the armed group Islamic State [ISIS] in Libya, Moscow's support for armed groups in eastern Ukraine or the Russian military intervention in support of the regime of Damascus in Syria), in the action of *ad hoc* armed coalitions (like the anti-ISIS alliance led by the US, the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia that intervened in the armed conflict in Yemen and the coalition led by Washington in Afghanistan), and in the deployment of international missions by the United Nations or by regional organisations (such as the UN missions in Mali [MINUSMA], the CAR [MINUSCA] and the DR Congo (east) [MONUSCO], the AU mission in Somalia [AMISOM] and the NATO mission in Afghanistan [Resolute Support]).

In 2015, the vast majority of armed conflicts (74%) were internationalised internal in nature

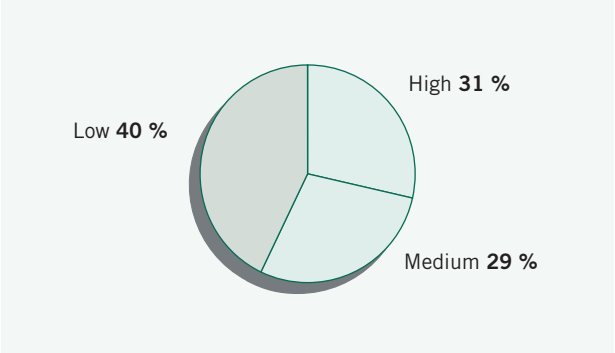
The internationalisation factor was also determined by the action of different armed groups beyond the state borders of their countries of origin. This aspect was particularly paradigmatic in the case of groups like Boko Haram, which crossed Nigeria's borders to act in Chad, Niger and Cameroon in response to those countries' participation in a regional multinational force devoted to fighting it; and also in the case of ISIS. This latter armed group continued operating in and controlling land in Syria and Iraq and claiming responsibility for actions outside those countries, most of which were perpetrated by branches that have pledged allegiance to the organisation in recent years, though the level of cooperation between the organisation led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and these factions remains unclear. In any event, it should be noted that most of today's armed conflicts have an international dimension or regional influence linked to factors such as flows of refugees,[7] the arms trade, the participation of foreign fighters, logistical or military support provided by other states to one of the parties to the conflict or the political, or economic interests of countries neighbouring the country in conflict, like with regard to legal and illegal resource exploitation, for example.

The causes of conflict in 2015 were multidimensional, as several factors usually came together. However, by analysing different contexts, it is possible to identify trends in line with previous years. **The main causes of two thirds of the armed conflicts in 2015 (24 cases, equivalent to 69%) included opposition to the government's internal or international policies, as well as opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the state,** which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power**.** From this subtotal, the factor of opposition to the government was present in 10 cases and was an especially prominent motivation in armed conflicts taking place in Africa. This was evident in Libya, where fragmentation persisted following the formation of two parallel governments in 2014; South Sudan, where some progress was observed following months of civil war after a peace agreement was signed in August 2015; and more recently in Burundi, where the president's ambition to stand for a new term worsened the conflict amidst an aggressive crackdown on dissent groups. It was also an important element in armed conflict in the CAR, the DRC (east) and Somalia, and outside Africa in contexts such as Syria and Yemen (Houthis). In the latter case, the struggle for power during a difficult transition ended in an escalation of violence worsened by the intervention of an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia.

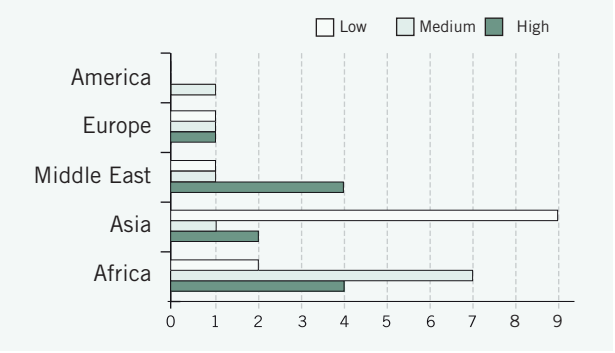
Of the subtotal of the aforementioned cases (24), 19 were related to the search for changes to the political, ideological or economic system of the state. Among them, we must distinguish the cases involving armed groups mobilised for a socialist-inspired ideological agenda (like the FARC-EP and the ELN in Colombia, the CPI-M in India and the NPA in the Philippines, which have been fighting against government forces

6. See the summary on Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria) and Africa (LRA) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
7. See the following section in this chapter on the impact of armed conflicts on civilians.

Graph 1.2. **Intensity of the armed conflicts in 2015**



Graph 1.3. **Intensity of the armed conflicts by region**



for decades) from those involving insurgent groups with an agenda aimed at applying their particular interpretation of Islamic precepts. These include armed organisations such as AQIM in Algeria, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Taliban militias in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the insurgency in the Republic of Dagestan in the Russian Federation, ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the different armed groups that have pledged allegiance to it. It is not possible to determine to what extent this approach is due to ideological factors, to seeking financial and/or logistical or to propagandistic motives. Many of these groups not only face government forces, but also non-state armed opposition groups, like in Syria or Yemen, for example, with tensions between groups with different interpretations of jihadism emerging at the same time.[8]

The main causes of two thirds of the armed conflicts in 2015 included opposition to the government's internal or international policies, as well as opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the state

Of the 35 total armed conflicts in 2015, the underlying motivations of over half (19, which represents 54% of all cases) were demands for self-determination or self-government and identity-based aspirations. As in previous years, these types of contexts were especially prevalent in Asia and in Europe, although they were also present in other regions, such as Sudan (Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile), South Sudan, Mali (north), Iraq, Israel-Palestine and Yemen (Houthis). In Asia, clashes took place in China (East Turkestan), the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Assam, Jammu and Kashmir), Pakistan (Balochistan) and the southern part of Thailand. In Myanmar, clashes between the government and dozens of armed groups of ethnic origin took place around the country during 2015 despite the signing of a nationwide cease-fire agreement. In Europe, armed conflicts related to identity and self-government took place in eastern Ukraine, with serious escalations and periods of thaw between the state and pro-Russian militias; and mainly in the southeastern region of Turkey. An increase in war dynamics between Turkish security forces and the Kurdish armed group PKK was reported amidst a collapsing peace process, impacts of the war in Syria and serious attacks allegedly perpetrated by ISIS.[9]

In some cases, actors with agendas based on identity or self-government coexisted with other organisations with demands more focused on a change of system, as in the case of Mali (north). In other cases, both motivations were present in the aspirations of the armed non-state actors. This occurred with Abu Sayyaf in the region of Mindanao, in the Philippines, and with the organisations operating in East Turkestan, in China.

The struggle for territorial control and resources was another motivation of armed conflict. Regarding the control of territories, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained a paradigmatic example. **As in previous years, the issue of resources was particularly relevant in conflicts in Africa, particularly in Libya, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Sudan (Darfur), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) and South Sudan.** The case of the DRC (east) was particularly relevant, since several reports stressed the magnitude of the pillaging of natural resources by armed and criminal groups during 2015, amounting to 1.3 billion USD per year, according to estimates by the UNEP. They also warned of the mechanisms used by insurgent groups to smuggle these resources and benefit from their exploitation (for example through taxation or by using fake tracking labels that facilitate the trade of minerals from conflict zones). Outside Africa, efforts to control resources continued to be one of the major causes of fighting in Balochistan (Pakistan), as armed groups operating in the area accuse the Pakistani authorities of taking advantage of the wealth of the province without the local population benefitting from it. The aim to control territories or resources incited numerous armed conflicts, though not necessarily as a main motivation. In many cases, this factor was purely instrumental, for example in clashes between various armed groups in Iraq and Syria in areas with oil wells in order to obtain financial resources and/or to cut their rivals' supplies.

Regarding the evolution of the armed conflicts in 2015, many of the cases (15 contexts, equivalent to

8. See "The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).
9. See "The conflict between Turkey and the PKK: the risks of further deterioration" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).

43%) reported dynamics and levels of violence similar to those in the previous year. A drop was observed in the levels of confrontation in nearly one third of the contexts (nine, representing 26%), including in the case of India (Assam), which ceased to be considered an armed conflict. In another third of the cases (11, accounting for 31% of the total), the situation worsened as a result of intensifying hostilities and levels of violence. This negative development was lower than in 2014, when most of the armed conflicts worldwide (55%) deteriorated. However, this general statement is not valid for all regions. In 2015, the vast majority of the cases in the Middle East worsened compared to the previous year and some cases that worsened in other regions did so significantly. Among them Burundi in Africa, Afghanistan in Asia (which in 2015 presented the worst levels of violence since 2001) and Turkey (southeast) in Europe, where the dynamics of war between the Turkish government and the PKK were revived with serious impacts on the population.

Almost one third of the conflicts in 2015 were of high-intensity and in many cases had well over 1,000 fatalities per year

In terms of the intensity of the armed conflicts, most were considered low-intensity (14 or 40%) and nearly one third of the cases (10 or 29%) were of medium intensity, while the number of serious contexts was similar to what it was in 2014 (11 cases, equivalent to 31% in 2015 and compared to 33% in 2014). **High-intensity conflicts in 2015 raged in Libya, Nigeria (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ukraine, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).** In many of them, the threshold of 1,000 fatalities per year was exceeded, along with high levels of destruction and severe impacts on the civilian population. Although death tolls are relative and difficult to contrast in armed conflicts, especially in high-intensity contexts, partial counts from official sources and data compiled by NGOs and UN agencies are indicative of the levels of violence in 2015. Over the course of the year, around 7,500 people were killed in clashes between Boko Haram and security forces in northern Nigeria; more than 3,400 insurgents were killed during the Pakistani military's counter-terrorism operations; approximately 4,400 people died in Ukraine (more than 9,000 since the war begun in 2014); around 3,000 insurgents were killed during Egyptian Army operations in the Sinai Peninsula; at least 16,200 civilian deaths were reported as a result of the armed conflict in Iraq and it is estimated that 55.000 people were killed in Syria. Some estimates indicate more than 260,000 people have been killed in Syria since the war broke out in 2011. However, the number of direct and indirect deaths during the five years of armed conflict in Syria could be as high as 470,000, according to new figures released in early 2016.

Notably, the *Alert* report has identified an increase in deaths caused by armed conflict in recent years. This conclusion is consistent with other research institutes, such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme at the University of Uppsala (Sweden), whose analysis of the armed conflicts in 2014 warned that the escalation of various conflicts and the extreme violence in Syria had caused the largest number of fatalities in armed clashes since 1989.[10] The latest report by the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development also points to an increase in deaths caused by armed conflict. The study *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts* says that the total number of people killed worldwide could have decreased from 2004 to 2009 and from 2007 to 2012, dropping from 526,000 to 508,000. However, the average number of annual deaths caused by armed conflict increased from 55,000 to 70,000.[11] Predictably this trend will increase in future editions of the report, since the study attributes part of the rise in deadliness to the impact of the conflicts in Libya and Syria in 2007 to 2012, when the levels of violence were not as serious as in later years in these and other countries. Nevertheless, it should be noted that those killed in armed conflict represent only 14% of global deaths, according to *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015,* and that they remain well below levels seen in some of the worst wars of the 20th century.[12]

Impact of conflicts on civilians

Armed conflicts around the world continued to cause destruction, suffering and a very serious impact on the civilian population in 2015. As detailed in the analysis of cases in each context, the consequences of these armed conflicts were not limited to those killed in fighting between state Armed Forces and armed insurgent groups or those killed as a result of indiscriminate acts of violence with devastating impacts on civilians in many conflicts. The consequences also included massacres and summary executions, arbitrary detentions, torture and many other forms of physical and psychological abuse, forced displacement of populations, the use of sexual violence, the recruitment of children and many other forms of abuse against boys and girls, in addition to other dynamics. Altogether, these cases are flagrant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In contexts like in Syria, the population was besieged and blockaded, while hunger and access to water was even used as a weapon of war. The extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure in many of these countries in conflict also had a negative impact on care for the injured and helped disease to spread. This could be seen in Yemen, where dengue

10. Therése Pettersson and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts: 1946 – 2014", *Journal of Peace Research*, July 2015, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 536-550.
11. Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts,* Geneva, 8 May 2015.
12. Pettersson and Wallensteen, ibid.

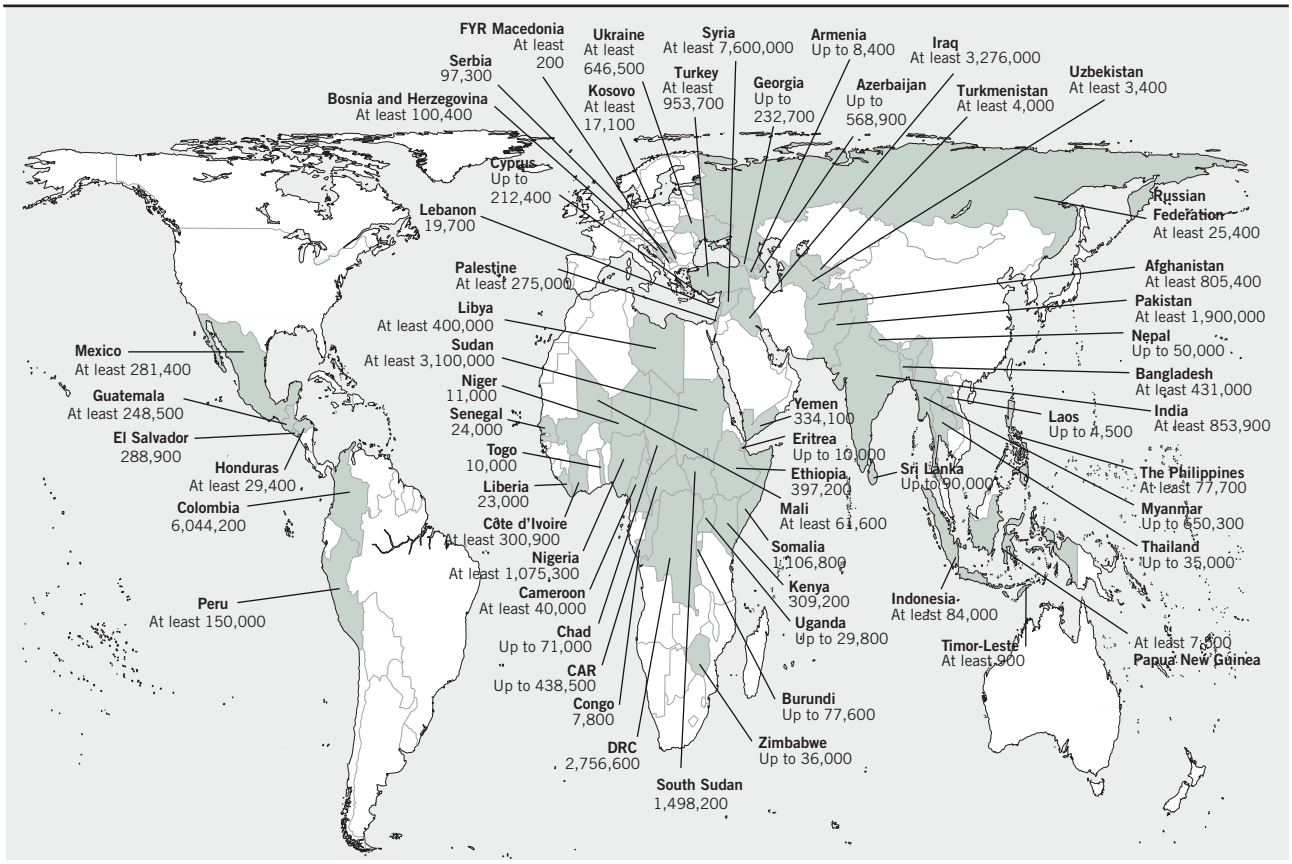
fever and malaria emerged, and in Ukraine, where there was an outbreak of polio 19 years after the country was declared free of the disease. These developments illustrate that the number of indirect deaths caused by armed conflicts is difficult to calculate in its full extent.

In 2015, armed groups deliberately used sexual violence as a weapon of war in countries such as Iraq, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Armed groups like Boko Haram and ISIS continued their practice of sexual slavery. Sexual violence was also perpetrated by members of state forces, like the Sudanese forces in Darfur and Nile Blue, and by foreign armies or UN personnel, as illustrated dramatically in 2015, where abuse allegedly perpetrated by members of the UN mission (MINUSCA) in the CAR was reported. French soldiers faced similar accusations during Operation Sangaris. In other countries such as the DRC, abuses by UN peacekeepers were also denounced.[13]

The impact of the armed conflicts on children continued to cause great concern. In 2015, the UN Secretary-General published a report on children in contexts of conflict covering the period from January to December 2014.[14] In terms of trends, it warns of the **unprecedented difficulties of protecting children in contexts of conflict** and underscores the very serious violations against boys and girls in major crises like in Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Nigeria, Syria, the CAR and South Sudan, as well as in prolonged conflicts like in Afghanistan, the DRC and Somalia and other more recent conflicts, like in Yemen. The report warns about the growing trend of abductions, stressing that mass kidnapping of civilians, including children, has become an increasingly common practice in conflicts and often leads to other serious violations of human rights, such as murder, maiming, recruitment and sexual violence. The unprecedented use of extreme violence in 2014 is also underlined, with a "spectacular" increase in serious violations against minors. Thus, children suffered extreme and disproportionate violence and were the direct targets of violence intended to generate the greatest possible number of fatalities and to terrorise communities. Among these tactics, the report mentions the attacks on schools. It also expresses concern about protecting children during military responses to extreme violence, including the deprivation of children's liberty for allegedly associating with extremist groups. The Secretary-General's report also highlights the enormous challenges related to the reintegration of children recruited for acts of extreme violence, given the serious and long-term emotional disorders caused by exposure to such violence.

The analysis of the events in some armed conflicts in 2015 confirms the vulnerability to which boys and girls are often exposed, as illustrated by the case of Boko

Map 1.2. **Number of people internally displaced by conflict and violence in 2014**



Source: IDMC, *Global Overview 2015: People internally displaced by conflict and violence,* IDMC, May 2015.

13. See chapter 4 (Gender, peace and security).
14. UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Children and armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General*, A/69/926-S/2015/409, 5 July 2015.

Haram in Nigeria, which intensified the use of children in suicide attacks. During the year, evidence also arose of the indirect consequences of conflicts on minors, such as the increase in and long-term impact of the infant mortality rate in Gaza for the first time in 53 years. It was also reported that half of all children in countries like Syria and South Sudan were not enrolled in the educational system as a consequence of situations of conflict and violence.

The forced displacement of populations was one of the most visible consequences of the armed conflicts in 2015, confirming the trend observed in previous years of a significant rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced people around the world. According to data published by UNHCR at the end of the year, which show a partial assessment of the situation based on data from the first half of the year, in 2015 over 60 million people were displaced inside and outside the borders of their countries due to armed conflicts, situations of violence and persecution. It is the highest total since data have been collected.[15] This means that one out of every 122 people in the world has had to leave their homes due to situations of conflict and violence. While 59.5 million people in this situation were counted at the end of 2014, during the first six months of 2015 the United Nations agency had identified new forced displacements of nearly five million people, most of them internally. **By mid-2015, the total number of refugees in the world, which at the end of 2014 had reached 19.5 million, crossed the threshold of 20 million for the first time since 1992.** Excluding Palestinian refugees, who fall under the mandate of UNRWA and are estimated at about 5.1 million people, UNHCR figures indicate that the number of refugees rose from 10.4 million at the end of 2011 to nearly 15.1 million by the middle of 2015. That is, in three and a half years, there has been an increase of 45%. The report also identifies other disturbing trends, including declining rates of voluntary return for refugees, which is at its lowest level in three decades and is an indicator of the status of the world's conflicts, since it means that people do not trust the possibility of a safe return to their homes.

UNHCR estimates that the number of people forcibly displaced due to conflict, violence and persecution exceeded 60 million in 2015

The leading country of origin of the refugee population and the main cause of the abrupt rise in the cases of forced displacement around the world in recent years was Syria, although the outbreak or worsening of other armed conflicts like in Afghanistan, Burundi, the DRC, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Ukraine also contributed to the trend. According to provisional data from UNHCR, until mid-2015, the conflict in Syria had generated 4.2 million refugees. The countries with the next-highest number of refugees were Afghanistan, which held the first place until mid-2014 with 2.6 million; Somalia, with 1.1 million; South Sudan, with 744,100; and Sudan, with 640,900.

The drama of the refugees became glaring for Western media from mid-2015, when flows of people making their way to Europe intensified. UNHCR estimates that more than one million people crossed the Mediterranean Sea, mostly from Syria, but also from other countries beset by violence. The situation, particularly the large number of fatalities from sinking boats and various obstacles facing the refugees during their ordeal when travelling to the heart of Europe, exposed the contradictions and weaknesses of European policies, which mostly offered an extremely limited, late and inadequate response to the crisis that was in clear breach of its international duties in terms of human rights. The main host states continued to be developing countries bordering on the territories in conflict. According to UNHCR, until mid-2015 the main recipient of global refugees was Turkey, with 1.84 million refugees (98% of them of Syrian origin). This was followed by Pakistan, which took in 1.5 million people (almost entirely from Afghanistan). Lebanon was third, with 1.2 million (99% from Syria), while Iran accepted 982,000 refugees (mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq) and Ethiopia took in 702,500 refugees in mid-2015 (most of them from Eritrea and South Sudan). The final number for 2015 will be higher, since UNHCR's data is provisional, not all people fleeing their countries are registered as refugees and forced displacement to other countries in the second half of the year has yet to be added. Thus, for example, UNHCR estimates that the number of refugees in Turkey already exceeded 2.5 million at the end of 2015. It should also be borne in mind that in some cases, would-be refugees have resorted to other forms of legal migration. This could be seen in Ukraine, where UNHCR estimates that until the end of 2015, 1.07 million people had sought asylum or other forms of legal residence in neighbouring countries escaping the conflict in Donbas.

However, in 2015 the vast majority of the people forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict and violence continued living in their own countries. There were various reasons for this, including because they tried to find safety within their country's borders or because they had no chance to escape across the border. In many cases, these people suffered great vulnerability, given their difficulties in accessing humanitarian aid and assistance. **While there were no overall figures on the scope of this phenomenon in 2015, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicated that at the end of 2014, 38.2 million people were forcibly internally displaced around the world.**[16] According to preliminary information from UNHCR, until mid-2015, Yemen was one of the countries with the highest levels of new internally displaced people (IDPs), followed by Ukraine, the DRC, Nigeria, Iraq and Pakistan. Syria remained the country with the largest number of IDPs

15. UNHCR, *UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2015*, 18 December 2015.
16. UNHCR and other international organisations like IDMC were expected to publish their figures for 2015 in the first quarter of 2016.

(over 7.6 million people). Other countries with high numbers of IDPs included Colombia (6.5 million), Iraq (4 million), Sudan (2.3 million) and Pakistan (1.6 million). The yearly *Alert* report also highlights many other scenarios of mass forced displacement caused by violence, such as southeastern Turkey and Myanmar, where clashes between government forces and the armed opposition group MNDAA displaced tens of thousands of people, many of whom sought refuge in China.

Arms embargoes

By virtue of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the UN Security Council can take coercive measures to maintain or restore international peace and security, ranging from economic or other sanctions to international military intervention.[17] The use of mandatory sanctions is intended to exert pressure on a state or group to comply with the objectives set by the Security Council without using armed force.[18] These sanctions can be of a general nature, such as economic or commercial ones; more selective ones, like arms embargoes, travel bans and financial or diplomatic restrictions; or a combination of both general and selective measures. UN arms embargoes are imposed by resolutions adopted under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the Charter. At least nine of the 15 member states of the UN Security Council must support the resolution and no permanent members (the US, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom) may veto it. There are two types of embargoes: voluntary and mandatory. UN member states must comply with mandatory arms embargoes.

This section only refers to arms embargoes currently enforced by international organisations and does not include embargoes and sanctions imposed by any government acting alone. In addition to the UN, organisations like the Arab League and the EU also issue binding arm embargoes for their member states. In some cases, these implement arms embargoes imposed by the United Nations, such as the arms embargo on the CAR (in 2013) and on some parties to the conflict in Yemen (imposed by the UN in April 2015 and implemented by the EU in June). In other cases, they are issued on the organisation's own initiative, like the EU's embargo against Russia in 2014. These embargoes are the result of common positions and joint actions adopted unanimously by the Council of Europe under the Common Foreign and Security Policy. As far as the OSCE is concerned, embargoes are voluntary. Other regional organisations such as the AU and ECOWAS have similar mechanisms, although these organisations are not currently imposing any arms embargo.

According to provisional figures, Syria still had the highest number of internally displaced people worldwide and countries like Yemen, Ukraine and the DRC were also the scenes of new mass displacements in 2015

Over the course of 2015, 13 countries and al-Qaeda (including associated organisations and individuals linked to it, like the Taliban) were subjected to arms embargoes from the UN Security Council. This was one more than the previous year, due to the sanctions on Yemen's Non-Governmental Forces (NGF). In seven of these countries (the DRC, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen), embargoes only affected NGF and not the government. The sanctions on the NGF in Yemen, imposed by the UN, were implemented by the EU in June 2015. **In late 2015, there were 22 arms embargoes imposed by the EU, of which 21 were forced upon countries, and one on al-Qaeda and the Taliban**. The latter is not linked to any country or territory. In four of these countries (the DRC, Iraq, Lebanon and Liberia), the embargos only affected NGF. The **Arab League** upheld its arms embargo on Syria established in 2011 and the OSCE did the same for the arms embargo applied voluntarily against Armenia and Azerbaijan in connection with the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh.

A total of 37 embargoes were imposed on 24 states and non-state armed groups[19] by different organisations in late 2015, one more than the previous year after the inclusion of Yemen. Thirteen of the European Union's 22 embargoes were related to compliance with UN sanctions.[20] The other nine corresponded to European initiatives in Belarus, China, Egypt, Myanmar, Russia, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.[21]

Of the 24 states and non-state armed groups identified by the UN, the EU, the Arab League and the OSCE, **12 were involved in active armed conflicts in late**

17. The Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council was created to that end.
18. Sanctions and specifically arms embargoes have been used unevenly since the United Nations was created. Between 1945 and 1989, they were only used in two contexts, both linked to decolonisation processes: in former South Rhodesia (currently Zimbabwe) between 1968 and 1979 (due to internal instability) and in South Africa from 1977 to 1994 (due to South African intervention in neighbouring countries, the violence and internal instability and the Apartheid system of racial discrimination). Like other instruments of the United Nations, their use was limited during the Cold War owing to the prevailing policies of competition between blocs. As such, UN activism on the issue grew at the end of this period, making it easier to impose weapons embargoes. Their use also helped to strengthen the UN's role as a guarantor of international peace and security. Moreover, arms embargoes gradually came to be seen as more effective than economic sanctions because they focus on countries' elites and on non-state armed groups, thereby limiting their humanitarian impact.
19. Including a voluntary arms embargo imposed by the OSCE on Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1992.
20. Concerning Sudan, the EU imposed an embargo on the entire country in 1994 and the UN Security Council imposed an embargo on the Darfur region in 2004, to which it added an arms embargo on South Sudan in 2011. The embargoes imposed by both organisations on Iran cover different types of weapons.
21. These do not include countries burdened with other types of sanctions, like the freezing of funds and other assets, restrictions on entry and travel bans for some citizens, like Burundi, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Moldova, Tunisia and Ukraine. European Commission, *Restrictive measures in force (Article 215 TFEU),* 15 January 2016.

Table 1.2. **Arms embargoes by the United Nations, EU, OSCE and Arab League in 2015**

Country*	Coming into effect	Country	Coming into effect
Embargoes declared by the United Nations (14)		**Embargoes declared by the EU (22)**	
Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities, Taliban militias **	2002	**Al-Qaeda and Taliban militias****	2002
CAR	2013	Belarus	2011
Côte d'Ivoire	2004	**CAR**	2013
DPR Korea	2006	China	1989
DRC (NGF since 2008)	2003	Côte d'Ivoire	2004
Eritrea	2009	**DRC (NGF since 2003)**	1993
Iran	2006	Egypt	2013
Iraq (NGF* since 2004)**	1990	Eritrea	2010
Lebanon (NGF)	2006	Iran	2007
Liberia (NGF since 2009)	1992	**Iraq (NGF since 2004)**	1990
Libya	2011	Lebanon (NGF)	2006
Somalia (NGF since 2007)	1992	Liberia (NGF since 2008)	2001
Sudan (Darfur) (NGF)	2004	**Libya**	2011
Yemen (NGF)	2015	**Myanmar**	1991
		North Korea	2006
Embargoes declared by the Arab League (1)		Russia****	2014
Syria	2011	**Somalia**	2002
		South Sudan	2011
Embargoes declared by the OSCE (1)		**Sudan**	1994
Armenia - Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	1992	**Syria**	2011
		Yemen (NGF)	2015
		Zimbabwe	2002

* In bold, country or group in armed conflict subject to embargo.
** Embargo not linked to a specific country or territory.
*** NGF: Non-Governmental forces
**** In the case of Russia, the embargo is related to the issue of Crimea and not to the conflicts affecting the northern Caucasus.
Source: Own work based on the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes and the European Commission, http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/index_en.htm.

2015. These countries included China, Egypt,[22] Libya, Myanmar, the CAR, Syria, Sudan and South Sudan and the armed groups present in Iraq, Somalia, Yemen and the DRC. Embargoes affected both conflicts suffered by Sudan and the DRC. In all, 12 embargoes affected 14 armed conflicts. It is worth emphasising that **the embargo on al-Qaeda and the Taliban does not correspond to any particular territory**, despite the fact that both organisations are based and operate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, according to Resolution 1390.

In 2015, there were 21 armed conflicts and 52 active socio-political crises where neither the UN nor other regional organisations established arms embargoes

Ten of the 12 states under sanctions were scenes of socio-political crisis with different degrees of intensity (Armenia-Azerbaijan, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Iran, Lebanon, North Korea, Russia, Sudan and Zimbabwe). Most of these countries experienced various scenarios of tension at the same time, which were affected by the same embargo. The other two cases were of a special nature. First, Liberia, which despite having overcome various armed conflicts in the past (between 1989-1996 and 1999-2003) and is not currently experiencing any socio-political crisis, is subject to an embargo due to its institutional fragility. Second, **Belarus**, a country that has been subjected to an EU weapons embargo since 2011 because of the ongoing and serious human rights situation and the deterioration of democracy and the rule of law. **Thus, of the 35 active armed conflicts in late 2015, there were 21 cases in which neither the UN Security Council, the EU, the Arab League nor the OSCE established an embargo** as a punitive measure. Moreover, 52 of the 83 socio-political crises identified in 2015 **were not subject to embargoes**. This is so despite the fact that the preventive nature of the measure could have led to a decrease in violence in many cases.

22. The European Union has imposed an arms embargo on Egypt, but unlike the other restrictive measures and sanctions established by the EU related to weapons exports, the Council of Europe has not issued a specific decision or regulations for it. Therefore, the arms embargo is not legally binding on the member states, but is a political commitment. See *EU arms embargo on Egypt,* SIPRI Database, 10 January 2016 and European Commission, *Restrictive measures in force (Article 215 TFEU),* 15 January 2016.

Regarding the global arms trade, there is a notable rising trend in the sale of heavy weapons (heavy and high-calibre weapons). An increase of 14% between the periods 2006-2010 and 2011-2015 has been identified, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).[23] The main exporters worldwide are still the US and Russia, accounting for 58% of all arms exports between 2011 and 2015, followed by China, France and Germany. In this same period, the main arms importers were India, Saudi Arabia, China, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Australia.

1.2.2. Regional trends

As mentioned in the Global trends section above, Africa was the location of the largest number of armed conflicts worldwide, with a total of 13 cases. **A distinctive feature of the conflicts in Africa was the level of internationalisation: all cases in the region were internal internationalised.** The dynamics of internationalisation were particularly evident in the actions of various armed groups with cross-border capabilities that launched offensives beyond their countries' borders, in the presence of many international missions sent by the UN and other regional organisations, in the deployment of *ad-hoc* military coalitions and, in some cases, in the direct action of third countries. The armed group of Nigerian origin Boko Haram provided an illustrative example of this internationalisation. The group continued to fight with the Nigerian Armed Forces, but also significantly extended its operations to neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroon and Niger, partly in response to their participation in the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) deployed in 2015 to combat the insurgent group.[24]

The internationalisation of conflicts in Africa was evident in the cross-border action of various armed groups, in the presence of international missions and coalitions and in direct intervention by third countries

The underlying causes of most cases of armed conflict in Africa included opposition to the government, which led to struggles to achieve or erode power, and aspirations to transform the political, economic or ideological system of the state. Regarding the first factor, in 2015 six conflicts were reported whose dynamics were motivated by opposition to a given government's domestic or international policies (Burundi, Libya, the CAR, the DRC (east), Somalia and South Sudan) whereas in six other cases, opposition to the country's system was observed (Algeria, Libya, Mali (north), Nigeria (Boko Haram), the DRC (east-ADF) and Somalia). In all these contexts, the common denominator was the aim to change the system based on a jihadist agenda with a specific interpretation of Islam championed by armed groups such as AQIM, Boko Haram, MUJAO, Ansar Dine, al-Mourabitoun, al-Shabaab, the ADF and the new ISIS branches in Africa.

It is worth noting that in North Africa and the Sahel, armed groups such as Boko Haram and factions of other insurgent groups formerly aligned with al-Qaeda expressed their loyalty to ISIS, claiming responsibility for their attacks as branches of the militant group based in Iraq and Syria and even setting up "provinces" of the caliphate in their areas of action or influence. Demands for self-determination and/or self-government and identity issues were also present in six conflicts in Africa. This could be seen in Ethiopia (Ogaden), Mali (north), the DRC (east), Sudan (Darfur), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) and South Sudan. Another root cause of fighting was the control of resources, which was evident in Libya, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Sudan (Darfur), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) and South Sudan. This factor also fuelled clashes in other contexts in Africa.

The vast majority (9 of 13) of the armed conflicts in Africa reported levels of violence similar to the previous year, while a decrease in hostilities was observed in one of them, South Sudan, mainly resulting from the signing of a peace agreement and the declaration of a truce between the warring parties, although the situation remained extremely fragile. Clashes intensified in three cases. First, northern Mali, where action increased by jihadists marginalised in the peace agreement signed in mid-2015. Second, Libya, which witnessed high levels of confrontation between numerous armed groups, persistent political and institutional fragmentation and an increasing impact of violence on the civilian population. And third, in Burundi, which came to be considered an armed conflict after the situation worsened due to the collapse of the talks between the government and the opposition, the persecution of dissidents, an attempted coup d'état, the controversial re-election of the president, armed security force attacks and extrajudicial executions. In terms of intensity, **the number of serious armed conflicts in Africa dropped compared to the previous year: in 2015, there were four cases (Libya, Somalia, Nigeria (Boko Haram) and South Sudan) against five cases the previous year**. Africa was no longer the area with the highest number of serious cases (42% in 2014), which fell to the same level as the Middle East (33% in 2015). Seven of the 13 conflicts in Africa were of medium intensity, while two others were of low intensity.

Seven of the 12 contexts of armed conflict in Asia were internal in nature and affected China (East Turkestan), the Philippines (NPA), the Philippines (BIFF), India (CPI-M), Myanmar, Pakistan (Balochistan) and Thailand (south). This accounts for **88% of all internal armed conflicts worldwide**. Five

23. SIPRI, *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2015*, SIPRI Fact Sheet, February 2016.
24. See the summaries on Chad, Cameroon and Niger in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

other cases in the region were considered internal internationalised. Those took place in Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao-Abu Sayyaf), India (Assam), India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Pakistan. The element of internationalisation in these cases was due to the presence of international military missions or coalitions (like Operation Resolute Support, under NATO, and Operation Sentinel Freedom, led by the US, both in Afghanistan), the links of some local armed groups with cross-border organisations or projects (such as the relationship between the Philippine armed group Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiya) and the impacts of some of these conflicts on border areas, as in the case of the dispute over the region of Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Demands for self-determination and/or self-government and identity-related aspirations continued to be major causes of conflict in Asia. These motivations were present in eight of the 12 armed conflicts in Asia in 2015: China (East Turkestan), the Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF), the Philippines (Mindanao-Abu Sayyaf), India (Assam), India (Jammu and Kashmir), Myanmar, Pakistan (Balochistan) and Thailand (south). It should be noted that the struggle in the Philippines against the BIFF was declared an armed conflict in 2015, given the escalation of violence between the Philippine Armed Forces and the rebel group, which has been increasingly opposed to the peace process between Manila and the MILF in the Mindanao region. Another relevant factor behind conflicts in Asia was opposition to the political, economic or ideological system of the state, found in seven of the 12 cases. This was evident in communist-type armed groups like the CPI-M in India and the NPA in the Philippines and in Islamist/jihadist organisations like the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. Disputes over control of resources were also an important cause of conflict in the case of Pakistan (Balochistan).

Asia had the largest percentage of internal armed conflicts worldwide and remained a significant scenario of disputes involving aspirations of self-determination and identity-related demands

The vast majority of the conflicts in Asia were low-intensity in nature (nine of 12). Pakistan was a scenario of both medium-intensity (Balochistan) and high-intensity conflict; the latter kind was also experienced in Afghanistan. Pakistan witnessed levels of violence comparable to the previous year, while **the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated significantly, reaching levels of violence similar to those detected since international troops invaded the country in 2001, following the 9/11 attacks in the US**. The Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF) also reported worsening levels of violence, thereby causing it to be studied as an armed conflict in 2015, as mentioned previously. Five contexts in Asia presented a decrease in violence and confrontation compared to 2014: China (East Turkestan), India (CPI-M), Myanmar, Thailand (south) and India (Assam). In the latter case, the trend of previous years continued and hostilities ebbed significantly. Meanwhile, the operational capabilities of the armed groups NDFB (S) and ULFA (I), the latter of which is opposed to peace talks, become impaired. As such, the dispute ceased to be considered an armed conflict in late 2015. Furthermore, six of the top ten countries importing weapons globally throughout the period 2011-2015 were in Asia. Three of those countries were scenes of armed conflict, including India, which ranked first with 14% of all arms imports worldwide; China in third place, with 4.7%; and Pakistan in seventh place, with 3.3%. Notably, China ranks third among the players in the arms export industry, accounting for 5.9% of all trade worldwide, which represents an 88% increase when comparing the years 2006-2010 with 2011-2015.[25]

Levels of conflict continued declining in Colombia, the only case of active armed conflict in America. This context was shaped by positive developments in the peace process between the government and the FARC-EP. Considered one of the longest-running armed conflicts in the world, the situation in Colombia was of low intensity in 2015.

Europe was the location of three cases of armed conflict. One of them was internal in nature, in Russia (Dagestan), and two were internationalised internal, in Turkey (southeast) and Ukraine. In Ukraine, the element of internationalisation mainly owed to Russian involvement in support of separatist outfits in the east. In Turkey (southeast), this was linked to the cross-border nature of hostilities, including but not limited to attacks by Turkish forces against PKK positions in Iraq and Syria; the repercussions of the Syrian war on the conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK; and ISIS' attacks in Turkey. Of the three armed conflicts reported in Europe in 2015, the situation in Russia (Dagestan) was identified as low intensity and witnessed an intense decline in violence compared to previous years. Ukraine experienced a high-intensity conflict with impacts similar to those in 2014, despite the reduction in hostilities in late 2015, including lesser use of indiscriminate bombing. Turkey (southeast) was a scenario of medium-intensity conflict that nonetheless faced severe deterioration linked to the failure of the peace process between Ankara and the PKK and the resumption of war, with new elements such as the spread of violence to urban centres and serious impacts on civilians.

Like in other areas of the world, **the armed conflicts in Europe had multiple causes. Still, common elements could be found, such as claims related to identity,**

25. SIPRI, ibid.

self-government and/or self-determination, in line with previous years. These motivations were present in conflicts in Turkey and Ukraine, while in Russia (Dagestan), the prevalent factor was the aspiration of radical Islamist groups to change the system. Some of these factions expressed their adherence to ISIS and its caliphate, causing divisions similar to those in other regions worldwide.

Finally, **the Middle East was still affected by high-intensity conflicts. In 2015, it experienced 33% of all severe cases worldwide, like Africa, but proportionately contained a greater number of cases**. Of the six contexts reported in the Middle East in 2015, four (67%) were high-intensity armed conflicts, including Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). As mentioned in the Global trends section above, high-intensity armed conflicts in this area far exceeded the threshold of 1,000 fatalities and even reached into the tens of thousands, as was the case in Syria. The armed conflict in Yemen featuring AQAP (and more recently also branches of ISIS) was of medium intensity, amidst overlapping dynamics of violence in the country. The case of Israel-Palestine was of low intensity and experienced a decrease in the levels of violence compared to 2014 (a year marked by the consequences of the escalation in Gaza that killed more than 2,000 people). In contrast to this latter case, other armed conflicts in the Middle East experienced an increase in violence, with profound impacts on the civilian population. Iraq and Syria were notorious cases because fighting there between many armed groups resulted in massive forced displacements of people and serious human rights violations. It should be noted that the Middle East has significantly increased its military spending in weapons imports in recent years. According to SIPRI, arms exports rose by 61% between 2006-2010 and 2011-2015.[26] Saudi Arabia ranked second among the top ten countries, accounting for 7% of the weapons imported globally (its acquisitions augmented by 275%). The United Arab Emirates ranked fourth on the list, with 4.6%. Iraq also reported an increase in weapons imports (83% between 2006-2010 and 2011-2015). SIPRI's analysis underscored that high levels of arms exports to the region facilitated the Arab coalition's intervention in Yemen in 2015.[27]

More than two thirds of the armed conflicts in the Middle East (67%) were of high intensity and caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people during 2015

The Middle East was the setting of the only international armed conflict in the world, Israel-Palestine, whereas the other cases were considered internationalised internal. Among other things, the internationalisation component in this region was evident in the involvement of third countries in the conflicts (such as Russia and Iran in supporting the regime in Damascus and the United States and Iran's intervention in Iraq) and in international military coalitions (such as the anti-ISIS alliance led by the United States, which continued to operate in Iraq and Syria, and the coalition of countries led by Saudi Arabia in the clashes between the Houthis and Yemeni Army). In addition, internationalisation was seen in the cross-border actions of various non-state armed groups such as Hezbollah in support of the Syrian regime; ISIS, which continued to operate mainly in Syria and Iraq but also claimed attacks in Lebanon, France and other areas through its branches; AQAP, which in early 2015 claimed responsibility for the attack against the weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris; and Sinai Province (SP – formerly Ansar Beit al-Maqdis), a militant group and branch of ISIS in Egypt that claimed responsibility for an attack on a Russian aircraft. The causes of armed conflict in the Middle East are many, including aspirations to change the ideological, political or economic system. These accounted for five of the six cases in the region, given the element of opposition to the government present in Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Houthis) and the strong presence of jihadists like SP, ISIS and AQAP.

26. SIPRI includes Turkey as a Middle Eastern country.
27. SIPRI, ibid.

1.3. Armed conflicts: annual evolution

1.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Burundi	
Start:	2015
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, factions of former armed groups
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The process of political and institutional transition that got under way with the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in 2000 was formally completed in 2005. The approval of a new constitution (that formalises the distribution of political and military power between the main two communities, the Hutu and Tutsi) and the holding of elections (leading to the formation of a new government), represent an attempted to lay the foundations for overcoming a conflict that began in 1993. This represented the principal opportunity for ending the ethnic-political violence that has plagued the country since its independence in 1962. However, the authoritarian evolution of the government after the 2010 elections, denounced as fraudulent by the opposition, has overshadowed the reconciliation process and led to the mobilization of political opposition. This situation has been aggravated by the plans to reform the Constitution by the Government. The institutional deterioration and reduction of the political space for the opposition, the controversial candidacy of Nkurunziza for a third term and his victory in a fraudulent presidential election (escalating political violence), the failed coup d'état in May 2015, violations of human rights and the emergence of new armed groups are different elements that show the deteriorating situation in the country.

A dramatic escalation of political instability and violence during the year brought the country to the brink of war,[28] while several attempts at dialogue between the government and the opposition hit impasses and failed. The wave of growing repression of the opposition during 2014 continued in 2015 with the arrest and trial of opposition leaders and threats against journalists and human rights activists. At least 100 Burundian fighters coming from the DRC were killed in Cibitoke by the Burundian security forces, many of them after being captured. This situation worsened with the calculated ambiguity of President Pierre Nkurunziza and the CNDD-FDD regarding the opportunity to run for a third term. In April 2015, the president announced his candidacy, ratified by the Constitutional Court in May. Nkurunziza argued that his first post-transition term does not count because he was appointed by the lower and upper houses of Parliament, as exceptionally provided for in Article 302 of the Constitution to accommodate the outgoing president of the transition in 2005. Sectors of his own party opposed his candidacy and large demonstrations were staged in April and May amidst a climate of political violence that caused around 240 fatalities between April and November, according to UNHCR. The death toll may have risen with between 100 and 250 fatalities in December, according to other sources.

Demonstrations against the Burundian president's third term failed to stop his candidacy and subsequent victory in the July election, which was boycotted by the opposition

This social mobilisation was accompanied by an attempted coup d'état on 13 May led by the former head of the secret services, General Godefroid Nyombare. He initially announced the dismissal of Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza while he was in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) to attend a meeting of the East African Community (EAC) regarding the crisis gripping the central African country. Nyombare had been dismissed in February after advising Nkurunziza against running for a third term, viewed as unconstitutional by his political opponents. The government managed to break up the attempt and even though Nkurunziza was at first unable to return to Burundi because the participants in the coup had blocked the airport, the Burundian special forces and Imbonerakure (radical youth wing of the CNDD-FDD ruling party) remained loyal to Nkurunziza. Heavy fighting in the capital left an unknown number of fatalities. The government of Nkurunziza was restored and the three generals that led the coup surrendered to the authorities. After the attempted seizure of power, and despite major demonstrations and tepid efforts by the international community to intervene, legislative and municipal elections were held on 29 June. The opposition boycotted the first round of the elections and the CNDD-FDD won amidst a climate of fear. The presidential election took place on 21 July and was once again boycotted by the opposition. The process was criticised unanimously by the political, social and religious opposition in the country and described as not credible by the international community because of the climate of violence, intimidation, media restrictions and the lack of legitimacy of Nkurunziza's third term. **After the election, the climate of repression, purges of the opposition and pressure on the media persisted** in a context of increasing violence owing to the steady trickle of news of extrajudicial executions, attacks and harassment of the political opposition and senior government officials. In mid-July, mediation efforts by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who began talks with the Burundian government and the opposition, were

28. See "On the brink of civil war in Burundi" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).

unsuccessful. Pressure from the regional organisation EAC and the AU to encourage dialogue between the warring parties was undermined by their own neighbours' leaders, who have followed strategies similar to Nkurunziza's in order to stay in power. Such are the cases of Yoweri Museveni, Robert Mugabe, Paul Kagame and others. Consequently, their ability to influence Nkurunziza was low. At the same time, the Burundian Army announced that it had killed 15 possible insurgents and had captured another 170 in several battles in the north of the country, although who was leading the rebels remained unclear. In August, the AU and the UN warned of the potentially catastrophic consequences for the country and the whole region if the Burundian political class did not resolve its differences peacefully and with dialogue.

In early September, demonstrations were held in some districts of Bujumbura in response to the forced disarmament operations conducted by the police. The US State Department called for both the opposition and pro-government militias (Imbonerakure) to be disarmed to avoid an escalation of violence. At the end of the month, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights announced that there had been an alarming increase in killings and detentions in the country since the president had won re-election in July. One of the country's better-known human rights activists, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, called on the EU to suspend aid to the government to pressure it to end the spiral of violence. In early October, the Commission Nationale du Dialogue Inter Burundais (CNDI) was created to promote dialogue between the government and the opposition, although this did not bring a reduction in violence. On the contrary, skirmishes pitting militias and insurgent groups against the security forces (launching grenades) proliferated, as did military actions in neighbourhoods of the capital, Bujumbura, and in the surrounding province of Bujumbura Rural. This context deteriorated again before the year ended. On 11 December, unidentified insurgent groups launched coordinated attacks on three military camps that received a forceful response from the Burundian Armed Forces, which announced the death of at least 87 insurgents, including eight members of the security forces. Local sources raised the figure to 200 deaths, many of them extrajudicial executions, which triggered a response from the AU Council for Peace and Security on 17 December, announcing the deployment of a robust intervention mission with 5,000 soldiers. The president warned that he would consider it an act of aggression from foreign troops. Subsequently, on 23 December, armed groups announced the creation of the Forces Républicaines du Burundi (FOREBU). In late 2015, regional leaders and the international community launched several initiatives combining proposals for dialogue with sanctions targeting members of the government.

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, demobilised members of the former rebel coalition Séléka (splinter groups of the former CPJP, UFDR and CPSK groups), anti-balaka militias, France (Operation Sangaris), MICOPAX/FOMAC (transformed into the AU mission MISCA, in turn transformed into the UN mission MINUSCA), EUFOR, groups linked to the former government of François Bozizé, other residual forces from armed groups (former armed forces), LRA armed Ugandan group
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:
Since independence in 1960, the situation in the Central African Republic has been characterised by continued political instability, which has resulted in several coups and military dictatorships. The keys to the situation are of an internal and external nature. Internal, because there is a confrontation between political elites from northern and southern ethnic groups who are competing for power and minorities that have been excluded from it. A number of leaders have attempted to establish a system of patronage to ensure their political survival. And external, due to the role played by its neighbours Chad and Libya; due to its natural resources (diamonds, uranium, gold, hardwoods) and the awarding of mining contracts in which these countries compete alongside China and the former colonial power, France, which controls uranium. Conflicts in the region have led to the accumulation of weaponry and combatants who have turned the country into regional sanctuary. This situation has been compounded by a religious dimension due to the fact that the Séléka coalition, which is a Muslim faith organisation formed by a number of historically marginalised groups from the north and which counts foreign fighters amongst its ranks, took power in March 2013 after toppling the former leader, François Bozizé, who for the past 10 years had fought these insurgencies in the north. The inability of the Séléka leader, Michel Djotodia, to control the rebel coalition, which has committed gross violations of human rights, looting and extrajudicial executions, has led to the emergence of Christian militias ("anti-balaka"). These militias and sectors of the army, as well as supporters of former President Bozizé, have rebelled against the government and Séléka, creating a climate of chaos and widespread impunity. France and a regional mission intervened militarily to reduce the clashes and to facilitate a dialogue process that could led to a negotiated transition.

Progress was made in the political transition, despite the delays in the electoral process and the climate of instability and violence, which lingered throughout the year regardless of the international missions' efforts to ensure security. The country remained divided into two main areas of influence: in the north were groups from the former Séléka coalition; in the central-western areas were anti-balaka militias; and in the southeast was the Ugandan armed group LRA. An example of this fragmentation

was the announcement by the rebel Nourreddine Adam (leader of a Séléka faction), who proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Logone, in the north of the country, in December. Clashes between anti-balaka militias and members of the former Séléka coalition took place mainly in the zone of contact between their respective areas of influence (between Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro and Bambari), as reported by the International Crisis Group, and were accompanied by intercommunity tensions.[29] In addition, ***zaraguinas* (highwaymen) on the border with Cameroon and part of the border with Chad maintained a climate of acute instability and crime**. Amnesty International called on the government to control the illicit diamond trade because it could be financing armed groups. In July, Global Witness said that European companies were doing business with logging firms that were providing funds for militias on both sides. In late September, violence escalated when heavy fighting broke out in Bangui between **rival militias. According to various sources, the clashes caused the forced displacement of around 30,000 people, killed at least 60 and wounded over 300.** The militias attacked Bangui prison and freed about 500 prisoners. The MINUSCA mission and the French Operation Sangaris intervened to try to restore order in the capital. The situation had been relatively calm in Bangui for months and the new fighting coincided with the absence of President Catherine Samba-Panza. The leader was in New York participating in the UN General Assembly and decided to return home immediately. When she arrived on 30 September, the president denounced a coup d'état attempt designed to affect the electoral process and abort the political dialogue.

The credibility of the international community was at stake after new scandals of rape and sexual violence committed by civilian and/or military UN peacekeepers (MINUSCA) and French soldiers (Operation Sangaris) were reported.[30] The UN Secretary-General ordered an independent group of experts created in June to investigate the events. Its report, published in December, showed the UN's mismanagement and lack of attention and sensitivity. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon tried to deal with the situation by demanding the resignation of his representative in the country. During the electoral period, the UN mission increased by 1,140 peacekeepers and deployed drones in Bangui. In November, Senegal, Egypt and Mauritania agreed to send new military and police contingents to reinforce the 12,000 MINUSCA members while France reduced its contingent, with the goal of dropping from 2,000 soldiers to 900. Another highlight of the year was Pope Francis' visit to the country in late November to end his trip to Africa (he had also visited Kenya and Uganda). The Pope was welcomed by large crowds and met with religious leaders, political authorities and diplomatic bodies despite the climate of insecurity and violence in the country, for which he was under tight security. In an important symbolic gesture, he visited the mosque of Koudoukou, in the PK5 district, where 15,000 Muslims live surrounded by anti-balaka militias. The city was home to over 122,000 Muslims before the latest period of the war that broke out in 2013.

The electoral authority postponed the presidential election initially scheduled for October to 27 December, given the fact that implementation of the recommendations in the Bangui Forum agreements was at a standstill, the security situation was deteriorating and preparations for the election and the registration of the refugee population were moving forward very slowly. Finally, the legislative and presidential elections were held on 30 December, in a peaceful atmosphere and with a high turnout. Their results gave victory to both Anicet-Georges Dologuélé and Faustin Archange Touadéra with the support of former President Francois Bozizé's party, the KNK. While the international community welcomed the elections, the vote count was slow and controversial. Previously, the Constitutional Court had invalidated 30 nominations, including that of Bozizé. Around 10 candidates released a statement questioning the electoral process and calling it a sham and brought actions before the Constitutional Court denouncing fraud, intimidation and other irregularities. The referendum to ratify the Constitution was held on 13 December amidst significant logistical and technical shortcomings. The UN reported support of over 90%, which was hailed by the international community. The second round was scheduled for 31 January 2016. The Summit of Heads of State of ECCAS approved the extension of the transition deadline to 31 March 2016.

DRC (east)	
Start:	1998
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Mai-Mai militias, FDLR, M23 (formerly CNDP), APCLS, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Ugandan armed opposition groups ADF-NALU, Rwanda, MONUSCO
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:
The current conflict has its origins in the coup d'état carried out by Laurent Desiré Kabila in 1996 against Mobutu Sese Seko, which culminated with him handing over power in 1997. Later, in 1998, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, together with various armed groups, tried to overthrow Kabila, who received the support of Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan and Zimbabwe, in a war that has caused around five million fatalities. The control and exploitation of the natural resources has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict and to the presence of foreign armed forces. The signing of a ceasefire in 1999, and of

29. International Crisis Group, *The Roots of Violence,* Africa Report no. 230, 21 September 2015.
30. See chapter 4 (Gender, peace and security).

several peace agreements between 2002 and 2003, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops, the setting up of a transitional government and later an elected government, in 2006. However, did not mean the end of violence in this country, due to the role played by Rwanda and the presence of factions of non-demobilised groups and of the FDLR, responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The breach of the 2009 peace accords led to the 2012 desertion of soldiers of the former armed group CNDP, forming part of the Congolese army, who organised a new rebellion, known as the M23, supported by Rwanda. In December 2013 the said rebellion was defeated.

Instability persisted throughout the year amidst military operations conducted by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) in the eastern part of the country and sporadic actions by insurgents and Mai-Mai militias in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. The deadline set by the UN Security Council for the voluntary disarmament of the Rwandan armed group FDLR expired in January 2015, which gave the green light for military retaliation against the insurgency. When the deadline expired, only 339 FDLR combatants out of an estimated total of 1,500 had demobilised. In February, the Congolese Armed Forces launched Operation Sukola II without the support of the UN mission in the country (MONUSCO) after the government refused to replace two generals involved in the operation accused of serious human rights violations. According to several UN reports, the offensive was a failure because the military capacity, number of troops, leaders and command structure of the FDLR all remained intact at the end 2015. In addition, the operation caused security vacuums in other areas of the provinces as a result of the withdrawal to conduct the military actions and increased looting against civilians to offset the losses to their income-generating activities (charcoal exploitation, mining, timber, tax collection and extortion). In October 2015, the Group of Experts on the DRC reported in October that the FARDC's operations forced the FDLR to withdraw from several positions and caused some temporary problems to its revenue streams.

According to the UN, the annual outcome of the offensive against the FDLR in the DRC (East) was a failure because its military capacity and command structure remained intact

Meanwhile, the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations related to the surrender of the armed group M23 (linked to pro-Rwandan groups, the Banyamulenge Tutsi community (opposed to the FARDC), various Mai-Mai militias and the FDLR) did not yield any significant results. The implementation of the amnesty provision and the repatriation process of ex-M23 combatants was slow, as only 180 former members of the 2,000 fighters who officially formed part of the group returned to the DRC. The government and the M23 traded blame for violating the agreement. The Congolese government even accused former M23 fighters of infiltrating into the eastern DRC. In November, the Congo Research Group alerted that the conflict remained active and warned of its volatility.[31] This was evident in the proliferation and fragmentation of militias in the east (about 70), the lack of involvement at the regional level and the continuous exploitation of the situation, which linked to the political situation in the country, could lead to an authoritarian drift and an escalation of violence in 2016.[32] There were two failed negotiating attempts regarding the armed group FRPI (active in the Ituri region, in the province of Orientale) during the year: late in 2014 and in June 2015. Subsequently, the Congolese Armed Forces and MONUSCO carried out a joint military operation against the militia. The group had been weakened as a result of military action, but continued to commit abuses against civilians. Finally, **the UN Group of Experts certified in October that natural resources continued to be trafficked illegally and armed groups and some FARDC officers were still benefiting from their exploitation and taxation.[33]** Labels designed to guarantee the traceability of minerals continue to be sold on the black market in Rwanda, which may result in minerals from conflict zones in the eastern DRC making it into the international market. A report published by UNEP in April stated that armed groups with links to crime are plundering 1.3 billion USD worth of natural resources in the country each year.[34] The revenue derived from trafficking gold, hardwood, charcoal and ivory funds at least 25 armed groups. According to OCHA, the humanitarian situation in the DRC remained serious, as there are more than 7.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly in the east, as a result of the activity of armed groups and military operations against these groups, clashes between communities and the influx of refugees. There were an estimated 1.6 million displaced people in the country in late 2015. The UN registered more than 248,000 refugees in the DRC: 21,560 were from Burundi, 104,956 were from the CAR and 11,699 were from Rwanda, which highlights the unstable situation in these three neighbouring countries.

31. Jason K. Stearns and Christoph Vogel, *The Landscape of Armed Groups in the Eastern Congo*, Congo Research Group – Center on International Cooperation, December 2015.
32. See "DRC faced with the risk of an escalation of political instability and armed conflict in 2016" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).
33. UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, *Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UN Security Council, 2015/797, 16 October 2015.
34. UNEP-MONUSCO-OSESG, *Experts' background report on illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources benefitting organised criminal groups and recommendations on MONUSCO's role in fostering stability and peace in eastern DR Congo*, UNEP-MONUSCO-OSESG, 15 April 2015.

DRC (east - ADF)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	DRC, Mai-Mai militia, armed opposition group ADF-NALU, MONUSCO
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:
The Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) is an Islamist rebel group operating in the northwest of the Rwenzori massif (North Kivu, between DR Congo and Uganda) with between 1,200 and 1,500 Ugandan and Congolese militiamen recruited mainly in both countries as well as in Tanzania, Kenya and Burundi. It is the only group in the area considered a terrorist organisation and is included on the US list of terrorist groups. It was created in 1995 from the merger of other Ugandan armed groups taking refuge in DR Congo (Rwenzururu, ADF), later adopted the name ADF and follows the ideology of the former ADF, which originated in marginalised Islamist movements in Uganda linked to the conservative Islamist movement Salaf Tabliq. In its early years it was used by Zaire under Mobutu (and later by DR Congo under Kabila) to pressure Uganda, but it also received backing from Kenya and Sudan and strong underground support in Uganda. At first it wanted to establish an Islamic state in Uganda, but in the 2000s it entrenched in the communities that welcomed it in DR Congo and became a local threat to the administration and the Congolese population, though its activity was limited. In early 2013 the group began a wave of recruitment and kidnappings.

Operation Sukola I against the armed group ADF was extended for a second year in North Kivu province. The ADF maintained its mobility, continuing its operations in small groups and attacking civilians throughout the year, especially in the Beni-Erengeti area, which became its stronghold. The Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) enjoyed the occasional cooperation of the UN stabilisation mission in the country (MONUSCO), particularly during joint military reconnaissance actions, exchanges of information and support in some combat operations. Although operations against the ADF were extended for a second year, very few troops left the group during the period. According to the UN Group of Experts, Operation Sukola I had achieved very little progress since the death of Congolese General Lucien Bahuma in 2014, who had led the FARDC's offensive against the group. The UN believes that the involvement of officers of Operation Sukola I in the timber trade contributed to the poor military response. Bahuma's replacement, General Muhindo Akili Mundos, was dismissed in June 2015, given the deadlock of the conflict. General Marcel Mbangu Mashita replaced him and has since reported a new military offensive against the ADF. Although the offensives had weakened it, the ADF maintained the ability to launch attacks and managed to restore its operational capacity by recruiting splinter militias. **Between October 2014 and June 2015, between 350 and 450 civilians were killed in the area of Beni**, in North Kivu province, in at least 50 separate incidents, for which the ADF was largely responsible. Both the FARDC and the Joint Verification Mechanism estimated that the group consists of around 150 fighters, although MONUSCO puts this figure at 260. Its leader, Jamil Mukulu, was captured in Tanzania in April, although the remaining hierarchy remained virtually intact, according to a report issued by the UN Group of Experts in October. Mukulu was extradited from Tanzania to Uganda in early July and charged by a Ugandan court of being responsible for crimes against humanity. The arrest of the leader of the group (which is subject to sanctions) prompted its escalation of activity against civilians. The UN Human Rights Office in the DRC conducted an investigation between October and December 2014 and published a report in May stating that the attacks perpetrated by the armed group could be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity under international law. The Group of Experts attempted to corroborate reports potentially linking the ADF to foreign Islamist extremists (like the Somali group al-Shabaab), but did not find enough evidence. Senior government officials of the DRC and Uganda confirmed there was no evidence linking the ADF to these foreign armed groups.

South Sudan	
Start:	2009
Type:	Government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government (SPLM/A), SPLM/A-in Opposition armed group (faction of former Vice President Riek Machar), dissident factions of the SPLM/A-IO led by Peter Gatdet and Gathoth Gatkuoth, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSNLM, REMNASA, community militias (SSPPF, TFN), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Sudan, Uganda
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓

Summary:
The peace agreement reached in 2005, which put an end to the Sudanese conflict, recognised the right to self-determination of the south through a referendum. However, the end of the war with the North and the later independence for South Sudan in 2011 did not manage to offer stability to the southern region. The disputes for the control of the territory, livestock and political power increased between the multiple communities that inhabit South Sudan, increasing the number, the gravity and the intensity of the confrontations between them. The situation became even worse after the general elections in April 2010, when several military officials who had presented their candidature or had supported political opponents to the incumbent party, the SPLM, did not win the elections. These military officers refused to recognise the results of the elections and decided to take up arms to vindicate their access to the institutions, condemn the Dinka dominance over the institutions and the under representation of other communities within them while branding the South Sudan government as corrupt. Juba's offerings of amnesty did

not manage to put an end to insurgence groups, accused of receiving funding and logistical support from Sudan. In parallel, there was an escalation of violence in late 2013 between supporters of the government of Salva Kiir and those of former Vice President Riek Machar, who has the support of some of these disaffected soldiers and militias.

After 20 months of war, the warring parties signed a peace agreement mediated by and under pressure from the IGAD-Plus in August 2015.[35] In August and September, the government (headed by Salva Kiir) and the main rebel opposition group SPLA-IO (led by Riek Machar) agreed to end the conflict that had caused tens of thousands of deaths and a serious humanitarian crisis with more than 2.3 million people displaced from their homes (of which 768,725 are refugees, according to UNHCR data from January 2016) and 4.6 million in emergency situations due the high risk of famine. Getting them to sign and commit to the peace agreement was not easy and pressure from the international community to end the fighting had been followed by threats of sanctions since early 2015. In March, the UN Security Council passed a resolution allowing the imposition of sanctions if the conflicting forces in the country failed to reach a peace agreement, following repeated breaches of past accords. The subsequent escalation of violence in the states of Upper Nile and Unity during April and May aggravated the dire humanitarian crisis and devolved into the heaviest fighting since August 2014. The AU Peace and Security Council urged the UN Security Council to designate individuals and organisations to be sanctioned, requesting the imposition of an arms embargo on the warring parties without delay. Sudan replied that these measures would only fuel the war and the IGAD-Plus agreed to give dialogue a chance before imposing sanctions. The deteriorating humanitarian situation led to strong condemnation by various international outlets including the UN, IGAD, ICGLR, WCC, the United States, the European Union and China, which deplored the escalation of violence and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Fighting in the states of Upper Nile and Unity exposed around 300,000 people to a serious food and health emergency situation, displacing more than 60,000 people in Bentiu and another 25,000 in Malakal, according to OCHA and UNMISS. The heavy fighting cut off emergency aid to 650,000 people because NGOs could not access the areas. The clashes continued in June, though with a lower intensity. On 30 June, the UN published a report on the human rights situation in the country that condemned the widespread practice of rape as a weapon of war, detailing actions like burning women alive. In another report released around the same time, OCHA stressed the alarming humanitarian situation in the country, where 4.6 million people were in a situation of severe food insecurity (40% of the total population of the country).

After 20 months of war in South Sudan and under international pressure, the warring parties signed a peace agreement providing for an 18-month transitional government

Amidst this climate of conflict and crisis, the warring parties held several rounds of negotiations mediated by the IGAD Plus. On 24 July, a draft peace agreement was submitted for the parties to evaluate, setting the deadline to end the violence on 17 August. The submission of the draft agreement coincided with the visit of US President Barack Obama to the region, who held a meeting with African leaders in Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the AU and the IGAD, on 27 July in order to seek solutions to the crisis in South Sudan and discuss possible sanctions and penalties if the parties did not agree to the peace agreement by the deadline. Finally, the South Sudanese government, the opposition rebel group SPLM-IO, the group of former SPLM detainees led by Pagan Amum and other politicians and representatives of South Sudanese civil society signed the peace agreement proposed by the IGAD-Plus. It was ratified in two stages: first, by Machar and Amum on 17 August and then by Salva Kiir on 26 August. Kiir claimed that he signed the document under pressure and included a list of 16 reservations that were not accepted by the IGAD-Plus.[36]

The IGAD-Plus presented the agreement as the definitive text for achieving peace and national reconstruction. However, the events that marked its adoption by the parties (related to external threats and pressures) and the development of the situation in the last months of the year raised alarms about its potential future. Although the parties signed the agreement, clashes continued in South Sudan and violated the ceasefire, which should have been permanent starting on 30 August. Moreover, they were exacerbated as the year ended due to several decisions taken unilaterally by Salva Kiir's government, including the removal of three governors from the region of Equatoria, the dissolution of the SPLM's party leadership structures (ignoring the signing of the Arusha Declaration in 2015) and especially the announcement of an administrative change by which South Sudan would adopt a federal government formula with 28 states. As a consequence, new armed groups emerged, like the South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (SSPPF), from the region of Equatoria, and Tiger Faction New Forces (TFNF), created by the Shilluk community in opposition to the new federal formula and division of their land. In this tense atmosphere and given the clashes in the final months of the year, the parties continued their negotiations, making gradual progress in the clauses stipulated in the peace agreement. A major achievement was announced at the end of the year: the creation of the **Transitional Government of National Unity by 22 January 2016**,

35. The IGAD-Plus includes the members of the IGAD and the AU, the EU, the United Kingdom, the United States, Norway and China.
36. See the summary on South Sudan in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

which should have been created within 90 days from the signing of the peace accord. **The news provided new hope for reviving the process and establishing the road map for peace in 2016.**

Sudan (Darfur)	
Start:	2003
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, *janjaweed*, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), other groups
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:
The conflict in Darfur arose in 2003 around the demands for greater decentralization and development settled by several armed groups, mainly the SLA and the JEM. The government responded to the uprising by sending its armed forces and forming Arab militias, known as *janjaweed*. The magnitude of the violence against civilians carried out by all the armed actors led to claims that genocide was ongoing in the region. 300,000 people have already died in relation to the conflict since the beginning of the hostilities, according to the United Nations. After the signing of a peace agreement between the government and a faction of the SLA in May 2006, the violence intensified, the opposition-armed groups started a process of fragmentation and a serious displacement crisis with a regional outreach developed in the region due to the proxy-war between Chad and Sudan. This dimension is compounded by inter-community tension over the control of resources (land, water, livestock, mining), in some cases instigated by the government itself. The observation mission of the African Union –AMIS– created in 2004, was integrated into a joint AU/UN mission in 2007, the UNAMID. This mission has been the object of multiple attacks and proven incapable of complying with its mandate to protect civilians and humanitarian staff on the field.

The year 2015 was marked by the stalemate in the peace talks in the country, even though the Sudanese government had decreed a ceasefire to facilitate the incorporation and participation of all parties.[37] While the peace talks produced no significant progress, during the second half of the year there was a reduction in violence in the Darfur region, as well as in the regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) research centre reported up to 83% less armed activity when comparing the data between January and November 2015.[38] August showed the lowest levels of political violence in Sudan over the year, both in terms of activity and the number of deaths reported. There were no reports of attacks by the two main pro-government militias, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Popular Defence Forces (PDF). Equally significantly, a decrease in rebel activity was noticed. This was directly related to the proposal of Omar al-Bashir's government to resume the National Dialogue to find a joint solution to the Sudanese conflict. **While overall figures of violence in Darfur fell during the year, the region remained the most affected by conflict in the entire country. ACLED reported 1,197 different security-related incidents across the country (attacks, killings, riots, violence against civilians, etc.), of which 68% were reported in the Darfur region.** Intercommunity clashes contributed significantly to those figures thorough the year, mainly between the Rizeigat, Ma'aliya and Habaniya communities. One of the two worst clashes reported in 2015 occurred on 12 May, when members of the Rizeigat group attacked the town of Abu Karinga (East Darfur), killing around 84 members of the Ma'aliya tribe. The other major incident took place in the town of Sunta (South Darfur) on 14 July, when clashes between members of the Rizeigat and Habaniya groups caused 176 fatalities and injured dozens. OCHA reported in November that intercommunity violence and the operations of the Janjaweed militias and the Sudanese paramilitary force RSF forcibly internally displaced about 2.5 million people in Darfur, 60% of which were children (1.5 million).[39] By late June, there were 367,229 refugees in UNHCR camps in Chad and 1,883 in the Central African Republic. The conflict in Darfur also led to allegations concerning **gross violations of human rights** in the region, especially with regard to **sexual violence against women and girls.**[40]

On a positive note, in May, the three main rebel groups in Darfur (the Movement for Justice and Equality (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW) and the Sudan Liberation Movement under the command of Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM)) **pledged to promote the protection and rights of children by complying with current international standards.** Their commitment was ratified at a consultative meeting held on 27 and 28 May at the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (Stadtschlaining, Austria).

The three main rebel groups in Darfur (JEM, SLM-AW and SLM-MM) pledged to promote the protection and the rights of children

During the year, the government of al-Bashir and the UN maintained disputes over the continuity of the international mission of the hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur, UNAMID (composed of AU and UN troops). At a UN Security Council meeting on 10 June, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet defended the need to maintain

37. See the summary on Sudan (Darfur) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).
38. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project's, *South Sudan and Sudan 2015 update*, December ACLED-Africa Conflict Trends Report, December 2015.
39. OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin Sudan*, no. 47, 16-22 November 2015.
40. See the summary on Sudan (Darfur) in chapter 4 (Gender, peace and security).

the mission, describing the peacekeeping efforts of the Sudanese government in Darfur as insignificant. Mulet said that the second phase of the government's Operation Decisive Summer, supported by paramilitary forces, aims to end the rebellion by military means, which is causing serious damage and displacement among the civilian population. The Sudanese government denied that the government was behind the violence and the displacements and blamed them on tribal clashes and rebel attacks. As such, Sudan asserted that the UNAMID mission was over. However, on 29 June, the Security Council decided to extend the UNAMID mission for another year. By late September, UNAMID had reported 218 casualties since its deployment on 31 July 2007. Finally, in a parliamentary session on 19 October, Sudanese President al-Bashir announced his plan for a **referendum on the status of the region of Darfur** scheduled for April 2016, as envisaged in the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). The announcement sparked criticism from parliamentary opposition groups and civil society organisations (such as the Darfur Civil Society Organisation), which had demanded a delay in the referendum because the conditions are not in place and holding it could trigger clashes and greater social polarisation.

The SPLM-N became the first African non-state actor to sign a text aimed at protecting children from the effects of armed conflicts

Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)	
Start:	2011
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed group SPLM-N, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) armed coalition, PDF pro-government militias, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, South Sudan
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:
The national reconfiguration of Sudan after the secession of the south in July 2011 aggravated the differences between Khartoum and its new border regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, which during the Sudanese armed conflict supported the southern rebel forces of the SPLA. The need for democratic reform and an effective decentralisation, which would permit the economic development of all the regions that make up the new Sudan, are at the root of the resurgence of violence. The lack of recognition of the ethnic and political plural nature, within which political formations linked to the southern SPLM are included, would also be another of the causes of the violence. The counter position between the elite of Khartoum and the states of the central Nile region, which control the economic wealth of Sudan, and the rest of the states that make up the country are found at the centre of the socio-political crises that threaten peace.

The violence in the areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile was variable throughout the year, ranging from a first half marked by clashes to an end of the year with lower levels of violence, which was connected to the ceasefire declared by the government of Sudan to facilitate the peace talks. The first six months were marked by the boycott of the SPLM-N in the presidential election and clashes between the rebels and the Sudanese Armed Forces, especially in the towns of al-Jineziya and Um Turuq-Turuq in February; in Kalogi (north of the capital of the state of South Kordofan) in March; and in the city of Dilling (in South Kordofan) in mid-April, which coincided with the start of the election. In May, clashes between the authorities and rebels continued. The paramilitary group RSF claimed that it had regained control of two areas in the state of South Kordofan. There were two major clashes in June. In the first, the SPLM-N ambushed a military convoy, killing six soldiers and injuring more than 25 in the town of Rashad, South Kordofan. The second occurred on 12 June, when Sudan launched air strikes over the town of Wed Abuk, in the state of Blue Nile, causing numerous civilian fatalities according to the SPLM-N. Data from OCHA show that the conflict had deteriorated the living conditions in the region in June, affecting the humanitarian crisis in the country and indicating that there are over 749,000 people in an emergency situation. The UN also estimated that until late June, violence had displaced about 378,000 persons in the regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, 20,000 in the Abyei area and 238,936 refugees in neighbouring South Sudan. In July, the SPLM-N accused the Sudanese Army of using cluster bombs in Thabo County (South Kordofan). This was confirmed by a report of the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, which provided evidence of the use of these weapons by the Sudanese Army. The situation of violence changed during the third quarter largely because the rainy season began in South Kordofan and Blue Nile and preparations for the National Dialogue had started. **In September, the government of Omar al-Bashir announced a ceasefire and amnesty to enable armed movements to participate in the National Dialogue.** The start of negotiations and the announced ceasefire reduced fighting in the region until December, when clashes resumed that coincided with the beginning of the dry season and deadlock in the peace talks.[41]

Finally, the SPLM-N became the first African non-state actor to sign a commitment aimed at **protecting children in situations of armed conflict** when it signed the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment protecting children in Geneva on 29 June. The text is an initiative promoted by the organisation Geneva Call and was developed to allow armed groups that are not recognised as parties to international treaties to ratify agreements on the protection of minors. The SPLM-N underlined its commitment to protecting civilians, saying that it was open to receive a UN commission of verification. This

41. See the summary on Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

was not the first agreement that the SPLM-N signed based on humanitarian standards and the Geneva Convention, since it also confirmed the ban on anti-personnel mines in 2013.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia (Ogaden)	
Start:	2007
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ONLF, OLF, pro-government militias
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=

Summary:
Ethiopia has been the object of movements of a secessionist nature or of resistance against the central authority since the 1970s. The ONLF emerged in 1984 and operates in the Ethiopian region of Ogaden, in the south east of the country, demanding a greater level of autonomy for the Somali community that lives in this region. On various occasions, the ONLF has carried out rebellious activities beyond Ogaden, in collaboration with the OLF, which has been demanding greater autonomy from the government for the region of Oromia since 1973. The Somali government has supported the ONLF against Ethiopian, which it confronted for control over the region between 1977 and 1978, a war in which Ethiopian defeated Somalia. The end of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2000, led to the increase of the government operations to put an end to the rebel forces in Ogaden. Since the elections that were held in 2005, the confrontations between the armed forces and the ONLF increased, although in recent years the intensity of the conflict has declined.

There were no major changes in the situation of violence, insecurity and lack of respect for human rights in Ogaden. The violent actions and information claimed by the insurgency could not be confirmed. **In February, peace talks between the government and the ONLF resumed (while various media outlets reported an escalation in the fighting) although there were no reports of new contacts throughout the year.**[42] In early June, the ONLF said in a press release that two of its representatives, Sulub Ahmed and Ali Hussein, were released in Moyale, a town on the border between Kenya and Ethiopia. The pair had been kidnapped by the Ethiopian government in Nairobi in January 2014 and were later moved to Ethiopia. According to separatist sources, the Ethiopian government released both delegates after much diplomatic effort exerted by the government of Kenya and members of the international community. The ONLF hailed the release as a positive step. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian prime minister declared that the government was planning to start exporting and using natural gas from the Ogaden region. These statements were swiftly contested by the ONLF, which accused the government and its Chinese partners of committing human rights violations that could be classified as genocide by collectively punishing part of the civilian population with starvation, summary execution, gang rape and forced displacement.

One of the most prominent events took place between late May and early June, when **paramilitary groups of the Ethiopian Regional Administration in Ogaden, known as the Liyu police, carried out a military operation in different places near the Ogadeni district of Shilaabo, executing hundreds of civilians** and burning several villages, according to the armed group. The villages affected included Lababaar, Xaadh Xaadh, Xindhowreed and others near Barmagoog and the Somali border region of Galmudug. This time, the Ethiopian government's silence was breached when the governor of the neighbouring Somali region of Galmudug and Somali government authorities confirmed on 1 June that at least 50 people had died (including 11 women, as well as children and elderly persons) and dozens had been wounded in attacks between a Somali clan militia and the Ethiopian Liyu police on Somali soil, near the border. In September, it emerged that the al-Shabaab Somali armed group had captured and executed two ONLF officials in May as they travelled from Baidoa, which is controlled by the Somali Federal Government, to Ogaden. This is not the first time that the jihadist insurgency has executed ONLF members. Eight members of the ONLF, including the secretary of defence, had previously been executed. The ONLF condemned the incident and said that it is not involved in the conflict and has always kept its distance from the war in Somalia. According to several sources, some Somali militia groups and corrupt local governments get favours from Ethiopia in exchange for providing information on or even detaining ONLF members and Ogadeni refugees who could be tortured or executed by the Ethiopian Army. Finally, a meeting was held in Oslo on 24 October by five political and military movements opposing the Ethiopian government, which announced the formation of the People's Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (PAFD), including the ONLF.

Somalia	
Start:	1988
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Federal government, pro-government militias and warlords, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Operation Ocean Shield, al-Shabaab, Eritrea
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:
The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a

42. See the summary on Ethiopia (Ogaden) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

coalition of opposing groups rebelled against the dictatorial power of Siad Barre and three years later managed to overthrow him. This situation led to a new fight within this coalition to occupy the power vacuum, which had led to the destruction of the country and the death of more than 300,000 people since 1991, despite the failed international intervention at the beginning of the 1990s. The diverse peace processes to try and establish a central authority came across numerous difficulties, including the affronts between the different clans and sub clans of which the Somalia and social structure was made up, the interference of Ethiopia and Eritrea and the power of the various warlords. The last peace initiative was in 2004 by the GFT, which found support in Ethiopia to try to recover control of the country, partially in the hands of the ICU (Islamic Courts Union) The moderate faction of the ICU has joined the GFT and together they confront the militias of the radical faction of the ICU which control part of the southern area of the country. In 2012 the transition that began in 2004 was completed and a new Parliament was formed which elected its first president since 1967. The AU mission, AMISOM (which included the Ethiopian and Kenyan troops present in the country) and government troops are combating al-Shabaab, a group that has suffered internal divisions.

Despite the persistent climate of war and insecurity in different parts of southern Somalia, progress was made in the political arena. Meanwhile, attacks and ambushes by al-Shabaab continued, inflicting several fatalities on the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali Army. Al-Shabaab's change in strategy towards guerrilla warfare starting in 2011 in response to the offensive carried out by AMISOM and the Somali Army dealt heavy losses to the AU mission. Al-Shabaab increased its armed actions during Ramadan, as in previous years. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project attributed 2,496 fatalities to al-Shabaab in 2015. The AU mission suffered the two worst attacks since it started in 2007: in June al-Shabaab killed more than 50 of the 100 soldiers stationed at the base of the town of Lego, 62 km from Mogadishu, which fell under the group's control and was completely looted. In early July, AMISOM announced that it was launching a new military operation (Operation Jubba Corridor), the third joint one with the Somali Army since 2010, involving forces of Kenya and Ethiopia in the regions of Bay, Bakool and Gedo, which share borders with both countries, west and south of Mogadishu. The operation liberated two of the last urban strongholds, Bardhere (Gedo) and Dinsoor (Bay), which had been under al-Shabaab's control for the past eight years. However, the action failed to weaken the group and brought AMISOM's deficiencies to light, which challenged its overall strategy in Somalia.[43] These deficiencies relate to its strategy (occupation of cities surrounded by al-Shabaab's domains); logistics (the difficulty to maintain its base supplies and the scarcity of resources); command coordination (tensions between the troops of Djibouti and Ethiopia);[44] and offensive capabilities. Also of note was the attack on 1 September on the AMISOM base in Jannale (80 km southwest of Mogadishu). At least 70 AMISOM soldiers from Uganda were killed. **In early September, it was disclosed that AMISOM may have suffered as many as 1,100 casualties since 2009** according to information that the mission had facilitated to the SIPRI research centre. In 2013, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said that more than 3,000 soldiers had died since the beginning of the intervention in 2007, but since evidence to support this data could not be provided, the UN subsequently published a retraction. Al-Shabaab carried out strategic retreats that did not involve any human or material losses. It continued its suicide bombings, attacks on institutions, bases and convoys and murders of politicians and humanitarian workers. Notably, al-Shabaab (an ally of al-Qaeda) experienced some division, with some of its members willing to join forces with Islamic State (ISIS) following difficulties in funding and the military successes of ISIS, especially among foreign fighters.[45] This internal conflict provoked purges and executions. Boko Haram (Nigeria) and ISIS (Syria and Iraq) called for the group to join ISIS.[46]

The overall strategy of AMISOM in Somalia was questioned because of the many attacks suffered and its strategic, logistical and coordination weaknesses

Under pressure, al-Shabaab continued expanding to the north of the country, increasing attacks in Puntland throughout the year. A loss of funding also caused an increase in kidnappings. Journalists for Justice published a report in November that highlighted the involvement of senior members of the Kenyan Armed Forces in the illegal trade in sugar and charcoal in Somalia and how this business provided a vital source of income to al-Shabaab. This report faced much criticism.[47]

Nevertheless, **headway was made in creating the country's federal states, with some difficulties in getting the approval of local actors and disputes over leadership and borders.** Only the federal states of Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle remained to be formed in 2016. A second meeting of the High Level Partnership Forum was held on July 29 and 30 and was co-chaired by Somali Federal President Mohamud and Nicholas Kay, the special representative of the UN Secretary-General. This was the main platform for high-level dialogue regarding the implementation of the process in Somalia known as the New Deal Somali Compact and the largest international conference held in Mogadishu in at least 25 years, with representatives and international delegates from more

43. Muhyadin Ahmed Roble, "Al-Shabaab has changed its tactics. AMISOM must do so too", *African Arguments*, 9 September 2015.
44. Somali Current, "'Ethiopians forces are not in the country to help Somalia regain peace and security' Djibouti commander", *Somali Current*, 17 August 2015; Africa Review, "Djibouti denies Ethiopian troops in Somalia don't answer to Amisom", *Africa Review*, 26 August 2015.
45. The Guardian, "Tensions rise as al-Shabaab foreign fighters consider supporting ISIS", *The Guardian*, 8 December 2015.
46. Hiraan Online, "Come and join the caliphate, ISIS urges Al-Shabab" and "Join ISIS - Nigeria's Boko Haram tells Al-Shabab", *Hiraan Online*, 4 and 15 October 2015, respectively.
47. Journalists for Justice, *Black and White. Kenya's Criminal Racket in Somalia*, International Commission of Jurists, Nairobi, November 2015.

than 30 countries, government leaders and regional administrations. The attendees decided that it would not be possible to hold an election with direct voting in 2016, so they agreed to hold a consultation with the different political actors to determine the next steps. On 19 and 20 October, the National Consultative Forum (NCF) was held in Mogadishu to determine the renewal process for Parliament and the government scheduled for August and September 2016, as established in the Provisional Federal Constitution of 2012. On 16 December, the NCF made public its consultations on how to form the government, which materialised in an agreement on 10 January 2016.

Maghreb – North Africa

Algeria[48]	
Start:	1992
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), governments of North Africa and the Sahel
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=

Summary:
The armed conflict has pitted the security forces against various Islamist groups since the beginning of the 1990s following the rise of the Islamist movement in Algeria due to the population's discontent, the economic crisis and the stifling of political participation. The conflict began when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was made illegal in 1992 after its triumph in the elections against the historic party that had led the independence of the country, the National Liberation Front. The armed struggle brought several groups (EIS, GIA and the GSPC, a division of the GIA that later became AQIM in 2007) into conflict with the army, supported by the self-defence militias. The conflict caused some 150,000 deaths during the 1990s and continues to claim lives. However, the levels of violence have decreased since 2002 after some of the groups gave up the armed fight. In recent years, the conflict has been led by AQMI, which became a transnational organisation, expanding its operations beyond Algerian territory and affecting the Sahel countries. Algeria, along with Mali, Libya, Mauritania, Niger and others, has fought AQIM and other armed groups that have begun operating in the area, including the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and al-Mourabitoun organisations (Those Who Sign with Blood) and Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS).

The conflict in Algeria remained characterised by recurrent outbreaks of violence involving security forces and members of jihadist armed groups, leaving a death toll of over 100. According to data from the ministry of defence, 109 militants were killed and 36 others were arrested in different operations and clashes in 2015. In addition, the security forces reported the arrests of suspects associated with different armed groups, fighter-recruiting networks and arms trafficking, as well as the destruction of explosives and the seizure of weapons. The Algerian authorities revealed that they also thwarted terror attacks on airports in two different cities orchestrated by the terrorist group Jund al-Khilafa, a branch of ISIS. Along with other countries of the Sahel, Algiers published a list of 21 potential suicide bombers trained in Libya and ready to attack Algeria and Tunisia as part of a group called Kawkabat al-Shuhada (Constellation of Martyrs), the local media reported. **Algeria's border security concerns were addressed with military reinforcement, creating a new military zone in the southeast, bordering with Libya, and doubling the number of troops deployed in border areas**, which in late 2015 exceeded 100,000. One of the worst attacks took place in the northern region of Ain Defla in July, when an ambush by AQIM killed 11 soldiers. Another major event took place in May, when several military units dismantled a jihadist cell, killing 25 suspected fighters. One of these was Bachir Kharza, the leader of Jund al-Khilafa, who took control after the death of his predecessor in December 2014. It surfaced that 17 of the militants killed belonged to the ISIS branch in the country and eight were members of AQIM. Furthermore, **the military operation took place during a meeting in which members of Jund al-Khilafa first tried to convince the fighters of al-Qaeda's branch to join their ranks. This illustrates the divisions faced by the jihadist group in Algeria in recent years, a trend within the global struggle between ISIS and al-Qaeda.**[49] In 2015, some analysts noted that AQIM was weakening as a consequence of several factors, including the killing of some of its senior members; tighter security in border areas, which limited its activities and weapons smuggling; and internal divisions caused by the rise of ISIS in the region. According to Algerian media outlets, these divisions may have reached prisons, with some inmates leaving AQIM to join ISIS. Faced with this situation, AQIM may have decided to unite forces to counterbalance ISIS by promoting "reconciliation" between its leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel, and the head of the armed group al-Mourabitoun, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, in the second half of the year, according to local sources. Earlier, Belmokhtar denied having pledged allegiance to ISIS, as rumours indicated, and confirmed his loyalty to the main branch of al-Qaeda. In 2015, Droukdel also issued a message ensuring his loyalty to the leader of the network, Ayman al-Zawahiri, which called to avenge the death of the top leader of al-Qaeda in Yemen in an attack by the US.[50]

The situation in the country was also troubled by internal political tensions amidst calls from the opposition to

48. In previous editions of the Alert report, this case was identified as "Algeria (AQIM)" due to the organisation's pre-eminence in the dynamics of violence. Starting this year, the case will be called "Algeria" given the involvement of other armed groups in the conflict.
49. See "The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).
50. See the summary on Yemen (AQAP) in this chapter.

declare the presidency vacant, implement a transition and hold early elections after Abdelaziz Bouteflika's fragile health raised doubts about his real ability to run the country. The government strove to squash these suspicions and announced constitutional reforms. At the end of the year, Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal confirmed that the president was in total control of the country, amidst scepticism from various political sectors and suspicion in some circles about the prominent role played by the president's brother, Said Bouteflika. In this context, 2015 was a year of major replacements of the highest security officials, which were seen as an internal purge and an indication of the power struggle within the regime, particularly among those close to Bouteflika and the Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS). Many observers consider the DRS to be the most powerful force in domestic politics and, according to analysts like the International Crisis Group, Bouteflika has been taking steps to reduce its influence since 2013.[51] As such, the most important event of the year took place when the head of the DRS, Mohamed "Tewfik" Mediene, was replaced in September. Regarded as a leading power behind the scenes, he had been head of the Algerian intelligence services for 25 years and was the last general from the times when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was eradicated by force. The year 2015 also marked the 10th anniversary of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation. The amnesty law benefitted 15,000 militants, whereas around 17,000 were killed during the war. Relatives of the victims continued to demand trials leading to the conviction of those responsible. In addition, the issue of enforced disappearances remains pending. This affects 7,144 people according to official data, but some associations put the figure as high as 20,000.

AQIM may have promoted reconciliation with the armed group led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar after groups close to ISIS made progress in North Africa

Libya	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, Resources, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government based in Tobruk, government based in Tripoli, armed factions linked to Operation Dignity, armed groups linked to Operation Dawn, ISIS and other armed actors; Egypt and other countries
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
In the context of the uprisings in North Africa, popular protests against the government of Muammar Gaddafi began in February 2011. In power since 1969, his regime was characterized by an authoritarian stance repression of dissent, corruption and serious shortcomings at the institutional level. Internal conflict degenerated into an escalation of violence leading to a civil war and an international military intervention by NATO forces. After months of fighting and the capture and execution of Gaddafi in late October, the rebels announced the liberation of Libya. However, the country remains affected by high levels of violence derived from multiple factors, including the inability of the new authorities to control the country and ensure a secure environment; the high presence of militias unwilling to surrender their weapons; and disputes over resources and trafficking routes. The situation in the country deteriorated from mid-2014 onward, with higher levels of violence and the formation of two parliaments and two governments in Tobruk and Tripoli, which have the support of respective armed coalitions. Efforts to solve the situation have been hampered by this scene of fragmentation and a climate of instability has assisted the expansion of ISIS in the North African country.

Following the severe deterioration of the situation in Libya starting in mid-2014, the scenario in the country was still characterised in 2015 by **high levels of violence, institutional fragmentation and political instability. The year witnessed continuous clashes between the many armed groups operating in the country, an increasing role of militias loyal to ISIS and episodes of armed intervention from foreign countries**. These and other dynamics of violence affected different parts of the country (especially Tripoli, Benghazi, Sirte and Derna) and caused the deaths of hundreds of people throughout the year, according to a UN report.[52] The precise number of casualties is not clear, but some partial counts putting the death toll at 750 in the city of Benghazi alone between January and June 2015 allow us to measure the impact of violence in the country. Clashes broke out during the year between armed factions close to the rival governments established in mid-2014 in Tripoli and Tobruk (the latter recognised internationally), but also between groups belonging to the same militia coalitions, thereby revealing internal fractures. Thus, there were clashes within the Libya Dawn coalition (close to Tripoli) and disagreements about adopting some local truces and supporting political negotiations. Divisions also occurred within the armed groups close to the rival government, like the Petroleum Facilities Guard, which refused to recognise the leadership of Khalifa Haftar (leader of Operation Dignity and appointed commander of the Libyan Army by the Tobruk authorities in March). The forces of Operation Dignity fought fierce battles with the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC), a coalition of Islamist militias

51. International Crisis Group, *Algeria and Its Neighbours*, Middle East and North Africa Report no. 164, 12 October 2015.
52. In mid-November, the UN mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a joint report on the situation in Libya in 2015. The text acknowledges the limits in obtaining exhaustive data on the impact of the armed conflict in Libya due to security problems and the restrictions on access to the country. Despite these restrictions, the report provides an overview of the main patterns of abuse of human rights and humanitarian law in Libya. UNSMIL has continued operating outside Libya since the escalation of violence in mid-2014 that led to the evacuation of all the mission's diplomatic staff.

including the armed group Ansar al-Sharia. Clashes between Tuareg and Tebu communities in the southwest also raged throughout the year in a context of historical grievances and competition for the control of resources and smuggling routes.

Meanwhile, **ISIS expanded its presence in Libya, especially in cities like Sirte and Derna, where it met resistance from residents and local groups**, including Islamist militias that managed to force ISIS out of Derna on July. Hostilities intensified in Sirte in August after ISIS killed the influential imam of a local tribe. The ISIS branches in Libya, which proclaimed the Province of Cyrenaica ("Wilayat Barqa") in late 2014 and the Province of Tripoli ("Wilayat Tarablus") in June, carried out other high-profile actions, such as an attack on a hotel in Tripoli in January; the beheading of a dozen Egyptian Copts kidnapped in Sirte in February; the execution of 28 Eritreans and Ethiopians in April; and other public executions in areas under their influence. The release of a video showing the beheading of Egyptian citizens prompted an armed response from Cairo, which launched a series of air strikes over the city of Derna that also killed civilians, according to some sources, thereby engaging in the conflict in the neighbouring country in an open way. The offensive by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime exposed the internationalised nature of the conflict in Libya, which some analysts have identified as a scenario of indirect confrontation pitting Egypt and the UAE (supporting the government in Tobruk) against Turkey and Qatar (supporting Islamist groups that predominate in the government in Tripoli). Egypt called for lifting the arms embargo on the government of Tobruk and asked for help from the Arab League, although this request did not translate into action by the regional organisation. Throughout 2015, violence in Libya was also expressed through car bombings, assassinations (including the attempted assassination of the prime minister of the Tobruk-based government, Abdullah al-Thinni, in May), attacks against embassies and oil facilities, attacks on protesters and the harassment and intimidation of humanitarian workers and human rights advocates.

In late 2015, the UN stated that all the parties to the conflict had committed multiple violations of human rights and violations under international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, summary executions, arbitrary arrests, torture and mistreatment. The climate of violence also forced mass displacements, doubling the figure for 2014. In December 2015, **the UN estimated that there were more than 435,000 displaced people in the country and 2.4 million (equivalent to nearly 40% of the population) in need of humanitarian aid**. The refugee population, asylum seekers and migrants in the country were identified as some of the most vulnerable. It is estimated that in 2015, about 2,430 people lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Europe. The living conditions of the population were also affected by the collapse of health infrastructure, the closure of many schools and universities, the presence of mines and explosives and high levels of crime and kidnapping due to the lack of the rule of law. The chances of stopping the drift of violence in Libya were curbed by persistent political division since 2015 following the disagreement between the authorities in Tripoli and those in Tobruk. The governments and parliaments based in both cities, **the National General Congress (CNG), in Tripoli, and the House of Representatives (HoR), in Tobruk, continued their dispute over the legitimacy of representing the Libyan people and participated in bumpy negotiations initiated by the UN.**[53] At the end of the year, pressures to make progress in a political settlement in Libya intensified in an international context marked by increased concerns about the activity of ISIS and refugee flows. Thus, in mid-December, members of the rival parliaments (50 of 136 MPs of the CNG and 80 of the 188 MPs of the HoR) signed an agreement establishing a national unity government, a House of Representatives, a Council of State and a Presidential Council. The accord lacked support from the leaders of the two operating governments in Libya and was branded as illegitimate by some groups, but the UN Security Council endorsed it. In late 2015, analysts warned that the agreement could generate a third institution that is not even able to operate in Libya and stated that several Western countries seemed interested in accelerating the formation of a legitimate government in Libya that could potentially authorise foreign military intervention in the country against ISIS.

In late 2015, the UN estimated that there were more than 435,000 internally displaced persons in Libya and 2.4 million (almost 40% of the population) in need of some form of humanitarian assistance

West Africa

Mali (north)	
Start:	2012
Type:	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, MLF, MISMA, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Summary: The Tuareg community that inhabits northern Mali has lived in a situation of marginalisation and underdevelopment since colonial times which has fuelled revolts and led to	

53. See the summary on Libya in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

the establishment of armed fronts against the central government. In the nineties, after a brief armed conflict, a peace agreement was reached that promised investment and development for the north. The failure to implement the agreement made it impossible to halt the creation of new armed groups demanding greater autonomy for the area. The fall of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, which for a number of years had been sheltering the Malian Tuareg insurgency and had absorbed a number of its members into its security forces, created conditions that favoured the resurgence of Tuareg rebels in the north of the country, who demand the independence of Azawad (the name which the Tuareg give to the northern region of Mali). After making progress in gaining control of the area by taking advantage of the political instability in Mali in early 2012, the Tuareg armed group, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), was increasingly displaced by radical Islamist groups operating in the region which had made gains in the north of Mali. The internationalisation of the conflict intensified in 2013, following the military intervention of France and the deployment of a peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) in the country.

The conflict in northern Mali was marked by the signing of a peace agreement[54] between the Arab/Tuareg coalition (Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) and Platform) **and the Malian government, as well as by increasing actions from jihadists groups** excluded from the peace talks. These jihadist groups targeted the Malian security forces and foreign troops deployed in the territory, such as the French mission and the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA. The year opened with a highly unstable landscape due to the sustained violence between rebels (CMA) and pro-government groups (Platform); the attacks of jihadists; the continuous incidents involving the MINUSMA mission; and the breakdown of negotiations between the government and rebels in the northern area. In the first quarter of the year, several episodes of violence resulted in about 60 fatalities, some of them members of the **MINUSMA. This made it the most dangerous UN mission, accounting for more than 40 fatalities since it started in 2013**. The periodic clashes between pro-government and pro-Azawad forces put peace talks at risk, although international mediation led by Algeria reached an initial peace agreement in early March between the government and some minor factions of the Arab/Tuareg groups. The CMA (formed by Tuareg and Arab groups claiming greater autonomy in northern Mali, including the MNLA, HCUA, MAA and CPA) initially rejected the proposal, as it did not address the causes of conflict or meet their expectations by overlooking the political status of Azawad. Meanwhile, the pro-government armed coalition Platform (composed of GATIA, CMPFPR and the MAA faction) accepted the proposal, leading to **the signing of the first peace and reconciliation agreement in Bamako to resolve the northern crisis on 15 May. The CMA initiated a process of internal consultations to discuss the text, finally signing it on 20 June**. Different stakeholders and mediators regarded this agreement as a major step towards the consolidation of peace and stability in the north of Mali and led the UN Security Council to approve the extension of the MINUSMA mission for one year, until June 2016, authorising the inclusion of 40 military observers to supervise the ceasefire. After the agreement was signed, security in the north remained extremely volatile due to ceasefire violations committed by armed groups that signed the agreement (the CMA and Platform), as well as attacks by jihadists excluded from the peace accord. The most serious incident took place on **15 August, when members of the CMA and pro-government GATIA militias clashed for three days over control of the city of Anéfis**, in the north of the Kidal region. At least 20 deaths were reported. GATIA took control of the city, which was a serious violation of the agreement since Anéfis had been under the CMA's control when the peace accord was signed. This was the first crisis in the peace process and was strongly condemned by the UN and the governments of Mali and Algeria. The CMA withdrew from the Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee, which raised serious doubts about the possible future of the peace process. After several rounds of mediation, on 7 September GATIA left the city of Anéfis and allowed the CMA to return. This episode pushed the MINUSMA to start deploying 13 of the 40 military observers approved by the UN Security Council to ensure compliance with the agreement. On 21 September, in the wake of this violence and insecurity, the government of Mali announced the delay of regional and municipal elections scheduled for 25 October. The incident in Anéfis, which jeopardised the fragile peace, gave rise to talks between the CMA and Platform that ended in a cessation of hostilities agreement between both groups.

Jihadist groups excluded from the peace talks in Mali increased their attacks against foreign interests and forces

The government considered the agreement between the secular rebels a major step for the implementation of peace, whereas jihadist groups saw it as betrayal by the armed groups, accusing them of collaborating with the government and French forces. This led to a rise in tensions and hostilities between jihadist groups and Arab/Tuareg armed organisations. On 16 October, Iyad Ag Ghaly, the leader of the group Ansar Dine, rejected the peace process and threatened to step up attacks on foreign forces and their allies. **On 20 November, armed commandos stormed the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, kidnapping about 170 people for hours before elite French troops intervened**. The al-Mourabitoun group in collaboration with AQIM and then the Macina Liberation Front claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed at least 19 people and showed the growing capacity of jihadist organisations to form partnerships, representing a greater potential for destabilisation. On 2 December, AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel confirmed an alliance with the al-Mourabitoun group

54. See the summary on Mali in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

led by the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar, claiming the attack on the hotel as a symbol of their unity. After the attack, the Malian government was forced to declare a 10-day state of emergency, which was extended until 31 March 2016 due to threats of new attacks.

Among the actions carried out in the country against jihadist groups, it should be noted that the French ministry of Defence announced during the second quarter of the year that French Special Forces killed four suspected militants in northern Mali. They included Amada Ag Hama (also known as "Abdelkrim the Tuareg"), and Ibrahim Ag Inawalen (also known as "Bana"), two of the main leaders of the groups AQIM and Ansar Dine, respectively. In early July, French special forces also revealed the death of Mohammed Ali Ag Wadoussene, one of the leaders of AQIM, in the vicinity of the city of Kidal. On December 20, the French government announced the "neutralisation" of ten suspected jihadists from the al-Mourabitoun group in the Ménaka Cercle. **On the humanitarian front**, OCHA reported that 477,392 people had returned to their communities by October 2015, especially in the Timbuktu and Gao regions. Around 139,502 Malian refugees were still living in neighbouring countries by 30 November, mainly in Niger and Mauritania. Furthermore, nearly 62,000 Malians were internally displaced and 2,011,661 people were at risk of food insecurity.

Nigeria (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Boko Haram (BH), Ansaru, Civilian Joint Task Force (pro-government militia), MNJTF regional force (Niger, Benin, Cameroon and Chad)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:
The Islamist sect Boko Haram demands the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria and considers that Nigeria's public institutions are "westernised" and, therefore, decadent. The group forms part of the fundamentalist branch initiated by other groups in Nigeria following independence in 1960 and which, invariably, triggered outbreaks of violence of varying intensity. Despite the heavy repression to which its followers have been subjected —in 2009, at least 800 of its members died in confrontations with the army and the police in Bauchi State— the armed group remains active. The scope of its attacks has widened, aggravating insecurity in the country as the government proves incapable of offering an effective response to put an end to the violence. International human rights organizations have warned of the crimes committed by the group, but also on government abuses in its campaign against the organization.

Violence perpetrated by Boko Haram (BH), which pledged allegiance to ISIS in March 2015, continued to escalate during the year while the conflict became even more internationalised. As in previous years, the armed group continued to carry out its bloody offensives, including suicide bombings at markets and bus stations, attacks on mosques, indiscriminate killings and clashes with state security forces in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. Some of its actions caused particular consternation, such as the use of children to commit suicide attacks, which took place throughout the year mainly in the states of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe and Gombe, as well as in neighbouring countries. Based on data from 2014, the *2015 Global Terrorism Index* published by The Institute for Economics and Peace identified the insurgency led by Abubakar Shekau as the most lethal group in 2014, responsible for 6,644 deaths, surpassing the 6,073 deaths attributed to ISIS.[55] In 2015, the Council on Foreign Relations programme called *The Nigeria Security Tracker*[56] documented 7,492 killings in the four northern states mentioned above. The state of Borno was the epicentre of the violence unleashed by BH, with 6,162 deaths reported. The Islamic extremist group was also responsible for 1,491,706 internal displaced people in Nigeria, while another 150,000 sought refuge in Chad, Niger and Cameroon, according to data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).[57] The news agency IRIN also blamed BH for internal displacements that affected Niger (66,000 people), Chad (68,162) and Cameroon (92,658 people). In late 2015, UNICEF denounced the impact that the conflict is having on children, leaving around one million children in Nigeria and neighbouring countries without an education because it was impossible to go to school. Around 2,000 schools remained closed because of the conflict while hundreds were looted, burned or destroyed. UNICEF also stressed that many families refused to send their children to school due to fear of attacks, as happened in 2014 with the kidnapping of 200 girls from a school in Chibok, who are still missing (in September 2015, the Nigerian government confirmed that attempts to negotiate with a branch of BH to secure their release were unsuccessful). UNICEF also warned about the increase in suicide attacks as a rebel strategy of war, three quarters of which were performed by women and in some cases by girls. Analysts interpreted BH's new modus operandi as a reaction to losing territory to the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which wrested large swathes of land from the militia early in the year.

During the first quarter, notable actions by BH included its attempt to derail the presidential election and its reaction to the creation and deployment of the MNJTF to fight against it. **In early January, BH perpetrated one of its most vicious actions, attacking the town of Baga for days** (which had been declared the base

55. The Institute for Economics and Peace, *2015 Global Terrorism Index*, November 2015.
56. Council on Foreign Relations, *The Nigeria Security Tracker*.
57. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Nigeria IDP Figures Analysis,* April 2015.

of the MNJTF). According to international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the attack caused about 2,000 mortal victims. During the second quarter, the violence perpetrated by (BH) continued to escalate, rising since the inauguration of new Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in 29 May and expanding to neighbouring countries due to the boost in the creation of the MNJTF. Buhari urged the implementation of the international coalition, formed by 8,700 troops from several countries (Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Benin), and changed its military strategy, shifting the centre of the Nigerian Army's operations from Abuja to Maiduguri, the largest northern city and capital of Borno State, the region where BH has its roots. On 31 July, the presidents of Nigeria and Cameroon announced the full deployment of the MNJTF, proclaiming that it would end the insurgency before the year ended. The second half of the year started with more suicide bombings by women and children as part of the ISIS campaign to increase violence during the month of Ramadan. Periodic attacks took place in the states of Yobe, Benue, Gombe, Adamawa and Borno. In this context, the MNJTF managed to significantly isolate BH, snatching a large part of its territory, reducing it to the Sambisa Forest and limiting its ability to attack. According to data presented by the **Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project in November 2015, the death toll of 230 victims caused by the conflict was the lowest since February 2013,** although the year closed with a substantial increase in mortality after the 3,000 deaths recorded during January 2015.[58] In addition to the attacks inside Nigeria, its neighbours Chad, Cameroon and Niger also suffered attacks that prompted different responses by their governments.[59]

Amnesty International published two reports on Nigeria throughout the year. The first one, released in mid-April, denounced that more than 2,000 women and girls had been captured by BH since early 2014, then subjected to sexual slavery and training to participate in armed offensives.[60] According to the report, BH may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the killing of 5,500 civilians in 2014 and early 2015. In the second report, released in June, Amnesty International drew attention to the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Nigerian Army as part of its war strategy against BH. The report urged the investigation of nine senior commanders of the Nigerian Armed Forces by the International Criminal Court for their role in the murder, extrajudicial killings and torture of thousands of people.[61]

The internationalisation of the conflict with Boko Haram increased following the deployment of the Multinational Force (MNJTF), with troops from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Nigeria

1.3.2. America

Colombia	
Start:	1964
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, FARC, ELN, new paramilitary groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
In 1964, in the context of an agreement for the alternation of power between the Liberal party and the Conservative party (National Front), which excluded other political options, two armed opposition movements emerged with the goal of taking power: the ELN (made up of university students and workers, inspired by Guevara) and the FARC (a communist-oriented organisation that advocates agrarian reform). In the 1970s, various groups were created, such as the M-19 and the EPL, which ended up negotiating with the government and pushing through a new Constitution (1991) that established the foundations of a welfare state. At the end of the 1980s, several paramilitary groups emerged, instigated by sectors of the armed forces, landowners, drug traffickers and traditional politicians, aimed at defending the status quo through a strategy of terror. Drug trafficking activity influenced the economic, political and social spheres and contributed to the increase in violence.

There was a significant decrease in clashes following progress in the peace talks held in Havana between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP and the unilateral ceasefire declared by the guerrillas on two occasions during the year.[62] In December, the Conflict Analysis Resource Centre (CERAC) published its latest monitoring report of violations of the unilateral truce decreed by the FARC-EP. The report showed that from 20 July 2015 to 20 December 2015, the armed group committed six offensive actions. The report also noted that FARC-EP's attacks decreased from 21 to six, which is a reduction of 71%. There was also a 69% decline in the frequency of fighting between the security forces and the FARC-EP, from 52 to 16 clashes. Both sides worked hard through joint working groups to achieve a bilateral ceasefire and to detail the verification mechanisms. The agreement was reached in January 2016. Regarding the ELN guerrillas, exploratory contacts with the government continued throughout the year, with notable difficulties in achieving an initial agreement regarding the agenda. The ELN increased its attacks in recent months as a way to exert pressure, although the number of victims was low.

58. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, Conflict Trends (No.44), *Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence*, December 2015.
59. See the summary on Cameroon, Chad and Niger in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
60. Amnesty International, *Our job is to shoot, slaughter and kill: Boko Haram's reign of terror in north-east Nigeria,* AFR44/1360/2015, 14 April 2015.
61. Amnesty International, *Stars on their shoulders. Blood on their hands. War crimes committed by the Nigerian military*, AFR44/1657/2015, June 2015.
62. See the summary on Colombia in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

East Asia

China (East Turkestan)	
Start:	2014
Type:	Self-government, System, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
Xinjiang, also known as East Turkestan or Uyghuristan, is China's westernmost region. It contains significant hydrocarbon deposits and has historically been inhabited by the Uyghur population, which is mainly Muslim and boasts important cultural ties with Central Asian countries. Following several decades of acculturation policies, the exploitation of natural resources and intense demographic colonisation, which has substantially altered the population structure and caused community tensions since the 1950s, several armed secessionist groups began armed operations against the Chinese government, especially in the 1990s. Beijing classifies such groups, including the ETIM or the ETLO, as terrorist organisations and has attempted to link its counter-insurgency strategy to the so-called global war on terrorism. In 2008, when the Olympic Games were being held in Beijing, there was an increase in armed attacks by insurgent groups, while 2009 saw the most fierce community clashes in recent decades. Over the following years the violence became more intense, frequent and complex, which is why the case was reclassified as an armed conflict.

On various occasions, the Chinese government declared that the **violence and the climate of religious and ideological radicalisation had decreased significantly during the year, especially thanks to the economic development of the region and its counter-insurgency strategy in Xinjiang**. While there are huge disparities between the official death toll and figures from Uyghur organisations in exile, media reports and specialised centres put the number of fatalities at around 200 in 2015, well below the more than 340 deaths in 2014. In this regard, a report by the US-based Uyghur Human Rights Project showed that between 656 and 715 people died in Xinjiang due to political violence in 2013 and 2014 and that the number of fatalities in 2014 roughly doubled that of the previous year. The report also found that the number of Uyghur casualties was three times higher than that of Han people and that the state-controlled press had only reported a third of the clashes in the region. Some of the most serious acts of violence in 2015 included 17 people killed in the region of Aksu during a police raid in late February; 18 people killed in an attack on a police station in Kashgar in late June; and an attack in a coal mine in Aksu prefecture in mid-September that killed 16 people and wounded another 50 (media outlets put the number of fatalities at between 50 and 60 fatalities, while groups in exile said it exceeded 100). The attack triggered a two-month police and military operation that culminated with the killing of another 28 people and the arrest of 1,000. Some media outlets suggested that the detonation of an explosive device in Bangkok in July, considered one of the worst attacks in the Thailand's history, was connected to the repatriation of 100 Uyghurs living in Thailand at that time. On several occasions, Beijing expressed alarm about alleged links between armed Uyghur organisations and jihadists due their stable presence in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is concerned about the increasing return to Xinjiang of military-trained people intending to commit terrorist attacks in China. Some media outlets reported that Beijing's growing worries about migratory flows to and from Xinjiang led to a substantial rise in the number of arrests at border crossing points.

Despite the decline in levels of violence, the government recognised that armed groups operating in Xinjiang continued to pose a major threat to the state. To address this threat, **Beijing approved new anti-terrorism legislation in late 2015, intensified its counter-insurgency efforts in Xinjiang and stepped up its diplomatic activity in an attempt to involve countries like the US to fight Uyghur armed organisations** such as ETIM, arguing that these groups pose a risk to the international community and not just to China. In late May, the government stated that since the anti-terrorism campaign started in May 2014 (after the deaths of 43 people in a marketplace in the city of Urumqi), it had dismantled 181 Islamist cells, 96% of which were planning attacks. During this campaign, which should have ended in May but was extended until the end of the year, thousands of additional troops and police officers were deployed in the region, increasing the number of arrests and trials significantly. More than 20 Uyghurs may have been executed during this period and many more have been sentenced to death. In March, the Supreme Court announced that more than 700 people were convicted of crimes related to terrorism and separatism during 2014, an increase of 13% over 2014. During the year, human rights organisations, governments (such as Turkey and Malaysia) and international bodies criticised the government's new anti-terrorism legislation and counter-insurgency campaign, considering them human rights violations that stoke instability and conflict. Several voices repeatedly warned about the growing religious restrictions on the Muslim community. Thus, in June, the government required restaurants to remain open during regular hours and forbade students, teachers and members of the civil service to fast during Ramadan. Some media outlets reported that in several areas of Xinjiang, school children were prevented from taking part in any religious practice and could not enter mosques. In mid-March, the UN special rapporteur on the freedom of expression and religion, Heiner Bielefeldt, criticised the government's religious policies towards the Uyghur community, citing the restrictions on fasting imposed on children in schools during the month of Ramadan as an example. Beijing denied the accusations and said that the number of mosques had multiplied by ten in the last 30 years and now stood at 20,000.

South Asia

Afghanistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban militias, warlords, Islamic State of Khorasan
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The country has lived with almost uninterrupted armed conflict since the invasion by Soviet troops in 1979, beginning a civil war between the armed forces (with Soviet support) and anti-Communist, Islamist guerrillas (Mujahideen). The withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 and the rise of the Mujahideen to power in 1992 in a context of chaos and internal confrontations between the different anti-Communist factions led to the emergence of the Taliban movement, which, at the end of the nineties, controlled almost all Afghan territory. In November 2001, after the Al-Qaeda attacks of 11 September, the USA invaded the country and defeated the Taliban regime. After the signing of the Bonn agreements, an interim government was established, led by Hamid Karzai and subsequently ratified at the polls. In 2014 a new government was formed with Ashraf Ghani as president. Since 2006, there has been an escalation of violence in the country caused by the reformation of the Taliban militias. In 2011 the international troops began their withdrawal, which was completed at the end of 2014. A contingent of about 12,905 soldiers will remain until December 2017 to form and train Afghan forces (as part of Operation Resolute Support, under NATO's command) and another force will stay in place to carry out training and counter-terrorism actions (3,000 US soldiers as part of Operation Freedom Sentinel).

In 2015, the level of violence in Afghanistan was the worst since the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001. In the first six months alone, the number of civilian casualties equalled the figure recorded in 2014. The UN estimated that over half of all Afghan districts were at risk of either high or extreme violence. The Taliban made territorial gains. The most significant took place in August, when they captured the capital of Kunduz province, the first time the group had held an Afghan city since 2001. The Afghan Armed Forces showed themselves unable to contain a well-trained and well-armed insurgency that was more motivated than the soldiers and the police, whose ranks were depleted by high numbers of desertions. International forces helped the Afghans on numerous occasions, especially with aerial bombardments. In fact, US President Barack Obama halted the withdrawal of American military forces, announcing that troops would stay in the country until 2017. In previous years, the winter meant a pause in the insurgency's campaigns, which resumed activity in the spring, but this year the violence did not stop. Moreover, a large number of foreign fighters joined the local insurgency. According to the minister of the Interior, these included more than 7,000 fighters, mostly Uzbeks and Pakistanis. The Islamic State (ISIS, which is known as ISIS-K in the province of Khorasan) became established in several territories, especially in Nangarhar, but also Zabul, Kunduz, Helmand and Logar. The ranks of ISIS-K were largely boosted by insurgents crossing from Pakistan's tribal areas, after Operation Zarb-e Azb and due to internal divisions in the Taliban movement following disagreement among its leaders regarding dialogue with the Afghan government. Nevertheless, the Taliban's territorial gains and the rise of ISIS were also the result of institutional weakness.

The level of violence in Afghanistan was the highest since 2001, although significant progress was made in the negotiating process between the Taliban and the government

The political crisis worsened amidst division by the creation of Afghanistan's national unity government, formed with two opposing leaders, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah. Progress on electoral reform was on hold due to the parties' inability to agree on many state affairs, which resulted in the postponement of the parliamentary elections scheduled for May. President Ghani also received opposition from Parliament and several institutions (including the National Directorate of Security intelligence agency, whose director resigned in December) after reaching out to Pakistan and sharing details with it regarding the peace process with the Taliban. In addition to other bilateral agreements, a memorandum of understanding was signed between both intelligence agencies and Afghanistan agreed to send its cadets to Pakistan for training. After several rounds of meetings between representatives of the High Peace Council and the Taliban in different countries, the first official day of dialogue between the Afghan government and the insurgency took place in Murree (Pakistan) in early July. However, the announcement of the death of Taliban leader Mullah Omar on 30 July (he died in April 2013, but his death was not officially announced until July 2015) divided the Taliban among those who wanted his successor to be the acting leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, and those who opposed him and the dialogue. As a result, the second round of talks scheduled for 31 July was cancelled. The process was postponed until Ashraf Ghani and Nawaz Sharif met at the UN climate summit in Paris, with the mediation of British Prime Minister David Cameron. After the Heart of Asia conference (Istanbul Process) in Islamabad in December, Ghani and Sharif agreed to resume talks with China and the US, but without the Taliban.[63]

63. See the summary on Afghanistan in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

India (Assam)	
Start:	1983
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(S) KPLT, KLO, MULTA, HUM
Intensity:	1
Trend:	End

Summary:
The armed opposition group the ULFA emerged in 1979 with the aim of liberating the state of Assam from Indian colonisation and establishing a sovereign State. The demographic transformations the state underwent after the partition of the Indian subcontinent, with the arrival of two million people from Bangladesh, are the source of the demand from the population of ethnic Assamese origin for recognition of their cultural and civil rights and the establishment of an independent State. During the 1980s and 1990s there were various escalations of violence and failed attempts at negotiation. A peace process began in 2005, leading to a reduction in violence, but this process was interrupted in 2006, giving rise to a new escalation of the conflict. Meanwhile, during the eighties, armed groups of Bodo origin, such as the NDFB, emerged demanding recognition of their identity against the majority Assamese population. Since 2011 there has been a significant reduction in violence and numerous armed groups have laid down their arms or began talks with the government.

Violence dropped considerably in the state of Assam compared to the previous year, as a result of which it was no longer considered as an active armed conflict. Fifty-nine people have been killed in the state as a result of the hostilities since 1983. According to the body count kept by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2015 was the year with the least fatalities since 1992, followed by 2012, when 91 deaths linked to the armed conflict were reported. Throughout the year, fighting remained sporadic between Indian security forces and various insurgent groups operating in the state. This trend was driven mainly by the reduction in the number of NDFB (S) insurgents, as the security forces stepped up their operations following the massacre of the Adivasi population perpetrated in December 2014, which significantly thinned the group's ranks. The security forces made dozens of arrests and several insurgents were killed in raids and clashes, which seriously impacted the group's operational capacity. Year-long efforts to cripple the NDFB (S) intensified in the first quarter, when security forces arrested 70 of its 190 members and several insurgents were killed in clashes with them. Another armed group active in the state, the ULFA(I) faction, which is opposed to peace talks, was also weakened due to the loss of support of the NSCN-K after the ceasefire agreement between the NSCN-K and the government was broken in March. The Naga group had taken advantage of the ceasefire situation to lend significant support to the Assamese group to obtain supplies. The number of bomb attacks in the state also fell considerably. All this, coupled with progress in the peace talks with the pro-negotiations faction of the ULFA, led to the reduction of violence in the state. However, despite the drop in violence, civilians continued to suffer from the consequences of the conflict. Police reports revealed that in the last three years, as many as 5,000 children have disappeared in the state, victims of human trafficking networks. Most of them had been internally displaced by violence and natural disasters and most were girls. Violence had a significant impact in terms of forced displacement. As a result of intercommunity violence in December 2014, 300,000 people were forcibly displaced, 90,000 of which remained living in temporary camps, unable to return to their homes. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), there were 113,000 internally displaced persons in the state of Assam, which makes it the Indian state with the second-largest number of displaced people after Jammu and Kashmir.

India (CPI-M)	
Start:	1967
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
The armed conflict in which the Indian government confronts the armed Maoist group the CPI-M (known as the Naxalites, in honour of the town where the movement was created) affects many states in India. The CPI-M emerged in West Bengal at the end of the sixties with demands relating to the eradication of the land ownership system, as well as strong criticism of the system of parliamentary democracy, which is considered as a colonial legacy. Since then, armed activity has been constant and it has been accompanied by the establishment of parallel systems of government in the areas under its control, which are basically rural ones. Military operations against this group, considered by the Indian government as terrorists, have been constant. In 2004, a negotiation process began which ended in failure. In the following years there was an escalation of violence that led the government to label the conflict as the main threat to national security. Since 2011 there has been a significant reduction in hostilities.

The armed conflict pitting the Indian security forces against the Naxalite insurgency in different states of the country remained active throughout the year, though a slight reduction in fatalities was reported compared to the previous year. According to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 251 deaths were accounted for as a result of the armed conflict. This fell in line with the trend reported in recent years, confirming that there has been a gradual reduction in the number of casualties since 2010, when the highest number of deaths in the last decade was reported with 1,180. Since then, the number has been reduced to almost one fifth. The state most affected by violence was Chhattisgarh, where 120 people died as a result of the conflict, followed by Jharkhand with 58, Odisha with 35 and Maharashtra with 17. In fact, while a decrease in violence was reported in the country, the

state of Chhattisgarh showed an escalation in clashes and a slightly higher body count than in 2014, which indicates that the armed conflict could be entering a phase of geographical concentration. Insurgents and security forces engaged in periodic clashes throughout the year, causing both military and civilian casualties. Chhattisgarh was the scene of some of the worst attacks. In April, a Maoist ambush in the district of Sukma killed seven policemen. In May, the insurgency kidnapped 250 people shortly before Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the district of Dantewada (one of the epicentres of the conflict) to sign economic agreements with major companies. One hostage was killed and the rest were released after the victim was accused of promoting infrastructure that the insurgency opposes.

Another major incident took place in the state of Odisha in September, when the Naxalite commander Sonadhar was killed before clashes with security forces. Sonadhar was accused of being responsible for an event that took place in 2013, when a convoy of the Indian National Congress Party in Chhattisgarh was attacked by Naxalites, killing 28 people, including one of the main party leaders in the state, Mahendra Karma. He had been one of the founders of Salwa Judum, a civilian counter-insurgent militia accused of serious violations of human rights and dismantled in 2011 after it was declared illegal and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The paramilitary organisation had also been accused of arming hundreds of young people from the poorest areas of the state to carry out counter-insurgency operations. However, coinciding with Modi's trip to Dantewada in May, one of Mahenda Karma's sons announced the reorganisation of Salwa Judum. Different human rights organisations denounced that the reconstitution of the organisation was linked to the recent government's deals with large companies to launch economic projects in the state of Chhattisgarh, as happened when the organisation was created a decade before.

India (Jammu and Kashmir)	
Start:	1989
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Governments, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, All Parties Hurriyat Conference, United Jihad Council
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=

Summary:
The armed conflict in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir has its origin in the dispute over the region of Kashmir which, since the independence and division of India and Pakistan, has confronted both states. On three occasions (1947 to 1948; 1965 and 1971) these countries had suffered from armed conflicts, with both of them claiming sovereignty over the region, divided between India, Pakistan and China. The armed conflict between India and Pakistan in 1947 gave rise to the current division and creation of a de facto border between both countries. Since 1989, the armed conflict has been moved to the interior of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where a whole host of rebel groups, in favour of the complete independence of the state or unconditional adhesion to Pakistan, confront the Indian security forces. Since the beginning of the peace process between India and Pakistan in 2004, there has been a considerable reduction in the violence, although the armed groups remain active.

According to the body count kept by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, violence in Kashmir killed 174 people in 2015, of which 20 were civilians, 41 were members of the security forces and 113 were insurgents. One of the most serious episodes occurred in August, when an exchange of fire between both border forces in Sialkot ended with three people dead and 16 wounded on the Indian side, and eight Pakistanis dead and 47 wounded. The climate of violence worsened with statements by some Indian politicians from the ruling party (BJP) that sparked protests and called for strikes. After Mufti Mohammed Sayeed came to power as minister of Kashmir (as a member of the PDP party, which ruled in alliance with the BJP), the government decided to release political prisoners who were not involved in criminal activities. However, the release of Masarat Alam Bhat (All Parties Hurriyat Conference, APHC) in March was rejected by the BJP, which prompted the government to declare that it would not release any other prisoner. In April, Minister Rajnath Singh speculated about abrogating Article 370, which grants special status to Kashmir. A month later, Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said it was a pity that the Indian soldiers had died fighting the insurgency and that terrorists had to be used to fight terrorists. The minister was referring to the pro-government paramilitary militia Ikhwan, whose impunity spread terror among the population in the 1990s.[64] More than a dozen former insurgents were victims of targeted killings, especially in Sopore. It was unclear who was behind these crimes, but the victims were mostly former members of Hizb-ul Mujahideen. In September, the High Court of Jammu ordered the police to impose a law prohibiting the slaughter of cattle and the sale and consumption of cow flesh (which has not been applied for decades in Kashmir) shortly before the celebration of the Muslim festival of sacrifice (Eid ul-Adha). Although the Supreme Court suspended the decree, the Eid was celebrated amidst mass protests. In response, the government blocked the Internet for three days and arrested several separatist leaders.

Pakistan also helped to strain the atmosphere with declarations considered provocative by the Indian government. In February, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reiterated his support for the right to self-determination

64. The Ikhwan militia was formed by former insurgents. At first, they joined the force as Indian Army informants in exchange for financial compensation and protection. Around 1994, they began to bear arms alongside the Army.

for Kashmiris at a meeting with APHC leaders in Azad Kashmir. In March, the foreign ministers of both countries met and agreed to cooperate, but Pakistani Army Chief Raheel Sharif threatened to retaliate if India opened fire on the border and stated that the Kashmir region was an indivisible part of Pakistan. A meeting between defence advisors was suspended due to the insistence of Pakistani advisor Sartaj Aziz to use the visit to meet with leaders of the APHC. At the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, both countries accused each other of escalating violence along the border. Sharif proposed a bilateral four-point plan to India to resume dialogue: to respect the ceasefire, not to resort to force, to demilitarise Kashmir and to withdraw troops from Siachen. The Indian foreign minister responded with several tweets saying that the answer was not to demilitarise Kashmir, but to de-terrorise Pakistan. In late 2015 there was rapprochement between both countries, largely brought about by US insistence. Both two prime ministers held an informal meeting at the summit on climate change in Paris. Later, in December, Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, whose attendance was not confirmed, participated in the Heart of Asia conference in Islamabad, where she exchanged proposals to resume talks. Also in December, after months of cancellations, a meeting between security advisors was held in Bangkok. The crucial step was taken by Narendra Modi phoning Nawaz Sharif to congratulate him for his birthday on Christmas Day. Modi decided to pay an unexpected visit to Lahore, from where Sharif led him to his residence in Raiwind. Although the meeting only lasted a few hours, it was the first time an Indian prime minister had set foot in Pakistan in 11 years.

The levels of violence in the armed conflict affecting Kashmir were similar to those in previous years, with the Pakistani and Indian governments helping to strain the atmosphere with their statements

Pakistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Pakistani Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, international insurgents, USA
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:
The armed conflict affecting the country is a result of the intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. Initially, the conflict played out in the area including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly called the North-West Frontier Province). After the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, members of its Government and militias, as well as several insurgent groups of different nationalities, including Al-Qaeda, found refuge in Pakistan, mainly in several tribal agencies, although the leadership was spread out over several towns (Quetta, Lahore or Karachi). While Pakistan initially collaborated with the US in the search for foreign insurgents (Chechens, Uzbeks) and members of al-Qaeda, it did not offer the same cooperation when it came to the Taliban leadership. The dissatisfaction of various groups of Pakistani origin who were part of the Taliban insurgency led to the creation in December 2007 of the Pakistani Taliban movement (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP), which began to commit attacks in the rest of Pakistan against both state institutions and civilians. With violence rising to previously unknown levels, and after a series of attacks that specifically targeted the Shiite, Ahmadiyya and Christian minorities, and to a lesser extent Sufis and Barelvis, public opinion turned in favour of eliminating the terrorist sanctuaries. In June 2014 the Army launched operation Zarb-e Azb to eradicate insurgents from the agencies of North and South Waziristan.

The Pakistani Army carried on with Operation Zarb-e Azb, which it launched in June 2014. According to the national intelligence agency's office of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), 3,400 insurgents were killed (183 of them leaders), 21,193 were arrested, 837 hideouts were destroyed, 488 soldiers lost their lives and 1,914 were wounded in battle. The Pakistani authorities did not provide information on civilian casualties or the number of displaced families resulting from the military operation.

In March, the Pakistani Army announced that it had ended the military campaign in the Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), but began a second, three-month operation to regain control of several areas under insurgent influence (the Bara and Tirah Valleys). However, the ISPR was the only source of information, so there is no way to verify this statement as no observers or journalists were allowed to access the area. Since the beginning of the operation, and especially in the wake of the terrorist attack on the school in Peshawar in December 2014, the Pakistani Army was granted full freedom of action to pursue the insurgency. In January, Parliament approved amendments to the Constitution and the Pakistan Army Act, 1952 that revoked several fundamental rights and granted military courts the jurisdiction to try civilian prisoners all over the country, including in the FATA. Despite the data provided by the ISPR, the TTP managed to strike various targets. In May, the group killed a counter-terrorism police officer in Peshawar. In September, an attack at the Badaber airbase, near Peshawar, killed 40 people, including 13 insurgents. The TTP also attacked various politicians, particularly a splinter group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar's (JuA). In June, an MP of Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League (PML-N), Chaudhry Shamshad, was killed in Gujranwala. In August, the JuA killed the minister of Punjab, Shuja Khanzada (PML-N). The attack took place at his home while he met with his supporters and killed another 18 people. Khanzada was considered responsible for the death of Malik Ishaq, leader of Lashkar-e Jhangvi, a sectarian terrorist group close to the TTP. Ishaq died along with two of his children and 13 of his militants during a shootout with police in July. In October, the JuA killed eight people in Dera Ghazi Khan, including MP Sardar Amjad Farooq Khosa, while 13 others were wounded.

In an attempt to improve the conditions of the population of the FATA, the All Parties Conference held in Islamabad in November unanimously agreed to approve a 22nd amendment to the Constitution to merge the tribal areas with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The amendment presented by the political parties granted citizenship rights to residents of the FATA and extended the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, which implied the abolition of Article 247 and the Frontier Crimes Regulations, which date from the colonial era. In what was seen as a tactic to delay the process, Nawaz Sharif presented a proposal to organise a committee to decide between creating a separate province from the tribal areas and merging them with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Some analysts thought that the military, which has showed itself to be opposed to changing the status of the FATA in the past, pressured the prime minister not to implement the reforms, at least for the duration of the military operation.

Despite optimistic accounts provided by the government of Pakistan, insurgent groups remained active in the country

Pakistan (Balochistan)	
Start:	2005
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, Pakistani Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:
Since the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, Balochistan, the richest province in terms of natural resources, but with some of the highest levels of poverty in the country, has suffered from four periods of armed violence (1948, 1958, 1963-69 and 1973-77) in which the rebel forces stated their objective of obtaining greater autonomy and even independence. In 2005, the armed rebel forces reappeared on the scene, basically attacking infrastructures linked to the extraction of gas. The opposition armed group, BLA, became the main opposing force to the presence of the central government, which it accused of making the most of the wealth of the province without giving any of it back to the local population. As a result of the resurgence of the armed opposition, a military operation was started in 2005 in the province, causing displacement of the civilian population and armed confrontation. In parallel, a movement of the civilian population calls clarifying the disappearance of hundreds, if not thousands, of Baluchi at the hands of the security forces of the State.

The violence did not stop in 2015 and claimed a high number of civilian and insurgent casualties. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 247 civilians, 90 members of the security forces and 298 insurgents lost their lives. In April, the government extended its military operation in Balochistan, according to the provisions of the National Action Plan. Shortly thereafter, it announced an amnesty for insurgents who laid down their weapons. The government also called for the extradition of some nationalist and rebel group leaders, including Hyrbyair Marri (BLA, in London) and Brahamdagh Bugti (BRP, in Geneva). The government said that it had identified 161 training camps, around 24 of which were located in Afghanistan and two in Iran. Nawaz Sharif provided evidence of India's alleged involvement in funding the Balochi insurgency during his visit to New York during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. In September, Balochistan Home Secretary Akbar Durrani declared that about 8,000 insurgents had been arrested and 204 killed in different operations. In Balochistan and the tribal areas, the media blackout prevented verification of these claims. On Independence Day (14 August), the government announced at an official ceremony that 400 insurgents had surrendered their weapons. According to official figures, the number may exceed 500. However, insurgent activity did not let up throughout the year. For example, in April, the separatist group Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) claimed responsibility for an attack that killed 20 Punjabi and Sindhi workers travelling by bus in the district of Kech. The next day, the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) revealed that it had killed 13 members of the BLF in Turbat. In late May, another bus was attacked, killing more than 20 Pashtuns, and the FC announced it had killed a commander and 12 members of the Balochistan Liberation Army. Attacks against the Shia community also continued. In October, during the month of Muharram, there were several attacks against Shia mosques and processions commemorating Ashura: more than 10 people died in a suicide attack in a mosque in Quetta; another suicide bomber killed 10 people in Bolan, six of them children; and a suicide bomber killed 16 people in a procession in Jacobabad.

The government expressed its willingness to talk with various insurgent and nationalist leaders to try to resolve the conflict. These announcements were frequent in the past, though Baloch nationalists complained that no real move was ever made to solve the problems of the Baloch people (the withdrawal of the Pakistani Army and paramilitary troops, investment in the province, the investigation of enforced disappearances and the release of political prisoners). The situation in the province deteriorated in 2015 due to the military operation and to the nationalists' opposition to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, who feared that it would take away resources from the province without benefitting local residents. Although concrete steps were taken in 2015 (the Khan of Kalat and Bahamdagh Bugti showed their willingness to negotiate), the context did not improve. In April, the murder of Pakistani rights activist Mahmoud Sabeen in Karachi showed to what extent it is taboo to draw attention to human rights violations in Balochistan. After the cancellation of an event at the University of Lahore that leaders of the association Voice of Baloch Missing Persons had been expected to attend, including the activist Mama Qadeer, Mahmud decided to hold it

at her café. While driving home, she was shot dead in the presence of her mother. In September, the main witness to the murder was also shot dead. The government did not submit any plan to improve the living conditions of the Balochi people, half of which live below the poverty line.

The Burmese government and eight armed groups signed a ceasefire agreement, but clashes persisted with insurgent groups excluded from it

South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups (KNU/KNLA, SSA-S, KNPP, UWSA, CNF, ALP, DKBA, KNPLAC, SSNPLO, KIO)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
Since 1948, dozens of armed insurgent groups of ethnic origin have confronted the government of Myanmar, demanding recognition of their particular ethnic and cultural features and calling for reforms in the territorial structure of the State or simply for independence. Since the start of the military dictatorship in 1962, the armed forces have been fighting armed groups in the ethnic states. These groups combined demands for self-determination for minorities with calls for democratisation shared with the political opposition. In 1988, the government began a process of ceasefire agreements with some of the insurgent groups, allowing them to pursue their economic activities (basically trafficking in drugs and precious stones). However, the military operations have been constant during these decades, particularly directed against the civil population in order to do away with the armed groups' bases, leading to the displacement of thousands of people. In 2011 the Government began to approach the insurgency and since then there have been ceasefire agreements with almost all of the armed groups.

The armed conflict pitting the security forces of Myanmar against different ethnic armed insurgent groups remained active throughout the year. The signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement in October failed to stop the clashes, because the groups excluded from signing it kept fighting. The agreement was signed by the Burmese government and eight armed organisations (the KNU, KNLA-PC, DKBA, Pa-O NLO, CNF, ALP, ABSDF and RCS/SSA-S). However, groups controlling large territories and large arsenals, such as the UWSA, SSA and KIA, were left out of the agreement.[65] The year 2015 began with a significant escalation of violence that especially intensified in the special region of Kokang (Shan State) in February with clashes between the Burmese forces and the Kokang armed opposition group MNDAA. Nearly 60 soldiers, 25 insurgents and between 50 and 100 civilians may have died in the fighting. In addition, tens of thousands of people were displaced to China fleeing the violence (the Kokang population is ethnically of Chinese origin). Clashes between the Burmese Armed Forces and the MNDAA continued at different times of the year. In April, the Burmese Army said that as many as 126 soldiers and 74 Kokang rebels had been killed since the start of the fighting, while the number of civilian fatalities was unknown. It also accused other insurgent groups of involvement in the attacks, particularly the KIA, SSA-S and TNLA, although these organisations denied any participation. The Burmese government imposed and later extended the state of emergency and martial law in the area. In June, the MNDAA announced a unilateral ceasefire resulting from the pressure applied by the Chinese government. However, the fighting continued and the government did not honour the ceasefire, saying that the group had to lay down its weapons.

There were also major clashes between the Burmese Armed Forces and the armed group KIA in the area of Hpakant, one of the most affected by the armed conflict, which forced the displacement of thousands of people during the year. At times during the year, these confrontations occurred on nearly a daily basis. In addition, more sporadic confrontations were reported with other armed groups such as the RCSS/SSA-S, SSA-N, DKBA and TNLA in areas they controlled in the states of Shan and Kachin. In mid-September, the election campaign in southern Shan State was suspended at the request of the RCSS because it claimed that the government had stepped up its attacks on the SSA-S (its armed wing) in areas under its control. However, the group finally decided to join the ceasefire agreement, which increased tensions between the SSA-S and TNLA. In November, the Burmese government and the SSA-N reached an agreement that enabled improvements in security in Shan State. According to figures collected by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), over 660,000 people remained displaced in Myanmar as a result of the armed conflict.

Philippines (Mindanao-Abu Sayyaf)	
Start:	1991
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Abu Sayyaf
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=

Summary:
Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Abu Sayyaf group has been fighting to establish an independent Islamic state in the Sulu Archipelago and the western regions of Mindanao (south). Although it initially recruited hostile members

65. See "The transition to democracy and peace in Myanmar" in chapter 5 (Opportunities for peace in 2016).

of other armed groups such as the MILF or the MNLF, it later moved away ideologically from both organisations and more systematically resorted to kidnapping, extortion, decapitating and bomb attacks, which led it to be included in the list of the USA and EU terrorist organisations. The government conceded that its counterinsurgency strategy of recent years had greatly weakened the group's leadership and military capacity, however at the same time it warned that Abu Sayyaf continued to be a threat for the state due to the numerous resources that it obtains from kidnapping and from its alleged alliance with organisations that are considered to be terrorist ones, such as Al Qaeda or Jemaah Islamiyah.

The Philippine Armed Forces increased military pressure against Abu Sayyaf in Sulu province in order to neutralise its top leaders, detain members of the transnational organisation Jemaah Islamiyah allegedly linked to Abu Sayyaf and free people kidnapped by the group. The government stated that **133 Abu Sayyaf members and 18 soldiers were killed and another 164 fighters and 80 soldiers were wounded in Sulu in 2015**. These figures do not include the civilian casualties resulting from the conflict or insurgents or soldiers who died outside Sulu province, the main stronghold of the armed group. The government also announced that 16 people kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf escaped, were released or were rescued in 2015. Later in the year, the group was estimated to hold four people hostage, including a Dutch citizen. Some major events took place during the year. In January, the Philippine Army used air support to capture four Abu Sayyaf camps in the region of Sumisip in an operation that killed an unknown number of combatants. In late February, in the jungle region of Patikul (Sulu), 24 Abu Sayyaf fighters and two soldiers were killed and another 50 people were injured. The leader of Abu Sayyaf, Radullan Sahiron, escaped alive. Following these clashes, the Philippine Armed Forces announced the start of a counter-offensive against Abu Sayyaf and the BIFF to defeat both groups militarily. Later in April, 14 people were killed and at least 25 were injured in fighting between the Philippine Armed Forces and Abu Sayyaf in Patikul (Sulu province), while in May, around 20 people were killed in military operations to regain control of two towns on the island of Basilan that had been occupied by Abu Sayyaf. In late August, the Philippine Armed Forces stated that over 40 Abu Sayyaf members were killed and dozens more injured during a counter-insurgency operation that the government claimed would have handed the group one of its most significant setbacks in recent times.

Reports indicate that the highest levels of violence during the year occurred during the second half of December. According to official figures, at least 44 people (mostly fighters) lost their lives and about 60 people were injured in several clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and Abu Sayyaf in the Sulu Archipelago, especially in the regions of Al-Barka and Buhanginan. In December, President Benigno Aquino had ordered intensified operations against the group, shortly after the Malaysian prime minister had urged the Philippine government to increase actions against Abu Sayyaf following the kidnapping and beheading of a Malaysian citizen in Sulu. In this regard, at the government's request, a regional court in Basilan officially declared Abu Sayyaf to be a terrorist group. The organisation was already on the US and EU's lists of terrorist organisations. Manila argued that the decision would enhance and boost the effectiveness of the fight against Abu Sayyaf and operations to rescue kidnapped people. On several occasions during the year, the government had warned of the threat to the state posed by Abu Sayyaf's frequent practices, including kidnapping and attacks with explosives, which the government claimed increased throughout the year. An example can be seen in the detonation of bombs in leisure centres and even buses in Zamboanga. Abducting people become one of the terrorist group's main sources of funding. Abu Sayyaf kidnapped several foreigners, achieving significant media attention. According to some sources, it is common for organised criminal groups to hand people they have kidnapped over to Abu Sayyaf to maximise the ransom they receive.

Philippines (Mindanao-BIFF)	
Start:	2015
Type:	Self-Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, BIFF
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The origins of BIFF date back to 2008 when its leader and founder, Ameril Umbra Kato, then commander of MILF, carried out a campaign of attacks in several provinces in Mindanao after the Supreme Court declared illegal the signing of the Agreement on Ancestral Domains, scheduled for August of that year. Since then, public and explicit opposition of Ameril Umbra Kato to peace talks between the government and the MILF were causing a major rift between the leadership of the MILF (in favour of resuming dialogue and maintaining the validity of the ceasefire between the two parties) and Kato, who formally founded BIFF in 2010. These is disparate information about BIFF's membership, military capabilities and alliances with other groups also operating in Mindanao. BIFF increased its armed activity as the Government and MILF made advances in peace negotiations and signed several agreements, such as the Framework Agreement on Bangsamoro (2012) or the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (2014). In 2015 the Government stated that the increase in counterinsurgency campaigns against the BIFF and the death of Ameril Umbra Kato would have greatly weakened the group.

Although the BIFF has been very active in opposing the peace process between Manila and the MILF in recent years, the intensity of the violence in 2015 explains why this case is studied as an armed conflict. According to official figures and media reports, **at least 300 people died in 2015 and many others were injured either in clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and the BIFF** or by violence largely committed by the BIFF. Most of

these casualties occurred during the counter-insurgency operation carried out by the military against the group between early January and late March. The government estimated that 139 fighters, 10 soldiers and 59 civilians were killed, dozens of people were injured and more than 120,000 civilians were forced to flee their homes, mainly in the provinces of North Cotabato and Maguindanao. Despite operations launched by UNHCR and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to provide humanitarian aid to the displaced population, several organisations warned of poor conditions in evacuation camps. The Philippine Armed Forces stated that the aforementioned offensive may have met its target of neutralising 50% of the BIFF's troops (including some of the leaders of the group), dismantling some of its facilities to manufacture explosives and end the siege of explosive expert Abdul Basit. He allegedly has links to organisations such as Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiyah and the BIFF and is wanted by the governments of the Philippines and the United States. The leader and founder of the BIFF, Ameril Umbra Kato, died in April shortly after the counter-insurgency operation ended. His health had been delicate since suffering a heart attack in late 2011. The chief of the Philippine Armed Forces declared that Kato's death weakened the BIFF enormously because he was its political, military and spiritual leader and said that the BIFF had fragmented into small units due to disputes between several commanders. Meanwhile, the MILF called on BIFF members who had no pending criminal cases against them to rejoin the MILF and support the peace negotiations.

Nearly 200 people were killed during an offensive conducted by the Philippine Armed Forces in Mindanao against the BIFF in early 2015

After Kato's death, the group's spokesperson announced the appointment of Sheik Ismail Abubakar (also known as Commander Bungos) to be the new head of the BIFF. He had family ties with Kato and was the BIFF's second-in-command of political affairs. In the following months, the BIFF carried out a series of attacks in the province of Maguindanao, but in July it acknowledged that it was unable to fight the state in an open war and therefore changed its strategy towards guerrilla warfare. At the end of 2015, specifically on 24 and 25 December and on the last night of the year, the BIFF carried out a series of coordinated attacks in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and North Cotabato that killed 13 people (nine civilians and four fighters) and forcibly displaced around 6,000 people. Although the Philippine Armed Forces deployed additional troops to the region and urged civilians to stay calm and to return to their places of origin, some media outlets reported that civilians were buying weapons for surveillance and self-defence. In addition, the government warned that the BIFF could carry out more attacks to increase instability in the region and in retaliation for recent losses. By December, the National Intelligence Committee had already warned of possible attacks during the Christmas season in Mindanao. Meanwhile, the BIFF said that those who died during the aforementioned incident were armed and engaged in combat, but residents of the attacked communities denied these accusations and said that they did not form part of the Christian militia Pulahan. In January 2015, around 70 people were killed, 44 of them police officers, in a clash between a special police force and fighters belonging to the MILF, the BIFF and other insurgent groups in Mamasapano.[66]

Philippines (NPA)	
Start:	1969
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Government, NPA
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=

Summary:
The NPA, the armed branch of the Communist party of the Philippines, started the armed fight in 1969 which reached its zenith during the 1980s under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Although the internal purges, the democratisation of the country and the offers of amnesty weakened the support and the legitimacy of the NPA at the beginning of the 1990s, it is currently calculated that it is operational in most of the provinces in the country. After the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001, its inclusion in the list of terrorist organisations of the USA and the EU greatly eroded confidence between the parties and, to a good degree, caused the interruption of the peace conversations with Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's government. The NPA, whose main objective is to access power and the transformation of the political system and the socio-economic model, has as its political references the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front (NDF), which bring together various Communist organisations. The NDF has been holding peace talks with the government since the early 1990s.

Despite tentative negotiations between the NDF and the government to resume peace talks, the Philippine Armed Forces and the NPA engaged in several clashes throughout the year, especially in Mindanao, which has recently emerged as the main bastion of the armed group. The death toll caused by the armed conflict was unknown, although **the Philippine Armed Forces put the figure at 3,000 in the last eight years. They estimated that in 2015 the number of NPA members fell from 4,443 to 3,926, that 269 fighters had surrendered or been captured and that the number of clashes instigated by the NPA dropped from 168 in 2011 to 119 in 2015.** The number of NPA combatants provided by the government at the end of year was inconsistent with figures published earlier (3,200 fighters in late 2014 and less than 2,900 at the end of the first quarter of 2015) and may indicate that the military capability of the NPA has remained relatively stable at around

66. See the summary on the Philippines (Mindanao) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

4,000 fighters since 2010. The Philippine Army also declared that in late 2015, the number of NPA fighters in Mindanao, its stronghold in recent years, dropped by 17% (from 2,035 to 1,691), the NPA's presence decreased in municipalities by 25% (from 547 to 413) and the number of fronts decreased from 29 to 24. The government also stated that between 2011 and March 2015, 79 NPA leaders and officers had been neutralised, nine of them in 2015, which weakened the group significantly. Attention should be drawn to the arrest of Adelberto Silva in Bacoor in mid-June. According to media reports, he was the secretary general of the Communist Party of the Philippines (PCP), the successor of Wilma Austria (arrested in March 2014) and the second-highest-ranking authority of the CPP and the NPA, only below the group's founder, Jose Maria Sison. Days later, the commander Leoncio Pitao, also known as Ka Parago, died in the city of Davao. Some analysts think that Pitao was one of the most experienced and highest-ranking figures in the NPA. Consequently, the Philippine Armed Forces declared that these developments could lead to the complete disintegration of the NPA in the region. The NDF claimed that Pitao was the victim of an extrajudicial execution and the Philippine Armed Forces may have committed war crimes. In July, the new chief of the Philippine Army repeated that the NPA was growing weaker, saying that his goal was to turn the insurgents into a militarily insignificant organisation (with less than 1,000 fighters) by the end of 2016. He also announced his plans to concentrate most counter-insurgency efforts in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, the **NPA not only denied that the group had been weakened, but claimed to have more than 10,000 fighters and 110 active fronts in 71 provinces, with a solid presence in 800 municipalities in late March when celebrating the 46th anniversary of its foundation**. The organisation also said that it had substantially increased its impact in Mindanao since Benigno Aquino's term of office started in 2010, going from 42 fronts to 47 and boosting the number of tactical offensives from 250 in 2010 to 400 in 2014. The NPA also protested against the decision of the US government to continue to include the group and the Communist Party of the Philippines on its list of terrorist organisations and denied the Philippine government's accusations about the use of anti-personnel mines, extortion, the recruitment of minors and attacks against indigenous populations. Concerning this last point, one of the episodes that generated the most controversy was the murder of three indigenous people (known as Lumad in the Philippines) in the town of Lianga (province of Surigao del Sur) in early September. This incident forcibly displaced nearly 2,000 people. Several human rights organisations blamed the attack on the paramilitary group Magahat Bagani Force, which according to these organisations had been trained and financed by the military for deployment in counter-insurgency operations. The governor of Surigao del Sur said that he had repeatedly asked the Philippine Armed Forces to dismantle the anti-communist militia, but to no avail, while another human rights organisation accused the military of committing human rights violations against the indigenous and peasant population. The Philippine Armed Forces denied the accusations and even the president publicly declared that there was no campaign of persecution or harassment against the Lumad population. In fact, some Lumad organisations denied the state's responsibility for the aforementioned attack and accused the NPA of massively recruiting their people. Several sources indicated that Lumads make up a significant proportion of the NPA's combatants in Mindanao and other regions. Finally, it should be noted that both sides accused each other of violating the cessation of hostilities agreed from 15 to 19 January 2015 (for the visit of Pope Francis) and from 23 December 2015 to 3 January 2016, dates when truces have historically been declared.

Thailand (south)	
Start:	2004
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, secessionist armed opposition groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
The conflict in the south of Thailand dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the then Kingdom of Siam and the British colonial power on the Malaysian peninsula decided to split the Sultanate of Pattani, leaving some territories under the sovereignty of what is currently Malaysia and others (the southern provinces of Songkhla, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat) under Thai sovereignty. During the entire 20th century, there had been groups that had fought to resist the policies of political, cultural and religious homogenisation promoted by Bangkok or to demand the independence of these provinces, of Malay-Muslim majority. The conflict reached its moment of culmination in the 1960s and 70s and decreased in the following decades, thanks to the democratisation of the country. However, the coming into power of Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001, involved a drastic turn in the counterinsurgency policy and preceded a breakout of armed conflict from which the region has been suffering since 2004. The civil population, whether Buddhist or Muslim, is the main victim of the violence, which is not normally vindicated by any group.

Both the Thai government and some research centres confirmed that **the levels of violence in the south of the country dropped compared to the previous year and were at their lowest level since the armed conflict started in 2004.** On several occasions during the year, the Thai government stated that violence in the Muslim-majority southern provinces had dropped approximately by half compared to the previous year. The research centre Deep South Watch counted 246 fatalities in 2015, clearly lower than the 341 reported the previous year and the 456 in 2013. The number

of people injured in the armed conflict also dropped from 987 in 2013 to 544 in 2015. According to the research centre, **during the 12-year armed conflict, 6,543 people have died (an average of 545 each year) and 11,919 have been injured (993 each year) in nearly 15,400 documented episodes of violence** (an average of 1,281 per year, whereas 674 episodes were reported in 2015). The months of May and October were the most violent of 2015. According to statistics compiled by the Southernmost Provinces Research Database, the number of bomb attacks in southern Thailand dropped by 50% compared to 2014 and by 65% compared to 2007, the year with the highest prevalence of this type of attack. Some of the incidents that had the most political impact during the year included the simultaneous or consecutive explosion of around 30 devices in different parts of Yala province over three days in mid-May; the explosion of a device on the resort island of Koh Samui that injured seven people in April; a string of simultaneous attacks in several towns in the provinces of Songkhla and Narathiwat that killed seven people and wounded 12 in mid-July; and coordinated attacks against several targets in Narathiwat province such as residential areas, a Buddhist temple and public buildings that killed three people and wounded 14. According to various analysts, some of these episodes of violence were linked to the development of the peace talks and were perpetrated by the BRN (the main armed group in the region) to remind the government who controlled the combatants on the ground and to distinguish itself from Mara Patani, a platform that encompasses six insurgent groups: the BRN, three different PULO factions, the BIPP and the GMIP.

The Thai government declared that violence in the southern part of the country was at its lowest levels since the armed conflict began in 2004

The Thai government attributed the reduction in violence to the new counter-insurgency and conflict management strategies put in place after the coup d'état in 2014. Examples can be seen in the start of the partial withdrawal of the military and police troops in the south of the country, followed by the increased recruitment of security force members from Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat provinces (instead of deploying troops from other regions of the country); more sophisticated intelligence work; the increase in checkpoints and raids in urban areas; rapprochement with influential people and organisations in the south of the country to reduce the insurgent groups' room to manoeuvre; and the incentives given to some insurgents, including the possibility of receiving provisional immunity during Ramadan to see their families. In addition to these tactics, some analysts believe that one of the reasons for the drop in violence was the commitment of the insurgent organisations to minimise the number of killings (especially among the civilian population) since peace talks began in 2013 and were later resumed by the military junta in 2015. In this regard, some armed organisations claimed that the drop in violence in 2015 was not due so much to a lack of means, but was instead a gesture of goodwill to the Thai government. They also claimed to be expanding their presence and influence to other areas, such as Songkhla province. In this regard, attacks like the one in July 2013 in Bangkok and in April 2015 on the island of Koh Samui garnered greater international media attention than the daily episodes of violence occurring in southern Thailand and some analysts believe that the insurgent groups could decide to change tactics and extend their operations beyond the southern, Muslim-majority provinces of Thailand since they have not come any closer to achieving their goals. Finally, the US government released a report in late June indicating that there was no evidence of ties between the groups operating in the south of the country and the armed group Islamic State (ISIS) and no signs that any foreign armed groups were present there.

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Ukraine	
Start:	2014
Type:	Government, Identity, Self-government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, pro-Russian armed actors in eastern provinces, Russia
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:
Considered in transition since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and a country of great geostrategic importance, Ukraine is undergoing a major socio-political crisis and armed conflict in its eastern regions as the scenario of the most serious crisis between the West and Russia since the Cold War. Preceded by a cluster of hotspots across the country (mass pro-European and anti-government demonstrations, the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich and his regime, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, anti-Maidan protests and the emergence of armed groups in the east), the situation in eastern Ukraine degenerated into armed conflict in the second quarter of 2014, pitting pro-Russian separatist militias, supported by Moscow, against state forces under the new pro-European authorities. Over time, issues such as the status of the eastern provinces were added to the international geostrategic dimension (political, economic and military rivalry between Russia and the West in Eastern Europe and Russia's demonstration of force for the benefit of its own public opinion, among other issues). Affecting the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, the war has had great impact on the civilian population, especially in terms of forced displacement. The parties to the conflict are participating in negotiations led by the Trilateral Contact Group (OSCE, Russia and Ukraine).

The conflict in eastern Ukraine remained active in 2015, with serious escalations but also periods of relative calm, especially in the last few months of the

year. **According to figures from the UN (considered conservative by the organisation itself), 9,115 people have been killed and 21,000 have been wounded from the beginning of the war (mid-April 2014) to early December 2015.** In 2015, around 4,400 people were killed and 11,000 seriously wounded (in 2014 around 4,700 people died and 10,000 were wounded). The International Monitoring Displacement Centre (IDMC) estimated that the war had displaced 1,431,800 people within Ukraine in mid-August 2015. Others fled the country as a result of the conflict. Thus, according to figures released by UNHCR, at the end of the year 1,103,212 people were seeking asylum or other forms of legal residency in neighbouring countries, mostly in Russia (858,363 people) and Belarus (127,620 people). In addition, about 2.9 million people who remained in the conflict zone (2.7 million in areas under rebel control and 200,000 in areas under government control) continued to face serious difficulties in late 2015, especially regarding access to health care, housing, social services and subsidies, with many of them continuing to rely on humanitarian aid, according to the UN. **A severe outbreak of violence lasted until mid-February,** mainly in the Donetsk airport and the surrounding area. The violence also partially expanded to the strategic port city of Mariupol and included the rebel military siege of the Debaltsevo railway junction, key for communication between the rebel areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. The most serious incidents during this period included an attack in Mariupol on 24 January that killed 30 civilians and wounded 112, a missile attack on a bus in Volnovakha (Donetsk) that killed 12 civilians and wounded around 30 and an attack on a tram and a vehicle in which 13 civilians lost their lives. **The escalation led to intense negotiations that resulted in the Minsk II agreement on 12 February, which included aspects like a ceasefire starting on 15 February, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and the creation of a buffer zone and the withdrawal of foreign weapons and troops**, in addition to other security and political-related aspects.[67] Despite the agreement, the rebels maintained the siege of Debaltsevo until Ukraine withdrew its troops on 18 February. In the last three weeks of January alone, 224 civilians were killed and more than 500 were wounded, largely by indiscriminate shelling on residential areas controlled by both the Ukrainian government (Avdiika, Debaltsevo, Popasna, Schastia, Stanychno-Luhanske) and the rebels (Donetsk). After the Minsk II ceasefire, there was a significant reduction in violence, although both actors continued to trade blame for violating the agreement.

The war in Ukraine killed over 4,400 people and wounded 11,000 in 2015, while new agreements were reached that reduced the violence, including a drop in indiscriminate shelling

Around mid-year, there was a further escalation of violence, with a substantive increase in ceasefire violations and the deployment of heavy weaponry in the buffer zone. Thus, between mid-May and mid-August, 105 civilians were killed and 308 others wounded, doubling the figures of the period from mid-February to mid-May. The UN stated that the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the contact line was incomplete and denounced the use of artillery, mortars, combat tanks and multiple missile launch systems. The presence and flow of foreign fighters and sophisticated weaponry and ammunition from Russia was also identified once again. Faced with this new escalation and with diplomatic pressure, the Ukrainian government and rebel authorities reached a new ceasefire, which began on 1 September and led to a further reduction in violence. Later that month, **a new agreement was reached on the withdrawal of tanks, mortars and artillery of less than 100 mm calibre** to a distance of 15 kilometres from the line of contact under the supervision of the OSCE, leading to a situation of relative calm and stability that also coincided with greater and more direct Russian military involvement in Syria. After a further increase in incidents in November and warnings of the irregular implementation of the agreement by the OSCE, the parties agreed to a new truce to take effect in the early hours of 23 December to enable the celebration of the New Year and Orthodox Christmas holidays. Nonetheless, allegations of non-compliance and violent incidents continued. **A report issued by the UN in late 2015 stated that there was a reduction in hostilities between mid-August and mid-November, the longest period without indiscriminate bombing in residential areas. The report also warned that people were still being killed, especially with improvised explosive devices.** During the year, there were also low-intensity incidents outside the war zone, like various attacks in Kharkov (Odessa province), including the explosion of a bomb that killed four people and injured a dozen on 22 February. On the same day, Ukraine celebrated the first anniversary of the departure of President Yanukovich. Dozens of people were arrested on charges of sabotage. However, these incidents did not open new fronts of violence. In August, demonstrations organised by Ukrainian national parties against a constitutional amendment that would approve legislation giving special status to the regions under rebel control ended in clashes between demonstrators and security forces. The explosion of a grenade killed three members of the National Guard, while 120 people were injured during the unrest.

67. See the summary on Ukraine in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

Russia and Caucasus

Russia (Dagestan)	
Start:	2010
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Dagestan, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
Dagestan –which is the largest, most highly populated republic in the north of the Caucasus, and with the greatest ethnic diversity– has been facing an increase in conflicts since the end of the 1990s. The armed rebel forces of an Islamic nature, which defend the creation of an Islamic state in the north of the Caucasus, confront the local and federal authorities, in the context of periodical attacks and counterinsurgency operations. The armed opposition is headed by a network of armed units of an Islamist nature known as Sharia Jamaat. The armed violence in Dagestan is the result of a group of factors, including the regionalisation of the Islam rebel forces from Chechnya as well as the local climate in Dagestan of violations of human rights, often set within the "fight against terrorism". All of this takes place in a fragile social and political context, of social ill due to the abuses of power and the high levels of unemployment and poverty, despite the wealth of natural resources. This is made even more complicated by interethnic tensions, rivalry for political power and violence of a criminal nature.

Dagestan remained the northern Caucasian republic most affected by violence between security forces and Islamist insurgents, although there was a significant reduction in fatalities and significant changes in the rebel ranks at the same time, as they gradually joined the armed group Islamic State (ISIS). Although insurgent commanders from the northern Caucasus had begun leaving the Caucasus Emirate and pledging allegiance to ISIS in 2014, the schisms worsened in 2015. The Caucasus Emirate's top leader, Aliaskhab Kebekov, a native of Dagestan, criticised the shift in allegiance. In February, the top leader of the Dagestani insurgency, Said Abu Muhammad Arakansky (Kamil Saidov), who succeeded former Dagestani leader Rustam Asilderov (who joined ISIS in December 2014), endorsed Kebekov's criticism of the deserting commanders and rebels. However, the cases of rebels joining ISIS increased and the Caucasian Emirate suffered substantial losses to its senior-ranking members in operations carried out by the security forces throughout the year. In June, a statement claiming to speak for all the emirs of the Caucasian Emirate declared loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS. In June, an ISIS spokesman announced the creation of the Province of the Caucasus (Wilayaat al-Qawqaz), which establishes provinces in republics of the northern Caucasus (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and other joint province in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia). In addition, Dagestani insurgent leader Rustam Asilderov was appointed emir of the branch of ISIS in the northern Caucasus. In the second half of the year, some analysts pointed out that most insurgents had become members of ISIS, while others raised questions about the extent to which the Caucasian Emirate had been dismantled. In late 2015, Russian authorities considered any insurgent killed in the republic to be a member of ISIS, including fighters still loyal to the Caucasian Emirate, according to researchers.

The insurgency in the northern Caucasus faced internal fractures over remaining loyal to the Caucasus Emirate or joining ISIS, including in Dagestan

Violence between security forces and rebel groups continued in Dagestan. According to the annual report of the independent website Caucasian Knot, in 2015 more than 120 people lost their lives (about 100 of which were insurgents) and 30 others were injured (half civilians and half members of the security forces). These figures indicated a reduction in violence compared to previous years (208 dead and 85 injured in 2014, 341 dead and at least 300 wounded in 2013). **Kebekov, the top leader of the regional insurgency since 2014 and the first leader of the Caucasus Emirate not of Chechen origin, was killed in a special operation in April in the Dagestani district of Buynaksk**. Four other people lost their lives, including the rebel leader of the district of Untsukulsky in Dagestan, Shamil Gasanov, and the leader of the central sector in Dagestan, Omar Magomedov. The insurgency faced further setbacks in August, including **the death of Kebekov's successor to the leadership of the Caucasian Emirate, Magomed Suleimanov, and the leader of the Dagestani branch, Kamil Saidov**, along with other insurgents, as part of another special operation in the district of Untsukulsky. Throughout the year, clashes, attacks and special operations struck in different parts of Dagestan, with exceptional measures taken. For example, seven suspected insurgents were killed in a special operation in the capital (Makhachkala) in March; a rebel leader from the sector of Gimry was killed in another operation in late June; and ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack near a major tourist attraction, the citadel in Derbent, Dagestan's second-largest city, killing an officer and wounding 10 people in late December. According to the Dagestani police, tourists were among the injured. ISIS claimed that the attack was directed against Russian intelligence personnel. Once again the armed conflict in Dagestan had a serious impact on the civilian population, including deaths and injuries, coupled with a climate of abuse and impunity for the security forces. In the second half of the year, the number of civilians killed and wounded in the conflict increased, including the killing of several imams. Some people were also abducted and measures of collective punishment were imposed on relatives of suspected insurgents. The counter-terrorist operations also entailed restrictions on movement for civilians and raids. Furthermore, the authorities kept up pressure on parts of the population practicing Salafist Islam, including mass arrests.

South-east Europe

Turkey (southeast)	
Start:	1984
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The PKK, created in 1978 as a political party of a Marxist-Leninist nature and led by Abdullah Öcalan, announced in 1984, an armed offensive against the government, undertaking a campaign of military rebellion to reclaim the independence of Kurdistan, which was heavily responded to by the government in defence of territorial integrity. The war that was unleashed between the PKK and the government particularly affected the Kurdish civil population in the southeast of Turkey, caught in the crossfire and the victims of the persecutions and campaigns of forced evacuations carried out by the government. In 1999, the conflict took a turn, with the arrest of Öcalan and the later communication by the PKK of giving up the armed fight and the transformation of their objectives, leaving behind their demand for independence to centre on claiming the recognition of the Kurdish identity within Turkey. Since then, the conflict has shifted between periods of ceasefire (mainly between 2000 and 2004) and violence, coexisting alongside democratisation measures and attempts at dialogue. The expectations that had built up since 2009 were dashed by increasing political and social tension and the end of the so-called Oslo talks between Turkey and the PKK in 2011. In late 2012, the government announced the resumption of talks. The war in Syria, which began as a revolt in 2011, once again laid bare the regional dimension of the Kurdish issue and the cross-border scope of the PKK issue, whose Syrian branch took control of the predominantly Kurdish areas in the country.

The situation in Turkey underwent a dramatic change with the collapse of the peace process, the resumption of war, its spread to urban centres in the southeast of the country and serious attacks by the armed group Islamic State (ISIS). Annual figures differ depending on the source, but they all put the death toll in hundreds. ICG reported that 194 members of the security forces, at least 221 PKK fighters and 151 civilians were killed from July to mid-December.[68] The presidency stated that 3,100 PKK members were killed; the Turkish Army announced that about 500 insurgents were killed between early December and early January 2016 alone. The PKK claimed that 220 Kurdish fighters were killed, along with 1,544 members of the security forces in 2015. Local NGOs put the number of civilian victims between August and December at over 160. In the first quarter, the dialogue was cancelled, overruled by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and affected by the pre-electoral campaign and by regional instability.[69] This gave rise to an even more volatile scenario, with some clashes between the Turkish Army and guerrillas. In May, the PKK accused the Turkish Army of ending the official ceasefire that had been an implicit response to the PKK's unilateral ceasefire declared in 2013. The armed group pledged not to engage in offensive actions during the election campaign, which witnessed serious political and social tension. This was evident in the social polarisation of Erdogan's pro-regime presidential agenda; the electoral rivalry between the ruling AKP and the pro-Kurdish party HDP; the HDP's commitment to surpass the 10% threshold; democratic regression aggravated by the security law passed in March; and the serious crisis gripping the region. The HDP suffered more than 100 attacks in 60 provinces during the electoral period, including one at an election rally in Diyarbakir in June that killed four people, wounded 100 and was blamed on ISIS. The Kurdish movement denounced the existence of ISIS cells in Turkey. Clashes in the city between Islamist Kurds and pro-PKK forces shortly afterwards led to several deaths and injuries. The AKP lost its absolute majority (40.87% of the vote and 258 of 550 seats) and the HDP made gains (13.12% of the vote and 80 seats). In the following months, the political class failed to agree on an electoral coalition, which led to early elections in November.

Open war resumed between Turkey and the PKK guerrillas, spreading to urban areas with a severe impact on civilians, while ISIS emerged attacking pro-Kurdish targets

The situation boiled over in the second half of the year. **On 20 July, 33 people were killed and around 100 were wounded in an attack blamed on ISIS in Suruç near the Syrian border. Most of the victims were young Turks who supported the city of Kobane (Syria).** The Kurdish movement said that the government was ultimately responsible for the massacre. This was followed by several killings of members of the security forces by people linked to the PKK and by the PKK itself, leaving the truce unheeded. In turn, **the government launched a military and police campaign later in the month that was presented as an offensive against ISIS and the PKK, and in practice led to the resumption of large-scale war against the PKK and the Kurdish movement as a whole**. This included the shelling of PKK areas in Turkey and northern Iraq; mass arrests, including of civilians and elected representatives; and special military operations in Kurdish urban centres, some of which witnessed the creation of Kurdish armed militias and unilateral declarations of autonomy by some Kurdish city councils. **Human rights organisations denounced the disproportionate nature of the special siege operations and curfews and their severe impact on civilians**, such as those killed and wounded, including children; restrictions on access to health care, water and food; serious damage to homes; media blackouts; and restrictions on movement. In September, the town

68. International Crisis Group, *A Sisyphean Task? Resuming Turkey and PKK Peace Talks*, Crisis Group Europe Briefing no. 77, 17 December 2015.
69. See the summary on Turkey in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

of Cizre was besieged. According to local human rights organisations, around 20 civilians were killed, while the government said that 40 PKK insurgents died and 25 police officers were wounded. **The PKK carried out large-scale offensives**, including 16 soldiers killed in an attack in Daglica (Hakkari) in September and 14 policemen killed in another attack in Igdir that same month.

The situation deteriorated even further in the last few months of the year. **Around 100 people were killed and several hundred were wounded in an attack at a peaceful pro-dialogue rally with a large Kurdish presence in Ankara on 10 August**. Analysts, experts and the media blamed the attack on ISIS, while the Turkish government jointly blamed ISIS, the PKK and the Syrian government. This widened divisions between the state and the Kurdish population, which accused the government of negligence and responsibility for directly or indirectly supporting ISIS during the years of war in Syria. **On the same day of the attack in Ankara, the PKK announced a ceasefire to facilitate early elections in November. The truce was rejected by the state, which continued its large-scale military and police offensive.** At the polls, the AKP recovered social support (317 seats and 49.5% of the vote), while the HDP remained above the electoral threshold but lost votes (winning 59 seats and 10.7% of the vote). In December, the Turkish Army deployed 10,000 troops supported by tanks and artillery in locations in the southeast and media outlets reported the use of heavy weapons by both sides. The districts of Cizre and Silopi (Şırnak province) and the city of Diyarbakır (Sur district) were particularly affected by the operations. According to the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, 162 civilians (including 32 children and 24 people over 60 years old) died between mid-August and the end of the year as part of 58 special operations with curfews in 19 districts of seven cities, where 1,377,000 people live. According to media reports, several hundreds of thousands of civilians fled the violence (200,000 according to one local newspaper, "several hundred thousand" according to other media outlets and 100,000 according to the police). In some cases, the PKK urged people to remain in their cities. These incidents took place amidst the state's persecution of human rights advocates, activists and journalists who disagree with the government. In November, the well-known president of the Diyarbakir Bar Association and human rights advocate Tahir Elçi was killed in Diyarbakir while appearing before the media to call for an end to the violence between Turkey and the PKK. The Kurdish armed group TAK (considered a branch of the PKK by some experts) also burst onto the scene once again. In December, the group announced the beginning of an offensive campaign against the state and "collaborators" in retaliation for military operations in the southeast, warning airlines and tourists. That month, the TAK claimed responsibility for an attack at an international airport in Istanbul that killed one worker and injured another. At a conference in December, the Kurdish movement legitimised the Kurdish urban insurgency and called for the creation of autonomous regions.

1.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

Egypt (Sinai)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups based in Sinai, including Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) and Sinai Province (SP, a branch of ISIS), Ajnad Misr, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis and Katibat al-Rabat al-Jihadiya, Israel
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The Sinai Peninsula has become a growing source of instability. Since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the area has reported increasing insurgent activity that initially directed its attacks against Israeli interests. This trend raised many questions about maintaining security commitments between Egypt and Israel after the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979, which led to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the peninsula. However, alongside the bumpy evolution of the Egyptian transition, jihadist groups based in the Sinai have shifted the focus of their actions to the Egyptian security forces, especially after the coup d'état against the Islamist government of Mohamed Mursi (2013). The armed groups, especially Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM), have gradually demonstrated their ability to act beyond the peninsula, displayed the use of more sophisticated weapons and broadened their targets to attack tourists as well. ABM's decision to pledge loyalty to the organisation Islamic State (ISIS) in late 2014 marked a new turning point in the evolution of the conflict. Its complexity is determined by the influence of multiple factors, including the historical political and economic marginalisation that has stoked the grievances of the Bedouins, the majority population in the Sinai; the dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; and regional turmoil, which has facilitated the movement of weapons and fighters to the area.

The armed conflict in the Sinai Peninsula worsened in 2015, especially in the second half of the year. **The violence intensified, with episodes that demonstrated the new capabilities of the ISIS branch in Egypt and caused great commotion worldwide, like the bomb attack on a Russian plane shortly after taking off from Sharm el-Sheikh**, while also revealing the regional and international interconnections pervading the conflict. Following the trend of the previous year, in 2015 the conflict primarily took shape in attacks against Egyptian soldiers and police officers by the armed group Sinai Province (SP), (formerly Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM), which changed its name after pledging allegiance to ISIS in late 2014), security force operations against the insurgent organisations (including air strikes) and clashes between both sides. The actions undertaken by SP included shootings, suicide attacks, car bomb attacks and the detonation of explosive devices on roads. Starting in 2015, SP also targeted members of the judiciary and murdered people suspected of

collaborating with Israel. The acts of violence were concentrated in Sinai, although some incidents also took place in Cairo and the Nile Delta, some without clear authorship. The armed group Ajnad Misr claimed responsibility for some actions, especially in the Egyptian capital. There were also armed actions in Giza and Karnak, two sites of tourist interest. The strict media blackout imposed by the regime of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi made it difficult to provide a verified body count caused by the armed conflict in Sinai, which according to some estimates could have killed hundreds and even thousands of people. **According to the Washington-based Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), attacks by militants in Sinai during the year increased tenfold compared to 2012, with over 350 actions, and the Egyptian Army's counter-insurgency operations could have been killed over 3,000 people in 2015.**[70] Several NGOs denounced the lack of information about the impact of the conflict, especially with regard to the civilian victims, and criticised the lack of a humanitarian point of view.[71] The acts of violence during the first half of the year followed the pattern of attacks by militiamen and counter-attacks by the security forces. Outstanding incidents in this period included the attack in the area of El-Arish in late January that killed around 30 soldiers and provoked a military response in the following days that killed around 45 rebels, according to military sources. After the execution of six members of ABM/SP in May, the armed group called for an attack on judicial representatives, considering them complicit in the government's repressive policies. Shortly thereafter, three judges were shot dead in El-Arish. In June, the Egyptian attorney general was assassinated. He was the highest-ranking figure to be targeted since a failed attempt on the life of the minister of the interior in 2013.

In late October, the ISIS branch in Sinai claimed responsibility for a bomb attack on a Russian plane that killed 224 people

The second half of the year began with an attack by ISIS in Egypt that various analysts described as unprecedented in terms of its organisation, the number of militants mobilised for it and the type of weaponry used. According to local sources, around 300 combatants of the armed group attacked around 15 checkpoints and security force facilities in an attempt to take control of the town of Sheikh Zuweid in order to annex it to the caliphate proclaimed by the leader of ISIS.[72] The militiamen used anti-aircraft missiles to deter Egyptian military helicopters, in addition to mortars, anti-tank missiles, car bombs and explosive devices in an attack that went on for 12 hours. Initial body counts said that 70 people had died, most of them soldiers, but military sources later indicated that around 20 soldiers and 241 militants had died. After the offensive in Sheikh Zuweid, a new extension of the state of emergency in Sinai was decreed (it has been in effect since late 2014), while a new counter-terrorist law was enacted with a controversial clause punishing the spread of information that contradicts the official version of events.[73] Later, in September, a new military operation was launched (Operation Martyr's Right), which the Egyptian Army claimed had killed 500 insurgents by November. Although al-Sisi insisted that the situation in the Sinai Peninsula was fully under control (contradicting his own prime minister, who said that Egypt was in a "state of war"),[74] various events confirmed the volatile scenario in the region. These incidents included the beheading of a Croat citizen kidnapped by SP; an attack on the mission that has supervised the ceasefire between Israel and Egypt since 1979, which wounded several troops; and a mistaken attack by the Egyptian security forces on a tourist convoy that killed 12 people, eight of them Mexicans. **In late October, the explosion of a Russian plane taking off from Sharm el-Sheikh and headed for Moscow killed 224 people in an action for which SP claimed responsibility and that strengthened the international projection of ISIS' jihadist project**. At first, both Egypt and Russia refused to admit signs that an attack had taken place. Moscow ended up acknowledging that ISIS was responsible after the armed group's attack in Paris in November, but by late December the government of al-Sisi continued to insist that there was no evidence of an attack. Throughout the year, **the government's policy of forced evictions, demolishing homes and closing tunnels in the area of Rafah, in order to create a buffer zone in the area bordering Gaza, prompted criticism from various human rights organisations** (3,255 homes and buildings were destroyed in July and August alone, according to Human Rights Watch). This approach was questioned because of its impact on the population (which received very little prior notice and no proper compensation for the evictions), but also due to the lack of evidence of the alleged collaboration between groups in Gaza and the ISIS branch in Sinai, and because of indications that SP had obtained its weapons primarily from its assaults on the Egyptian Army and on Libya. Regarding this latter country, it should be noted that Egypt became militarily involved in an aerial offensive against ISIS positions in Libya in February after the armed group beheaded around 20 Egyptian Copts.[75] Finally, it should be mentioned that in 2015 the United States lifted the weapons embargo imposed on Egypt since 2013 and al-Sisi's government re-established diplomatic relations with Israel.

70. The Economist, "The peninsular war: Egypt is losing control of the Sinai", *The Economist*, 14 November 2015.
71. IRIN, "Secrecy in Sinai – an unknown human toll", *IRIN*, 10 July 2015.
72. See "The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).
73. See the summary on Egypt in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
74. Omar Ashour, "The Sinai is far from stable", *al-Jazeera*, 17 July 2015.
75. See the summary on Libya in this chapter.

Iraq	
Start:	2003
Type:	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Iraqi and Kurdish (peshmerga) military and security forces, Shia militias, Sunni armed groups, Islamic State (ISIS), international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Iran
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The invasion of Iraq by the international coalition led by the USA in March 2003 (using the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction as an argument and with the desire to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein due to his alleged link to the attacks of the 11th September 2001 in the USA) started an armed conflict in which numerous actors progressively became involved: international troops, the Iraqi armed forces, militias and rebel groups and Al Qaeda, among others. The new division of power between Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish groups within the institutional setting set up after the overthrow of Hussein led to discontent among numerous sectors. The violence has increased, with the armed opposition against the international presence in the country superimposing the internal fight for the control of power with a marked sectarian component since February 2006, mainly between Shiites and Sunnis. Following the withdrawal of the US forces in late 2011, the dynamics of violence have persisted, with a high impact on the civilian population. The armed conflict worsened in 2014 as a result of the rise of the armed group Islamic State (ISIS) and the Iraqi government's military response, backed by a new international coalition led by the United States.

The situation in Iraq continued to worsen in 2015, with extremely high levels of violence that further aggravated the situation of the population after over a decade of hostilities. According to data collected by the organisation Iraq Body Count (IBC), **in 2015 the armed conflict in the country killed at least 16,200 civilians, although these figures will likely be corrected upward.** In 2014, the preliminary figures kept by the IBC indicated that 17,000 civilians had died in Iraq, though in the end the number was over 20,000. These death tolls are a significant increase compared to the period 2009-2012, when the number of civilian deaths varied from 4,000 to 5,000 per year. According to more conservative estimates of the UN mission in the country (UNAMI) and the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), in nearly a two-year period (from 1 January 2014 to 31 October 2015), the conflict in Iraq had killed 18,802 civilians and wounded another 36,245 people. However, the UN acknowledged the difficulties in compiling information due to security reasons, admitted that the real figure could be much higher and stressed that it is not known how many people have died from secondary effects of the conflict, like the lack of access to food, water or medical attention.

The armed conflict in Iraq killed at least 16,200 civilians during the year, according to provisional estimates in late 2015

According to data from the UN, more than 3.2 million people had been displaced by the conflict since early 2014. Violence in Iraq mainly took the form of clashes pitting the armed group ISIS against Iraqi troops and other armed groups like Shia militias, Sunni tribal forces, popular mobilisation units (PMUs) and Kurdish combatants (peshmerga). Bomb and suicide attacks also took place throughout the year, for which ISIS claimed responsibility, many of them in Baghdad. There were also air strikes and many forms of abuse. ISIS was accused of conducting massacres and of murdering people thought to be opponents or informants, in addition to former members of the security forces and civil servants, tribal leaders, professionals, activists and members of ethnic and religious minorities. The crimes perpetrated by ISIS also include sexual slavery, the destruction of heritage and the use of chemical weapons, although the UN could not confirm the latter. The Iraqi military and its affiliated forces were denounced for other practices, including acts of reprisal against people accused of collaborating with ISIS, restrictions on movement for displaced people, arbitrary arrests and military operations conducted without taking the necessary precautions to protect the civilian population.

The conflict affected different areas of the country, especially the governorates of Baghdad, Anbar and Diyala, with gains and losses occurring on various fronts throughout the year. In early 2015, the government launched a special operation to try to recapture Tikrit, where ISIS conducted a massacre in 2014 (according to a report released in 2015, 1,700 cadets were killed in the military's Camp Speicher). Alongside the Iraqi forces, Shia militias backed by Iran played a leading role in the battle for Tikrit. The involvement of the United States, which leads the international coalition against ISIS and contributed with air strikes, caused some friction with the Shia forces and was interpreted as an attempt by Washington to regain influence in the struggle against ISIS in Iraq. After a siege lasting weeks, ISIS was expelled from Tikrit in April. Meanwhile, intense fighting took place around the city of Baiji, the site of the largest oil refinery in Iraq. **ISIS won a major victory in May by taking the city of Ramadi, the capital of Anbar governorate, located around 100 kilometres from Baghdad.** In just one month, the fighting in this area claimed the lives of over 500 people and forced 25,000 others to flee. The fall of Ramadi was considered evidence of the limits of the US-led aerial campaign and a heavy blow to the Iraqi forces and their allies, all of which were harshly criticised. The US secretary of defence accused them of lacking the effort and will to fight and President Barack Obama acknowledged the difficulties in defining a strategy in Iraq and in training local troops. The Iraqi forces were called into question even more after a parliamentary report demonstrated the many mistakes that enabled the capture of Mosul by ISIS in 2014,

including the abandonment of huge amounts of military materiel. During the second half of the year, Baghdad launched an offensive to try to expel ISIS from Anbar governorate, with the hostilities centring on Fallujah and Ramadi. Supported by the United States, the campaign encountered various obstacles, including the intense heat and the fortifications and booby traps set up by ISIS. In late December, the government announced that it had recaptured Ramadi. Also near the end of the year, Kurdish forces launched an operation with support from the international anti-ISIS coalition and PKK/YPG forces that expelled the group from Sinjar, where it had committed many atrocities against the Yazidi population and where mass graves were found. The Kurdish forces also clashed with ISIS fighters around Mosul.

In addition to the armed conflict, in 2015 **the country was also affected by domestic political tensions that threatened to further destabilise the country**. One controversial issue was the role of the Shia militias and particularly the decision to grant them control over security in certain parts of Baghdad, which led to accusations that Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi was allegedly unable to impose his authority and prompted a boycott by some MPs. In this context, various voices warned of the risk of acts of vengeance amidst sectarian tensions in the country, especially after human rights organisations issued reports accusing Shia militias of abducting and murdering Sunnis accused of collaborating with ISIS. During the second half of the year, the political tension was evident in many protests against corruption and the lack of services, primarily in Baghdad and the southern part of the country. The unstable atmosphere prompted the intervention of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who tried to defuse the tension, and in the months that followed al-Abadi's government announced a series of reforms aimed at tackling the problem of corruption, streamlining public spending and allaying sectarian tensions. These measures included reducing the number of ministries, senior officials, advisors and bodyguards and introducing a quota for independents in government positions. Nevertheless, during the third quarter, Shia MPs threatened to withdraw support for al-Abadi if he did not enact deeper reforms. Some analysts cautioned that in the background of the crisis was a power struggle between groups close to the prime minister and commanders of the Shia militias backed by Iran that have strengthened their positions in the fight against ISIS.[76] Finally, disagreement between the Iraqi and Turkish authorities was reported during the second half of the year due to Turkish actions against PKK positions in northern Iraq.

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International[77]
Main parties:	Israeli Government, settler militias, ANP, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, PFLP, DFLP, Popular Resistance Committees
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:
The conflict between Israel and the various Palestinian actors started up again in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, favoured by the failure of the peace process promoted at the beginning of the 1990s (the Oslo Accords, 1993-1994). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict started in 1947 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 divided Palestinian territory under British mandate into two states and soon after proclaimed the state of Israel (1948), without the state of Palestine having been able to materialise itself since then. After the 1948-49 war, Israel annexed West Jerusalem and Egypt and Jordan took over control of Gaza and the West Bank, respectively. In 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza after winning the "Six-Day War" against the Arab countries. It was not until the Oslo Accords that the autonomy of the Palestinian territory would be formally recognised, although its introduction was to be impeded by the military occupation and the control of the territory imposed by Israel.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to motivate periodic episodes of direct violence throughout the year that increased in the last quarter and killed between 150 and 200 people in 2015. **In comparative terms, the levels of lethality were lower than in 2014, when over 2,000 fatalities were reported, mainly due to the escalation of violence in Gaza between June and August**. The dynamics of violence in 2015 were of a different nature and took place in the West Bank, with serious incidents in Jerusalem and Gaza as well. More sporadic incidents were reported in the first nine months of the year, including clashes between Palestinian youth and Israeli security forces during demonstrations in the occupied territories (to mark a new anniversary of the Nakba, for example); Palestinians shot dead by Israeli soldiers during attempted attacks on Israelis or on checkpoints; and deaths in Gaza caused by the detonation of explosives left over from the hostilities of the previous year. The events that occurred during this period included an arson attack carried out by Israeli settlers against a Palestinian family in July that killed a baby and later killed the parents. The attack, which caused international consternation, was part of the

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict reported an escalation of violence at the end of 2015, but in comparative terms the levels of lethality were lower than in 2014

76. International Crisis Group, *Iraq: Conflict Alert*, ICG, 24 August 2015.
77. Despite the fact that Palestine (whose Palestine National Authority is a political association linked to a given population and to a territory) is not an internationally recognised state, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is considered "international" and not "internal", since it is a territory that is illegally occupied and its intended ownership by Israel is not recognised by International Law or by any UN resolution.

policy of revenge or "price tag" promoted by radical settlers acting against the Palestinian people, often in retaliation for measures that limit the expansion of settlements in occupied territories. The attack sparked mass protests in the Palestinian territories, leading to new fatalities as young Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were killed by Israeli security forces. In September, Jerusalem became the flashpoint of tensions between Israelis and Palestinians after the government of Benjamin Netanyahu imposed restrictions on Palestinian access to the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif) to facilitate visits by Israelis to the area in order to celebrate the Jewish New Year. In this context, the king of Jordan warned Israel against raising any change to the status quo that has prevailed in the Temple Mount for decades, according to which Jews can visit but not pray in the area. Although pressure from the international community and Arab countries prompted Israel to lift the restrictions on Palestinians in mid-September, the wave of violence did not stop and incidents began to occur regularly in October. **The violence culminated in random knife attacks by Palestinians against Israeli citizens in public or on buses; the deliberate hitting of Israelis with cars; the shooting of young Palestinians during search operations, at checkpoints, during demonstrations and clashes and during attacks and alleged acts of aggression against Israeli soldiers and civilians.** According to estimated tolls, from 1 October to the end of the year, more than 20 Israelis, one US citizen, an Eritrean and over 130 Palestinians lost their lives in these incidents.

According to Israel, over half the Palestinians killed during this period were aggressors. The Israeli response to this phenomenon prompted much criticism from Palestinians, but also from Israeli and international NGOs that accused Israel of killing alleged suspects without evidence and without them posing an imminent threat. The United States warned Netanyahu's government of signs of an excessive use of force. The Israeli reaction also included the imposition of unprecedented security measures in Jerusalem, additional deployments of soldiers in various cities and an intensification of the use of collective punishment, like the demolition of homes of the alleged attackers and the refusal to hand corpses over to their families. According to the Israeli NGO B'Tselem, by late December Israel had destroyed around 30 Palestinian homes and had not returned the remains of 55 Palestinians, including 11 children. Although the Palestinians seemed to perpetrate their attacks independently and without coordination, Israel accused the Palestinian authorities of inciting the violence. However, the Palestinian authorities blamed the phenomenon on the frustration of Palestinian youth regarding the occupation and the lack of expectations of a political solution. The escalation of violence in late 2015 came in a context of chronic deadlock in the negotiations, with few prospects of recovery following Netanyahu's victory in the elections in March.[78] At the height of the election campaign, the prime minister ensured that there would be no Palestinian state as long as he was in power. His position on this issue and on the Iranian nuclear dossier[79] distanced him from the United States. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority maintained its strategy to internationalise the Palestinian issue. After it signed the Treaty of Rome in late 2014, it presented the International Criminal Court with a record of abuses committed by Israel over the last decade in Gaza, of the settlements in the occupied territories and of the treatment of prisoners in Israeli gaols. At the end of the year, Palestinian groups recognised their concern about the atmosphere of deadlock and the feeling of a power vacuum due to the pending departure of Abbas and the persisting divisions between Hamas and Fatah.[80] Finally, the report of the UN Human Rights Council on the conflict in Gaza between June and August 2014 was released during 2015. The investigation confirmed that most of the victims of the conflict were Palestinians (2,251, of which 1,462 were civilians and 551 were children), while the Israelis lost 67 soldiers and six civilians. The report concluded that both sides committed violations that could constitute war crimes and stressed the unprecedented destruction caused by the conflict. Hamas praised aspects of the report, but criticised that it equated "victim with victimiser", while Israel dismissed the inquiry, calling it biased. During the year, the UNRWA also drew attention to the rising child mortality rate in the Gaza Strip, which increased for the first time in 53 years, and various voices denounced the pending challenge related to the reconstruction of the area.

Syria	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the PYD/YPJ militias of the PYD), al-Nusra Front, ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, other armed groups
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
Controlled by the Ba'ath party since 1963, the Republic of Syria has been governed since the 1970s by two presidents: Hafez al-Assad and his son, Bashar, who took office in 2000. A key player in the Middle East, internationally the regime has been characterised by its hostile policies towards Israel and, internally, by its authoritarianism and fierce repression of the opposition. The arrival of

78. See the summary on Israel-Palestine in chapter 3 (Peace processes).
79. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
80. See the summary on Palestine in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

Bashar al-Assad in the government raised expectations for change, following the implementation of some liberalising measures. However, the regime put a stop to these initiatives, which alarmed the establishment, made up of the army, the Ba'ath and the Alawi minority. In 2011, popular uprisings in the region encouraged the Syrian population to demand political and economic changes. The brutal response of the government unleashed a severe crisis in the country, which led to the beginning of an armed conflict with serious consequences for the civil population.

The situation in Syria continued to deteriorate throughout 2015. **The armed conflict continued to be characterised by its high level of complexity, the multiplicity of armed groups involved, the high levels of violence and destruction, and the intervention of foreign actors**. The dynamics of internationalisation in the conflict intensified during the year and especially during the final quarter, with the more explicit involvement of other countries and an escalation of hostilities that further worsened the grim impacts on the civilian population in a conflict that only in 2015 caused more than 55,000 fatalities, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Some estimates indicate the conflict has claimed the lives of over 250,000 people since 2011. However, according to figures released in early 2016 by the Syrian Centre for Policy Research (SCPR), the number could be significantly higher: a total of 470,0000 people may have died directly or indirectly because of the war, while 1.9 million could have been wounded. According to this death toll, the total number of people killed or wounded in the war in Syria would be equivalent to 11.4% of the population of the country. Throughout 2015, the violence affected different parts of the country, including Damascus, Idlib, Aleppo, Homs, Deir ez-Zour, Ghouta, Hama and Sumayda, with clashes pitting rebel groups against government forces and their allies, as well as fighting between opposition groups. The various events included the expulsion of ISIS from Kobane by Kurdish militias (YPG) at the start of the year, with aerial support from the US-led international anti-ISIS coalition and continuous clashes between both sides around the supply routes to Raqqa (a bastion of ISIS). Also notable was ISIS' capture of Palmyra, the bloody battles in the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp (outskirts of Damascus) and the heavy fighting between Bashar al-Assad's forces supported by Hezbollah and opposition groups in Zabadani, in the area bordering with Lebanon.

The situation in the different fronts varied over the course of the year, but at the start of the second half the Assad regime acknowledged that its troops had been forced to concentrate on some areas of the country. The government approved an amnesty for deserters in an attempt to attract new forces to its side. In this context, **Russian support for Damascus increased significantly, reflected first in a boost to military aid (combat aircraft, missiles, tanks and helicopters), the sending of special forces and the expansion of an airbase in Latakia. Starting on 30 September, Russian forces became directly involved and began air strikes in the country.** The government of Vladimir Putin argued that the intervention responded to a request by Damascus and was intended to fight ISIS and other "terrorist" groups. However, until the end of the year, most of the Russian attacks had affected rebel groups other than ISIS. Russia's open support therefore joined the support of Hezbollah and Iran. Meanwhile, the United States scrapped its training programme for moderate rebel forces, but maintained its air campaign in Syria as part of the anti-ISIS coalition, which was joined by France in September and the United Kingdom and Germany in December. In addition, the United States supported a new dissident coalition, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The YPG/YPJ armed factions of the Syrian Kurdish party PYD (branch of the PKK) play an outstanding role in the SDF,[81] which also consists of Sunni Arab armed groups and Christian militias. The international offensives against ISIS in Syria intensified following its claim of responsibility for the attacks in Paris and against a Russian plane in Egypt.[82] The involvement of other countries in Syria also included Jordanian attacks against ISIS' positions at the beginning of the year after the group killed a Jordanian pilot and Turkish actions to evacuate an Ottoman mausoleum and against Kurdish forces in Syria. At the end of the year, the downing of a Russian plane by Turkey added an element of tension to the foreign actors involved in the Syrian crisis.

The dynamics of internationalisation of the conflict in Syria intensified during the year, with more explicit involvement from other countries

The violence continued to have a devastating impact on the population. Different UN and NGO reports agreed on blaming all parties for indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial attacks in areas with a civilian presence. Assad's government was systematically denounced for the use of barrel bombs, ISIS continued to carry out kidnappings, killings and the destruction and heritage and armed opposition groups were accused of firing on civilian areas and of using tactics like deliberately blocking the supply of water as a means of applying pressure. Various organisations, including civil defence groups, the Syrian American Medical Society and HRW, denounced the use of chemical weapons in actions attributed to the government, which led the UN to open an investigation. In addition to civilians killed in attacks, murdered, or who died under torture, many others lost their lives due to a lack of food or medical assistance and the use of people as human

81. Aron Lund, *Syria's Kurds at the Center of America's Anti-Jihadi Strategy*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2 December 2015.
82. See Egypt (Sinai) in this chapter.

shields was deplored. A report on the impact of the conflict released by the Syria Centre for Policy Research, with the support of UNHCR and UNDP, concluded in March that 64.7% of the population was living in conditions of extreme poverty. It also denounced that the life expectancy had fallen from 75.9 years in 2010 to 55.7 in 2014 and that half the children were not enrolled in school, giving Syria one of the lowest rankings in levels of school attendance worldwide. By late 2015, over 12.2 million people were in need of assistance in Syria, but the delivery of aid was hindered by the security situation and the imposition of restrictions by the parties. In light of this, the UN Secretary-General repeatedly denounced the lack of implementation of the resolutions aimed at guaranteeing access to humanitarian aid in the country and demanded that the case of Syria be brought before the International Criminal Court. UNHCR also underscored that the armed conflict in Syria is the main factor behind the dizzying rise in the number of forcibly displaced people since 2011. According to figures released in late 2015 that correspond to the first half of the year, **Syria continued to be the country that was the primary source of refugees (with 4.2 million, located mainly in neighbouring countries) and the country with the highest number of internally displaced people (over 7.6 million).**[83] The refugee crisis received special media coverage during the year due to the increase in the flows of people towards Europe, especially starting in mid-2015.

The evolution of the refugee crisis and growing concern about the scope of the ISIS phenomenon[84] influenced the revival of international diplomatic efforts to find a solution in late 2015. The International Syria Support Group[85] held meetings in Vienna, agreed to support the implementation of a countrywide ceasefire (though not applicable to ISIS and the al-Nusra Front, a branch of al-Qaeda) and urged dialogue between the Syrian government and the opposition. The purpose was to move towards the creation of an "inclusive, credible and non-sectarian" unity government, the drafting of a new Constitution within 18 months and finally the holding of elections. In mid-December, the UN Security Council gave unanimous support to this plan, approving Resolution 2254 in December. Opposition groups held meetings in Turkey and Saudi Arabia and expressed their conditional willingness to participate in the political process promoted as part of the Vienna process. However, disagreements persisted between local and international stakeholders regarding who to recognise as representatives of the opposition, the application of the "terrorist" label to some of them and the future of Bashar al-Assad.[86]

The Gulf

Yemen (AQAP)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, tribal militias, Houthi militias
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:
With a host of conflicts and internal challenges to deal with, the Yemeni government is under intense international pressure –mainly the USA and Saudi Arabia– to focus on fighting al-Qaeda's presence in the country, especially after the merger of the organisation's Saudi and Yemeni branches, through which al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was founded in 2009. Although al-Qaeda is known to have been active in Yemen since the 1990s and has been responsible for high profile incidents, such as the suicide attack on the US warship USS Cole in 2000, its operations have been stepped up in recent years, coinciding with a change of leadership in the group. The failed attack on an airliner en route to Detroit in December 2009 focused the world's attention on AQAP. The group is considered by the US government as one of its main security threats. Taking advantage of the power vacuum in Yemen as part of the revolt against president Ali Abdullah Saleh, AQAP intensified its operations in the south of the country and expanded the areas under its control. From 2011 the group began to carry out some of its attacks under the name Ansar Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law). More recently, particularly since mid-2014, AQAP has increasingly been involved in clashes with Houthi forces, which have advanced their positions from the north of Yemen.

In a scenario of overlapping dynamics of violence in Yemen throughout 2015, the armed conflict involving AQAP in recent years was directly influenced by the general atmosphere of instability in the country and by the evolution of the conflict between the Houthis and forces loyal to President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, backed by an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia.[87] **The al-Qaeda branch in Yemen continued its attacks on the security forces, but also took advantage of the upheaval to advance in the southern part of the country and became increasingly involved in fighting with the Houthis, while a recently created branch of ISIS also gained prominence in Yemen.** Throughout the year AQAP continued to claim responsibility for actions against the Yemeni Armed Forces and government institutions, including attacks on military bases and academies and troops that left scores of fatalities, the assault on the central bank in Al Mukalla (in the governorate of Hadramawt) and offensives that

83. UNHCR, *UNHCR: Mid-Year Trends 2015,* UNHCR: Geneva, 18 December 2015. http://www.unhcr.org/56701b969.html.
84. See "The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).
85. The International Syria Support Group consists of the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, the United Kingdom, the United States and Iran, whose participation in international efforts to end the conflict in Syria was accepted for the first time.
86. See the summary on Syria in chapter 3 (Peace processes).
87. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) in this chapter.

freed over 300 prisoners. Also in line with previous years, **AQAP's positions continued to be targeted by US drone strikes, killing dozens of suspected combatants of the group. One of these drone strikes in mid-May killed AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi**, the former secretary of Osama bin Laden who the leader of the network, Ayman al-Zawahiri, had appointed the head of worldwide operations. Al-Wuhayshi was succeeded by AQAP military chief Qassim al-Rimi, who in later messages insisted that the United States was the main target of the organisation and ensured that it would not forget its members held in Guantanamo Bay. In Yemen, however, AQAP militants clashed more intensely with Houthi forces. Although fighting had been reported between both groups in the past, in 2015 AQAP took a more active stance to halt the Houthis' advance to the south, taking advantage of the resistance of the group of southern origin in central and southern parts of the country. In this context, AQAP managed to expand the areas under its control in the southeastern governorate of Hadramawt, which accounts for nearly one third of the territory of Yemen, and strengthened contacts with tribes in the area. During the second quarter, it also launched attacks in Aden, questioning the pro-Hadi side's alleged control of the city. At the end of the year, AQAP also tried to return the Zinjibar area, in Abyan governorate, which had previously been under its control for a few months in 2011 and 2012.

Throughout the year, the activity of the ISIS branch in Yemen ("Wilayat al-Yemen") continued to grow. The armed group, established in November 2014, made incursions mainly in the north, but also into the southern part of the country, AQAP's traditional region of influence. ISIS claimed responsibility for various offensives, including bomb attacks against mosques in Sana'a frequented by the Houthis and other buildings and headquarters belonging to the armed group. These actions killed 137 people in March, around 30 in June and nearly 40 in September, most of them civilians. ISIS also killed Yemeni soldiers in south-central Shabwah governorate and killed Houthi combatants in Aden. In October, the Yemeni branch of ISIS claimed responsibility for several suicide attacks against troops of the international coalition led by Saudi Arabia and in December it claimed that it was behind the assassination of the governor of Aden. In this context, various analysts pointed to the growing competition between AQAP and ISIS in Yemen by taking advantage of the instability and increasing sectarian tensions in the country, stressing that both groups had attempted to present their actions against the Houthis as a way to gain more followers. The two groups did not face off directly, but AQAP has distanced itself from some of the ISIS strategies, particularly its attacks on mosques.[88] As part of the global struggle between ISIS and al-Qaeda, in his first public message, the new leader of AQAP repeated his group's loyalty to the network headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri. At the end of the year, AQAP issued a joint statement with AQIM declaring that the caliphate proclaimed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's group is illegitimate and criticising the fact that ISIS fights against other Muslims instead of focusing on the battle against Jews and Christians. Finally, **in early 2015, AQAP claimed responsibility for the attack on the French satirical weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, which claimed 12 lives and caused indignation worldwide**. The attack was carried out by two assailants who explicitly asserted their link with this branch of al-Qaeda and at least one of them had received training and presumably support from AQAP to undertake the action. In late 2015, al-Zawahiri released a message congratulating AQAP on the attack.

Yemen (Houthis)	
Start:	2004
Type:	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/ Ansar Allah), tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias, armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Iran
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The conflict started in 2004, when the followers of the religious leader al-Houthi, belonging to the Shiite minority, started an armed rebellion in the north of Yemen. The government assured that the rebel forces aimed to re-establish a theocratic regime such as the one that governed in the area for one thousand years, until the triumph of the Republican revolution in 1962. The followers of al-Houthi denied it and accused the government of corruption and not attending to the northern mountainous regions, and also opposed the Sanaa alliance with the US in the so-called fight against terrorism. The conflict has cost the lives of thousands of victims and has led to massive forced displacements. Various truces signed in recent years have been successively broken with taking up of hostilities again. As part of the rebellion that ended the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011, the Houthis took advantage to expand areas under its control in the north of the country. They have been increasingly involved in clashes with other armed actors, including tribal militias, sectors sympathetic to Salafist groups and to the Islamist party Islah and fighters of AQAP, the affiliate of al-Qaeda in Yemen. The advance of the Houthis to the centre and south of the country exacerbated the institutional crisis and forced the fall of the Yemeni government, leading to an international military intervention led by Saudi Arabia in early 2015. In a context of internationalisation, the conflict has acquired sectarian tones and a regional dimension.

The situation in Yemen **deteriorated severely during 2015 as a result of the worsening political crisis, an escalation of violence exacerbated by the involvement of foreign actors, the intensification of sectarian tensions, the collapse of efforts to facilitate a negotiated solution and a humanitarian crisis worsened by how the armed conflict developed.**[89] According to UN estimates, the conflict claimed over 6,000 lives in 2015. During the first quarter of the year,

88. See "The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).
89. See "Armed violence in Yemen: a new invisible Syria?" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).

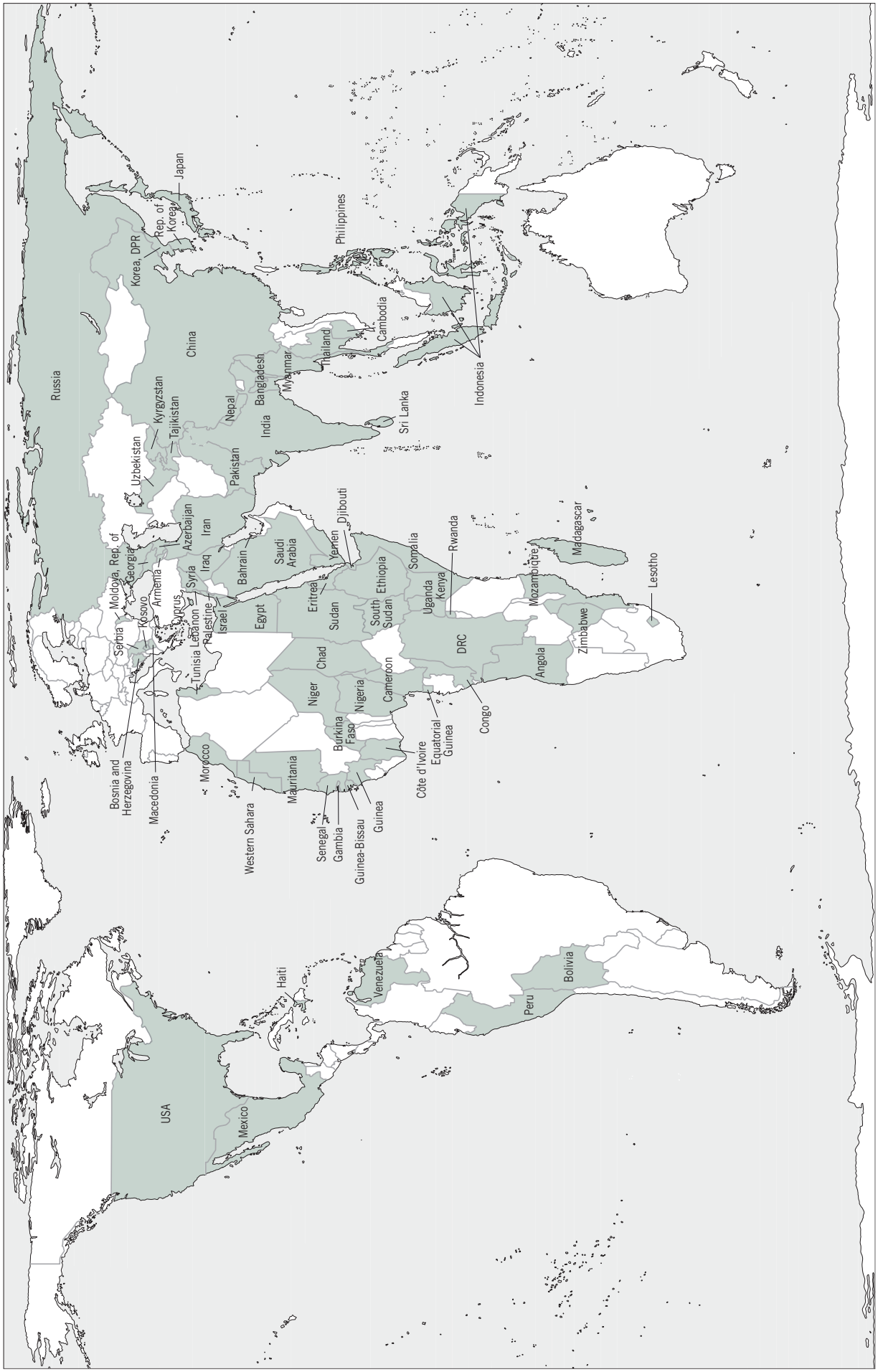
the focus was on the struggle for political power. The Houthis decided to respond with force to the government initiative intending to enshrine a six-state federal scheme into the new Yemeni Constitution. The armed group, which in recent years has expanded its area of influence from the north of the country, seized control of the capital, Sana'a, in early 2015, faced off with security forces in the presidential palace and put Yemeni President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi under house arrest. The Houthis and Hadi then signed an agreement that was considered an act of capitulation by the president, who submitted his resignation. However, his resignation was not ratified by Parliament and was called into question after he fled to the southern city of Aden. From there, Hadi denounced a coup d'état, claimed that he was still the president and declared the measures taken by the Houthis to be null and illegitimate, such as the dissolution of Parliament and the creation of a presidential council. The Houthis' actions were also rejected by parts of the population (there were massive protests in cities like Sana'a and Taiz) and by the UN Security Council, which in February unanimously approved Resolution 2201 demanding Hadi's release, the group's withdrawal and participation in good faith in the initiatives of dialogue to resolve to crisis. The Houthis continued to gain ground as they headed south and offered a reward for Hadi, who called for international intervention to confront the armed group.

In this context, **a turning point came in late March and the conflict took on an increasingly international dimension. On 26 March, one day after Hadi sought exile in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh decided to lead an international offensive against the Houthis** as part of a coalition including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and Egypt, with support from the United States and the United Kingdom. The Saudi-led international coalition launched Operation Decisive Storm and initially focused its strategy on airpower. Meanwhile, in mid-April the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2216 with Russia abstaining, which imposed an arms embargo on the Houthis, demanded their withdrawal and adopted sanctions against the circle of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Hadi's political rival, Saleh has influence over various military units and is an ally of convenience of the Houthis despite the clashes between the Houthis and the Yemeni Armed Forces during his government. The air campaign and the fighting between the Houthis and the forces loyal to Hadi did not let up in the months that followed in various parts of the country, except for some periods of truce that were broken after a few hours or days. A naval and aerial blockade was also imposed. While continuing to attack the armed group's stronghold in the north, at mid-year the international coalition backed an offensive by pro-Hadi forces called Golden Arrow that allowed them to recover control of Aden. The international coalition's involvement included the supply of weapons and armoured vehicles, as well as a growing presence on the ground with troops from the UAE, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. The pro-Hadi side was also reinforced by mercenaries hired by the UAE. The internationalisation of the armed conflict in Yemen also became clear in the rise in incidents along the border area with Saudi Arabia. According to media reports, in addition to the casualties suffered by the coalition troops in Yemen, another 80 people died in Saudi Arabia in incidents linked to the conflict, most of them soldiers and border guards. The conflict also took on sectarian tones and was considered a scenario of indirect confrontation between the regional powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The pro-Hadi front, and especially Saudi Arabia, insisted on presenting the Houthis as a threat due to an alleged alliance with Iran, although observers and experts questioned their previous level of relations and the real degree of cooperation between the armed group and Iran. At the end of the year, the pro-Hadi side tried to establish control over Aden and the Houthis attempted to repel the offensive on Taiz and to respond to attacks in the northern area. The conflict and the power vacuum in the country favoured intense activity by ISIS and AQAP in 2015, especially in the southern part of the country.[90] Both groups attacked Houthi interests, but some of their actions also affected the pro-Hadi side.

Both warring sides in Yemen were accused of carrying out actions that constitute war crimes. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights accused the Saudi-led coalition of being responsible for a disproportionate number of attacks with civilian casualties. The international coalition was also denounced for attacks on MSF hospitals and for the use of cluster bombs, while the Houthis were criticised for launching attacks in residential areas and laying land mines indiscriminately. At the end of the year, the UN warned that over half the 6,000 fatalities in the conflict were civilians. The armed violence also caused major damage to the country's infrastructure, leading to a collapse in healthcare facilities, which were overwhelmed by the wounded and patients with diseases like dengue fever and malaria that spread amidst the conflict. In what was already the poorest Arab country, **in late 2015 nearly 21.1 million people (82% of the Yemeni population) were in need of humanitarian assistance, according to data from the UN. Over seven million people faced a situation of severe food insecurity.** The armed conflict also forced massive displacements of population. According to UNHCR, during the first quarter of 2015, Yemen was the country that reported the highest number of new forced displacements, with 900,000, raising to 2.3 million the total number of internally displaced people in the country. Thousands of other Yemenis fled towards countries in the Horn of Africa, like Somalia, Djibouti and Ethiopia. Another background factor of violence in the country was the blocking of efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement.[91] An initial meeting between the parties in Geneva in June, though not a direct one, ended with no results, while a second round in December did lead to direct dialogue, but it was frustrated by constant violations of the ceasefire decreed in the days prior and by substantive differences on key issues under negotiation. The pro-Hadi side stressed that the provisions of Resolution 2216 had to be accepted and the Houthis repeated the need for a change of government.

90. See the summary on Yemen (AQAP) in this chapter.
91. See the summary on Yemen in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

Map 2.1. **Socio-political crises**



Countries with socio-political crises in 2015

2. Socio-political crises

- 83 socio-political crises were reported worldwide during 2015, most of them in Africa (36) and Asia (20). The other crises took place in Europe (11), the Middle East (11) and America (five).
- Tensions persisted in Mozambique between the RENAMO opposition and the FRELIMO government, marked by RENAMO's demand for self-government in the provinces where it obtained a majority in the presidential election.
- Burkina Faso successfully held elections, turning the page on the transitional stage and the Presidential Guard's failed coup d'état.
- Over 100 people were killed in Tunisia in various attacks and clashes between security forces and armed factions.
- In Venezuela the opposition victory in elections held in December 2015 opened a new and uncertain political scenario in the country.
- The situation in Nepal worsened considerably following the approval of the first Constitution since the end of the armed conflict while protests by Madhesi and Tharu organisations continued.
- Tension between India and Pakistan grew to such an extent that the mediation of other states was needed to achieve a rapprochement at the end of the year.
- In August, relations between North and South Korea experienced the greatest tension in recent times and entered an almost pre-war scenario.
- The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh worsened, with a major impact on civilians and the use of heavy weapons for the first time since the ceasefire agreement in 1994.
- Many cases of abuse committed by the security forces were reported in Egypt throughout 2015, including the use of sexual violence against detainees and the deaths of people in police custody.

The present chapter analyses the socio-political crises that occurred in 2015. It is organised into three sections. The socio-political crises and their characteristics are defined in the first section. In the second section an analysis is made of the global and regional trends of socio-political crises in 2015. The third section is devoted to describing the development and key events of the year in the various contexts. A map is included at the start of chapter that indicates the socio-political crises registered in 2015.

2.1. Socio-political crises: definition

A socio-political crisis is defined as that in which the pursuit of certain objectives or the failure to satisfy certain demands made by different actors leads to high levels of political, social or military mobilisation and/or the use of violence with a level of intensity that does not reach that of an armed conflict and that may include clashes, repression, coups d'état and bombings or attacks of other kinds, and whose escalation may degenerate into an armed conflict under certain circumstances. Socio-political crises are normally related to: a) demands for self-determination and self-government, or identity issues; b) opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state, or the Internal or International policies of a government, which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or c) control of resources or territory.

Table 2.1. **Summary of socio-political crises in 2015**

Socio-political crisis[1]	Type[2]	Main parties	Intensity[3] / Trend[4]
Africa			
Angola (Cabinda)	Internal	Government, armed group FLEC-FAC, Cabinda Forum for Dialogue	1
	Self-government, Resources		=
Burkina Faso	Internationalised Internal	Government, political opposition, state security forces, civil society, armed groups operating in the Sahel region	2
	Government		↓
Cameroon	International	Government, regional force (MNJTF), Nigerian Islamist armed group Boko Haram, attacking groups from CAR	3
	Government, System, Resources		↑
Central Africa (LRA)	International	AU regional force (RTF, composed of the Ugandan, Congolese and South Sudanese Armed Forces), Operation Observant Compass (USA), self-defence militias from DRC and South Sudan, the LRA, the former Central African armed coalition Séléka	3
	Resources		↓
Chad	International	Government, political and social opposition, Nigerian Islamist armed group Boko Haram, regional force (MNJTF)	3
	Government, System		↑
Congo	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Côte d'Ivoire	Internationalised Internal	Government, militias loyal to former President Laurent Gbagbo, mercenaries, UNOCI	2
	Government, Identity, Resources		↓
Djibouti	Internal	Government, armed group FRUD, political and social opposition (UAD/USN coalition)	1
	Government		↑
DRC	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
DRC – Rwanda[5]	International	Governments of DRC, Rwanda, armed groups FDLR and M23 (former CNDP)	1
	Identity, Government, Resources		=
DRC – Uganda	International	Governments of DRC and Rwanda, ADF, M23 (former CNDP), LRA, armed groups operating in Ituri	1
	Identity, Government, Resources, Territory		=
Eritrea	Internationalised Internal	Government, Internal political and social opposition, political-military opposition coalition EDA (EPDF, EFDM, EIPJD, ELF, EPC, DMLEK, RSADO, ENSF, EIC, Nahda), other groups	2
	Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Eritrea – Ethiopia	International	Eritrea, Ethiopia	1
	Territory		=
Ethiopia	Internal	Government (EPRDF coalition, led by the party TPLF), political and social opposition, various armed groups	2
	Government		↑

1. This column includes the states in which socio-political crises are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. This last option is used in cases involving more than one socio-political crisis in the same state or in the same territory within a state, for the purpose of distinguishing them.
2. This report classifies and analyses socio-political crises using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the Internal or International policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). Regarding the second type, the socio-political crises may be of an Internal, Internationalised Internal or International nature. As such, an Internal socio-political crisis involves actors from the state itself who operate exclusively within its territory. Secondly, Internationalised Internal socio-political crises are defined as those in which at least one of the main actors is foreign and/or the crisis spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Thirdly, International socio-political crises are defined as those that involve conflict between state or non-state actors of two or more countries.
3. The intensity of a socio-political crisis (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation, decrease, no changes) is mainly evaluated on the basis of the level of violence reported and the degree of socio-political mobilisation.
4. This column compares the trend of the events of 2015 with 2014, using the ↑ symbol to indicate that the general situation during 2015 is more serious than in the previous one, the ↓ symbol to indicate an improvement in the situation and the = symbol to indicate that no significant changes have taken place.
5. This title refers to International tensions between DRC–Rwanda–Uganda that appeared in previous editions of the *Alert!* report. Even though they share certain characteristics, DRC–Rwanda and DRC–Uganda are analysed separately in *Alert 2016!*

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Africa			
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Internal	Central government, regional government, political opposition (OFDM, OPC parties) and social opposition, armed opposition (OLF, IFLO)	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Gambia	Internal	Government, factions of the Armed Forces, political opposition	1
	Government		=
Guinea	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, political parties in the opposition, trade unions	1
	Government		↑
Guinea-Bissau	Internationalised Internal	Transitional government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties, International drug trafficking networks	1
	Government		↑
Kenya	Internationalised Internal	Government, ethnic militias, political and social opposition (political parties and civil society organisations), armed group SLDF, Mungiki sect, MRC party, Somali armed group al-Shabaab and groups that support al-Shabaab in Kenya	3
	Government, System, Resources, Identity, Self-government		↑
Lesotho	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties	2
	Government		↑
Madagascar	Internal	High Transitional Authority, opposition leaders, state security forces, dahalos (cattle rustlers), self-defence militias, private security companies	1
	Government, Resources		↓
Mauritania	Internationalised Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups AQIM, MUJAO	1
	Government, System		=
Morocco – Western Sahara	International[6]	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		=
Mozambique	Internal	Government, former armed group RENAMO	2
	Government		↑
Niger	International	Government, political opposition (Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic) and social opposition, armed group MUJAO, armed group Those Who Sign in Blood, Nigerian Islamist armed group Boko Haram, regional force (MNJTF)	3
	Government, System		↑
Nigeria	Internal	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, farmers and livestock raisers, community militias	3
	Identity, Resources, Government		↓
Nigeria (Niger Delta)	Internal	Government, armed groups MEND, MOSOP, NDPVF and NDV, Joint Revolutionary Council, militias from the Ijaw, Itsereki, Urhobo and Ogoni communities, private security groups	1
	Identity, Resources		↑
Rwanda	Internationalised Internal	Government, Rwandan armed group FDLR, political opposition, dissident factions of the governing party (RPF), Rwandan diaspora in other African countries and in the West	1
	Government, Identity		=
Senegal (Casamance)	Internal	Government, armed group MFDC and its various factions	1
	Self-government		=
Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland)	Internal	Republic of Somaliland, autonomous region of Puntland, Khatumo State	1
	Territory		=
Sudan	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Sudan – South Sudan	International	Sudan, South Sudan	2
	Resources, Identity		↓

6. Although Western Sahara is not an Internationally recognised state, the socio-political crisis between Morocco and Western Sahara is considered "International" and not "Internal" since it is a territory that has yet to be decolonised and Morocco's claims to the territory are not recognised by International law or by any United Nations resolution

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Africa			
Tunisia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including the Uqba bin Nafi Battalion and the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades (branch of AQIM), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS).	3
	Government, System		↑
Uganda	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Zimbabwe	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
America			
Bolivia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition (political parties, authorities and civil society organisations from the eastern regions)	1
	Government, Self-government, Resources		=
Haiti	Internationalised Internal	Government, political and social opposition, MINUSTAH, former military officers	2
	Government		=
Mexico	Internal	Government, political and social opposition (farmer, indigenous and student organisations and trade unions) and armed opposition groups (EZLN, EPR, ERPI, FAR-LP)	1
	System, Government		↑
Peru	Internal	Government, armed opposition (remnants of Shining Path), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)	2
	Government, Resources		↓
Venezuela	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↓
Asia			
Bangladesh	Internal	Government (Awami League), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami), International Crimes Tribunal	3
	Government		↑
China (Tibet)	Internationalised Internal	Chinese government, Dalai Lama and Tibetan government-in-exile, political and social opposition in Tibet and in neighbouring provinces and countries	1
	Self-government, Identity, System		↓
China – Japan	International	China, Japan	2
	Territory, Resources		↓
India (Manipur)	Internal	Government, armed groups PLA, UNLF, PREPAK, PREPAK (Pro), KNF, KNA, KYKL, RPF, UPPK, PCP	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
India (Nagaland)	Internal	Government, armed groups NSCN-K, NSCN-IM, NSCN (K-K), NSCN-R, NNC, ZUF	2
	Identity, Self-government		↑
India – Pakistan	International	India, Pakistan	3
	Identity, Territory		=
Indonesia (Aceh)	Internal	Indonesian government, regional government of Aceh, political opposition	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		=
Indonesia (West Papua)	Internal	Government, armed group OPM, political and social opposition (autonomist or secessionist organisations, indigenous and human rights organisations), indigenous Papuan groups, Freeport mining company	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↓
Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	International	DPR Korea, Rep. of Korea	3
	System		↑
Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea[7]	International	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia	2
	Government		=

7. This International socio-political crisis affects other countries that have not been mentioned, which are involved to varying degrees.

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Asia			
Kyrgyzstan	Internationalised Internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	1
	System, Government, Identity, Resources, Territory		↑
Myanmar	Internal	Government, political and social opposition (NLD opposition party), 969 group	2
	System		↓
Nepal[8]	Internal	Government, political parties –Nepali Congress, UCPN (M) and CPN (UML)–, United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF), Tharuhat-Tharuwan Joint Struggle Committee	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Pakistan	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed opposition (Taliban militias, political party militias), Armed Forces, secret services	3
	Government, System		↑
Philippines (Mindanao)	Internal	Government, factions of the armed groups MILF and MNLF	3
	Self-government, Identity		=
Sri Lanka	Internal	Government, Tamil political and social opposition	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Tajikistan	Internationalised Internal	Government, political and social opposition, former warlords, regional armed groups, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan	2
	Government, System, Resources, Territory		↑
Thailand	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↓
Thailand –Cambodia	International	Thailand, Cambodia	1
	Territory		↓
Uzbekistan	Internationalised Internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan	1
	Government, System		=
Europe			
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	International	Government of Azerbaijan, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia	3
	Self-government,Identity, Territory		↑
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Internationalised Internal	Central government, government of the Republika Srpska, government of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation, high representative of the International community	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Cyprus	Internationalised Internal	Government of Cyprus, government of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Greece, Turkey	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Georgia (Abkhazia)	Internationalised Internal	Government of Georgia, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↓
Georgia (South Ossetia)	Internationalised Internal	Government of Georgia, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity		
Macedonia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Moldova, Rep. of (Transdniestria)	Internationalised Internal	Government of Moldova, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity		↑

8. In the 2016 edition of *Alert!* the crises in Nepal and Nepal (Terai) have been united under the name of Nepal due to the interrelating dynamics between them in 2015.

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Europe			
Russia (Chechnya)	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Chechnya, armed opposition groups	2
	Sistema, Government, Identidad		↓
Russia (Ingushetia)	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Ingushetia, armed opposition groups	2
	System, Government, Identity		=
Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria)	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, armed opposition groups	3
	System, Government, Identity		↓
Serbia – Kosovo	International[9]	Government of Serbia, government of Kosovo, political and social representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo, UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Middle East			
Bahrain	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government, Identity		=
Egypt	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		=
Iran (northwest)	Internationalised Internal	Government, armed group PJAK, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Iraq	1
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Iran (Sistan and Balochistan)	Internationalised Internal	Government, armed groups Jundullah (Soldiers of God / People's Resistance Movement), Harakat Ansar Iran and Jaish al-Adl, Pakistan	2
	Self-government, Identity		=
Iran – USA, Israel[10]	International	Iran, USA, Israel	1
	System, Government		↓
Iraq (Kurdistan)	Internationalised Internal	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources, Territory		↑
Israel – Syria – Lebanon	International	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah (party and militia)	3
	System, Resources, Territory		=
Lebanon	Internationalised Internal	Government, Hezbollah (party and militia), political and social opposition, armed groups ISIS and al-Nusra Front	3
	Government, System		=
Palestine	Internal	PNA, Fatah, armed group al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Hamas and its armed wing Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Salafist groups	1
	Government		=
Saudi Arabia	Internationalised Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including AQAP and branches of ISIS (Hijaz Province, Najd Province)	2
	Government, Identity		↑
Yemen (south)	Internal	Government, secessionist and autonomist opposition groups from the south (including the South Yemen Movement/al-Hiraak al-Janoubi)	2
	Self-government, Resources, Territory		↑

1: low intensity; 2: medium intensity; 3: high intensity.
↑: escalation of tension; ↓: decrease of tension; =: no changes.
The socio-political crises in bold are described in this chapter.

9. The socio-political crisis between Kosovo and Serbia is considered "International" because even though its International legal status remains unclear, Kosovo has been recognised as a state by over 100 countries.
10. This International socio-political crisis affects other countries that have not been mentioned, which are involved to varying degrees.

2.2. Socio-political crises: analysis of trends in 2015

This section examines the general trends observed in socio-political crises in 2015, both worldwide and regionally.

2.2.1. Global trends

Eighty-three scenarios of socio-political crisis were identified around the world in 2015. As in previous years, the highest number of these crises was in Africa, with 36 cases (44%), followed by Asia, where 20 cases were reported (24%). The Middle East and Europe were the scene of 11 each (13% in both cases), while five were identified in America (6%). Six new scenarios of socio-political crisis were found: Cameroon, due to the actions of the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram on Cameroonian soil, killing around 200 people, including many civilians; Lesotho, owing to the political crisis in 2015 and the fighting between parts of the military after the general elections in February; and Mexico, due to the rise of the human security crisis and many forms of violence in recent years, including repression against political and social opposition groups (farmer, indigenous and student organisations and trade unions, among others). Moreover, cases in Central Africa (LRA), India (Manipur) and Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria), which had been considered armed conflicts in previous years, were now viewed as socio-political crises because they presented lower thresholds of violence. Despite the de-escalation, all three cases involve active armed insurgencies. In turn, various socio-political crises stopped being considered as such due to the falling tension in recent years. Furthermore, two cases considered crises in previous years were described as armed conflicts in 2015 due to the rise in violence: Burundi and the conflict between the government of the Philippines and the armed group BIFF.[11]

Africa was the continent with the largest number of socio-political crises, while Asia and the Middle East reported higher percentages of high-intensity tension

The socio-political crises had many causes, with more than one primary factor in most cases. The analysis of the landscape of crises in 2015 enables to identify trends regarding their main causes or motivations. In line with the data observed in previous years, **67% of the crises included among their various main causes opposition to the domestic or International policies implemented by the respective governments, which led to conflicts to achieve or erode power, or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective states.** This factor of opposition to the government was especially prevalent in America (present in all cases of socio-political crisis) and in Africa (70% of the crises). Secondly, demands for self-government and/or identity-related demands were one of the causes of nearly half the crises (49%). This average was easily topped in Europe (91% of the cases). Thirdly, it should be noted that disputes over control of land and/or resources was an especially important main cause of more than one third of the crises in the world (34% or 28 cases), with a greater presence in America and Africa (40% and 39%, respectively). However, this is an element that directly or indirectly fuels many crisis situations to various degrees.

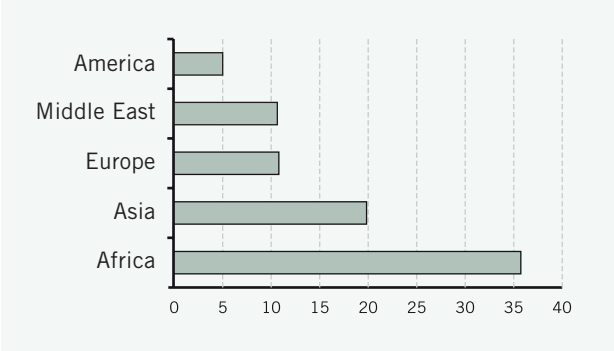
In line with previous years, slightly over half the crises in the world were domestic in nature (43 cases or 52%), more than one fourth were Internationalised Internal (22 cases or 26%) and one fifth were International (18 cases or 22%). Regarding the evolution of the crises, two fifths (34 cases) reported a deterioration in the situation compared to 2014, while one third (29 cases) experienced no significant changes and around one fourth improved somewhat (20 cases).

In terms of intensity, during 2015 close to half the crises were of low intensity (48% or 40 cases), while nearly one third were of medium intensity (30% or 25 cases) and just over one fifth were characterised by high levels of instability and/or violence (22% or 18 cases). Taken together, the medium and high-intensity cases therefore accounted for over half of all socio-political crises. Africa and Asia were the continents with the highest number of high-intensity socio-political crises, with seven and six cases, respectively. Three other cases were located in the Middle East, and two were in Europe. **The most serious crises in 2015 were in Central Africa (LRA), Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia, Bangladesh, DPR Korea–Rep. of Korea, the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Manipur), India-Pakistan, Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria), Egypt, Israel-Syria-Lebanon and Lebanon.** Some of the countries affected by the high-intensity crises were among the ten top importers of heavy weapons (India, Pakistan, South Korea) or among the ten countries with the highest military spending (Russia, India, South Korea), according to data collected by SIPRI.[12]

Some of these high-intensity crises were scenes of violence with thresholds of lethality above 100 fatalities, as was the case (among others) of intercommunity violence in Nigeria over access to resources, with several hundred fatalities in 2015 (over 1,200 in 2014); the violence perpetrated by the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH) in Cameroon, Chad and Niger and the

11. See the summaries of Burundi and the Philippines (BIFF) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
12. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Trends in International Arms Transfers,* 2015, SIPRI Fact Sheet, February 2016; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Trends in World Military Expenditure,* 2014, SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2015.

Graph 2.1. **Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2015**



militarisation policies in those states, with death tolls of several hundred casualties, including many civilians; the deterioration of the situation in Tunisia, with over 100 victims and an increase in attacks by jihadist armed groups; the rise of political confrontation in Bangladesh, with 150 fatalities in the first quarter alone and a prolongation of the severe political electoral crisis of 2014, among other factors; over 170 people killed in clashes along the Line of Control between Pakistan and India; and the violent practices arising from the new anti-terrorist plan in Pakistan, the National Action Plan, including the execution of around 300 people, most of them not convicted of terrorism.

As part of the high-intensity crises, the use of suicide attacks and large-scale attacks on civilian targets was reported in Kenya (including but not limited to the attack by the Somali armed group al-Shabaab on Garissa University College in Kenya, claiming 148 lives) and in Lebanon (such as a double attack in a Shia neighbourhood for which ISIS claimed responsibility that killed 43 people and wounded 200 in November, in addition to other incidents). Armed groups with regional or International projection and an enormous ability to destabilise different states in their areas of origin like Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and ISIS played a significant role in these highly lethal scenarios, as did the use of especially deadly war strategies in populated areas and against civilians. Faced with this challenge, militarised and repressive responses with indiscriminate effects also helped to boost the levels of conflict.

In addition to their lethality, **the crisis situations had other serious impacts on human security. For instance, there were new forced displacements** (with cases like Eritrea, where around 400,000 people have fled in recent years, according to the UN, in a context of repression and poverty; Niger, with around 66,000 people Internally displaced by Boko Haram's violence on its soil; and the forced flight of over 10,000 people from the Rohingya community in Myanmar, solely in the first quarter of 2015 due to violence against it). Other impacts include kidnapping (cases like the more than 400 people abducted by the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA in the first eight months of 2015, a 60% increase compared to the same period in 2014), disappearances (in Kenya and Mexico, among others), executions (around 300 in Pakistan following the new anti-terrorism plan and around 20 in Kenya) and sexual violence (like in Haiti, one of the top five countries in terms of accusations of sexual abuse and exploitation levelled at UN mission personnel, according to data from 2015).[13] There were also daily impacts like restrictions on the freedom of movement and the militarisation of territory (like in Nagorno-Karabakh, with the use of mortars and heavy weapons along the line of separation and near civilian areas in 2015 for the first time since the ceasefire in 1994), restrictions on or the denial of displaced populations' right to return (like in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia) and the repression of human rights and freedoms (like in Eritrea, where a UN commission of inquiry found that the government continues to commit serious, systematic and widespread human rights violations, and in Ethiopia, where various organisations complained of the harassment of opposition groups and media outlets). The impact of anti-terrorist laws and measures with indiscriminate effects was especially worrying, as was the persecution of Islam in the public sphere partially under cover of the so-called global war on terrorism, which risks aggravating conflicts with a sectarian dimension. Local and foreign populations in countries like Kenya, Chad, Cameroon, Pakistan, Egypt and others were affected by disproportionate measures of repression.

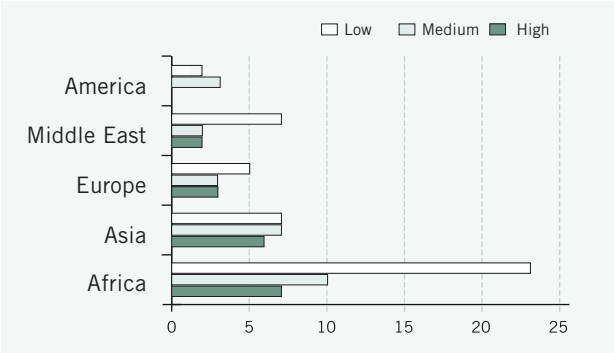
Eighteen cases of high-intensity socio-political crises were reported during 2015, some of which exceeded the annual death toll of around 100 fatalities by wide margins

2.2.2. Regional trends

As in previous years, **in 2015 Africa remained the main scene of socio-political crises worldwide.** Forty-three per cent of all socio-political crises took place in Africa (36 of the 83 cases). In terms of intensity, half the tensions in Africa were of low intensity (53% or 19 cases), slightly more than one quarter presented medium levels of intensity (10 cases or 28%) and nearly one fifth had high levels of violence (seven cases or 19%). On aggregate, **most of the high-intensity crises in the world took place in Africa** (39%). However, in comparative regional terms, other continents had higher percentages of high-intensity crises than Africa. For example, high tensions accounted for 30% of the total socio-political crises in Asia and 27% in the Middle East. Central Africa (LRA), Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia were the seven most intense scenarios in Africa in 2015. Moreover, around half the socio-political crises

13. See chapter 4 (Gender, peace and security).

Graph 2.2. **Intensity of the socio-political crises by region**



in Africa deteriorated compared to the previous year (17 cases or 47%), while 36% (13 cases) experienced no significant changes and only 17% (six cases) saw their situation improve.

Furthermore, most of the crises in Africa were domestic in nature (20 cases or 56%). One fifth were considered Internationalised Internal (seven cases or 19%). Aspects of Internationalisation in local crises included the involvement of foreign state or non-state actors in the disputes, participation in regional military missions, the presence of International missions with a robust mandate among others. One fourth of the crises were International (nine cases): Central Africa (LRA), Eritrea-Ethiopia, Morocco-Western Sahara, DRC-Rwanda, DRC-Uganda and Sudan-South Sudan, as was the fighting between the group of Nigerian origin Boko Haram and the forces of Chad, Cameroon and Niger. The latter three countries and Benin participated in the MNJTF regional force (8,700 troops) to battle Boko Haram.

The socio-political crises seriously affected human security, giving rise to displacement, abductions, executions, militarisation and the repression of human rights

As for the root causes of the crises, in Africa most of the disputes were over opposition to the policies of the respective governments and/or systems. This aspect was present in 75% of the cases (27 contexts), a percentage similar to the previous year. During the year, this incompatibility took form in different ways, including crises over electoral processes and/or attempts to keep leaders in power (Uganda, DRC, Rwanda, Sudan, Niger and others); the rise of repression against the social and political opposition in countries like Ethiopia, Eritrea and DRC; fighting between groups of the political system (between the Parliament and president in Madagascar; between the executive branch and parts of the Armed Forces in Lesotho; between the government and the presidential security force, including a failed coup d'état, in Burkina Faso; between the president and the government in Guinea-Bissau); electoral violence in Nigeria; and threats from former armed groups (RENAMO in Mozambique), in addition to other aspects.

Another significant cause was **the struggle for the control of resources or territory, present in 39% of the cases (14 crises).** Throughout 2015, intercommunity violence continued at a high level of intensity in Nigeria over access to resources, though with a de-escalation in terms of fatalities (more than 1,200 in 2014 and several hundred in 2015), while there were warnings of a significant rise in abductions in Central Africa by the armed group LRA. In addition, **demands related to identity and/or self-government were one of the most important causes of 36% of the crises (13 cases). In this regard, during 2015 there was an escalation of violence by the armed group OLF,** which demands independence for the Oromo community in the region of Oromia in Ethiopia, coupled with a rise in repression by the Ethiopian security forces against the community. Warnings were also raised in the Niger Delta region ahead of the elections.

Socio-political crises in **Asia**, were characterised by a great diversity of type. In terms of intensity, **one third of the most serious crises in the world took place in Asia** (six of 18). This also amounted to just under one third of all crises in Asia. High-intensity contexts were observed in Bangladesh, DPR Korea¬¬-Rep. of Korea, the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Manipur), India-Pakistan and Pakistan. Regarding the high-intensity crises of 2014, Thailand reported an easing of tension in 2015. Overall, regardless of their intensity, the situation of slightly more than one third of the socio-political crises deteriorated (seven cases or 35%), while the rest presented no significant changes (six cases) or witnessed some degree of improvement (seven cases). Notable were the deterioration of the politically tense situation in Bangladesh, where the political opposition and journalists were persecuted intensely; the worsening of the various lines of tension in Tajikistan, including armed attacks and growing fears of the worsening situation in neighbouring Afghanistan; the rise in violence in Nagaland (India) and the breaking of the ceasefire with the armed group NSCN-K; the increase of disputes and grievances in Nepal as the new Constitution was approved, the first from the post-war period; and the serious increase in tension between North and South Korea, with mutual shelling and a state of alarm nearly reaching pre-war levels. Meanwhile, other socio-political crises that underwent no significant changes in 2015 continued to raise alarms nevertheless. These included the constant violations of the 2003 ceasefire between India and Pakistan and the Internal situation in Pakistan. Prominent cases of de-escalation included the lowering of tension between China and Japan in their dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the improved situation in Myanmar following the first elections considered credible, fair and transparent, although the serious source of tension centred on violence against the Rohingya population remained active.

Moreover, it is relevant to note that according to data collected by SIPRI, five of the top 10 importers of heavy weapons from 2011 to 2015 were Asian

countries (India, China, Pakistan, Vietnam and South Korea), four of which (all except Vietnam) had one or various socio-political crises (in addition to armed conflict in India, China and Pakistan). Taken as a whole, the region of Asia and Oceania accounted for 46% of imports worldwide between 2011 and 2015, 26% more than between 2006 and 2010. India was the largest importer in the region, representing 14% of global imports. This was a 90% increase compared to imports between 2006 and 2010.

With regard to the causes of the socio-political crises, demands related to identity and self-government and/or opposition to the policies or system of the states were present in half the socio-political crises. Furthermore, in slightly over one third of the socio-political crises (seven cases), competition for the control of territory or resources was one of the main causes of the dispute. Over half the crises in Asia were of a domestic nature (55% or 11 cases), several points above the global average (52%), one fifth were Internationalised Internal and one fourth were International: China-Japan; North Korea-USA, Japan, South Korea (and other actors); DPR Korea-Rep. of Korea; India-Pakistan; and Thailand-Cambodia.

Anti-terrorist measures in 2015 had serious impacts on the civilian population in countries such as Kenya, Chad, Cameroon, Pakistan and Egypt

The least amount of socio-political crises in the world took place in America, with five cases total in 2014, in line with previous years.[14] All were of medium intensity (three cases: Haiti, Peru and Venezuela) or low intensity (two cases: Bolivia and Mexico). No situations of high-intensity socio-political crisis were reported unlike in 2014, when there was a serious escalation in Venezuela (40 fatalities and over 800 wounded). The main causes of all five crises were opposition to government policies, which materialised in protests varying in intensity and nature, as well as the persecution of opposition groups. Tensions were reduced in cases of medium intensity such as Peru and Venezuela, despite the uncertainty surrounding the latter after the legislative elections in late 2015 were won by the opposition and led to a new scenario with a Chavista government and an anti-Chavista Parliament. However, tensions rose in Mexico along with an increase in different lines of conflict in recent years, including persecution against political and social opposition groups and the weight of crime and violence linked to drug trafficking.

The root causes of most of the crises in Europe in 2015 included demands related to identity and/or self-government

Moreover, socio-political crises in America were mostly domestic (80% of the cases), while the situation in Haiti remained characterised as an Internationalised Internal crisis due to the role of MINUSTAH. Given the ongoing tension in an election year, the mission revoked its original intention to reduce its presence in 2015. Its role continued to be controversial in a year when the UN reported the extensive practice of sexual relations by members of MINUSTAH with Haitian people in exchange for material assistance. Also, although no contexts of socio-political crisis were identified in the United States, it was involved in International tensions outside the Americas, in Asia and the Middle East. Thus, the United States was a relevant stakeholder in the International crisis surrounding the North Korean nuclear programme and the dispute over the Iranian atomic programme, among others. In July, a historic agreement was achieved between the parties to the conflict over Iran's atomic programme. The United States remained the country with the most military spending (data from 2014, released in 2015) and the main arms exporter worldwide (data from SIPRI for the 2011-2015 period), accounting for 33% of all exports around the world. Russia was the second-greatest arms exporter, with 25%.

Europe was characterised by the predominance of low-intensity crises, which represented 63% of the cases (seven of 11), though this was a lower percentage than the year before (85% of the cases in 2014). There were two situations of high-intensity tension in Europe: the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, which witnessed a serious deterioration, including the use of heavy weapons for the first time since the ceasefire in 1994; and the conflict in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (Russia) between the Islamist insurgency and the security forces, which was considered an armed conflict in previous years. The two medium-intensity socio-political crises also took place in the northern Caucasus (in Chechnya and Ingushetia) and also involved armed groups and other actors. During 2015, the armed insurgency in this region witnessed Internal division around loyalty to its previous leadership, agenda and structures (Caucasus Emirate) and many defections to the armed group Islamic State (ISIS). The consequences of this are still uncertain for Russia and its northern Caucasian republics. It is worth mentioning that the situation deteriorated in nearly half the socio-political crises in Europe (45% or five cases).

The root causes of most of the crises in Europe included **demands related to identity and/or self-government (10 of 11 cases).** Tensions worsened in

14. This report does not include as socio-political crises situations produced by criminal violence, drug trafficking networks, cartels or gangs. For further information, see the definition of socio-political crises at the beginning of the chapter.

Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015, with threats of a referendum and departure from all state institutions from the Bosnian Serb entity, the Republika Srpska. **Opposition to government policies was also a prominent factor, present in nearly two thirds of the cases (seven).** In 2015, this aspect became relevant in the Balkans with political crises in Kosovo and in Macedonia, and in Eastern Europe with the worsening situation in Moldova. Moreover, nearly half the socio-political crises in Europe were Internationalised Internal in nature (five of 11 cases), while just over one third were Internal (four cases) and almost one fifth were International (two cases). Regarding the Internationalisation of the disputes, Russia's role was dominant in unresolved militarised conflicts regulated by ceasefire agreements, like in Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria) and Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh). In this respect, in 2015 Europe continued to be affected by antagonism between Russia and Euro-Atlantic actors (EU, European governments and NATO), which appeared in crises in Moldova, for example.

The Middle East was the location of 17% of the high-intensity socio-politial crises around the world in 2015 and was the setting of worsening cases such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq (Kurdistan) and Yemen (south)

Finally, **the Middle East, where 11 cases of socio-political crises were reported, was the location of 17% of the high-intensity cases of socio-political crisis around the world, compared to 39% in Africa and 33% in Asia.** However, it was the region with the second-highest percentage of high-intensity crises in relation to the total count of crises by region. Thus, slightly more than one fourth of its crises (three cases or 27%) were of great intensity: Egypt, Israel-Syria-Lebanon and Lebanon. In Egypt, persecution continued against the Islamist and secular opposition, with serious clashes especially as part of the fourth anniversary of the ouster of President Mubarak and a high number of deaths of people in police custody. Regarding Egypt-Israel-Syria, the greatest escalation of violence between Israel and the Shia militia Hezbollah since the war between them in 2006 took place in early 2015. Meanwhile, Lebanon remained affected by a series of crises that included war dynamics in neighbouring Syria, entailing major acts of violence on Lebanese soil and a situation of domestic political deadlock. Three other cases of crisis were of medium intensity in 2015: Saudi Arabia, Iran (Sistan and Balochistan) and Yemen (south).

In terms of the trends of the socio-political crises, most of the cases in the Middle East (55%) maintained levels of violence and instability similar to those in 2014 and the situation worsened in 36% (four of 11 cases). Only one of the crises in the Middle East improved, though it is a case of special importance due to its projection in International relations: the dispute over the Iranian nuclear programme, about which a historic agreement was signed in July. **The contexts where the conflict dynamics worsened were in Saudi Arabia, Iran (northwest), Iraq (Kurdistan) and Yemen (south).** The aspects of deterioration included the role of alleged ISIS cells in Saudi Arabia, as well as the impact and interconnections that the respective conflicts in Iraq (role of ISIS) and Yemen (Houthi military advance) had on the regions of Kurdistan and southern Yemen, respectively, along with local factors. These and other crises in the Middle East region demonstrated their multiple causes, regionalisation processes and growing challenges posed by ISIS (through the alleged local cells or adherent groups, like in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon) and other extremist groups in crises in the region. Overall, the vast majority of the socio-political crises in the Middle East were Internationalised Internal (five cases or 46%), though Internal tensions remained significant (four cases or 36%) and International crises were less present (two cases or 18%). The most common factor in the origin of the disputes in this region was opposition to the domestic or International policies of the respective governments or states (seven cases or 64%). Demands related to identity and/or self-government were also a significant primary cause, present in half of all cases (55%).

2.3. Socio-political crises: annual evolution

2.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Central Africa (LRA)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	Resources International
Main parties:	AU regional force (RTF, composed of the Ugandan, Congolese and South Sudanese Armed Forces), Operation Observant Compass (USA), self-defence militias from DRC and South Sudan, the LRA, the former Central African armed coalition Séléka

Summary:
The opposition armed group LRA, moved by the religious messianism of its leader, Joseph Kony, was created in 1986 with the aim of ov erthrowing the government of Uganda, introducing a regime based on the Ten Commandments of the Bible and releasing the northern region of the country from its marginalisation. The violence and insecurity caused by the attacks of the LRA against the civil population, the kidnapping of minors to add to its ranks (about 25,000 since the beginning of the conflict) and the confrontations between the armed group and the armed forces (together with the pro-governmental militia) have led to the death of some 200,000 people and the forced displacement of some two million people at the most acute moment of the conflict. The growing military pressure carried out by the Ugandan armed forces obliged the group to take refuge first in South Sudan, later in DR Congo and finally in the Central African Republic. Thus, the LRA increased its activities in the neighbouring countries where it set up its bases, due to the inability to stop it in DR Congo, Central African Republic and the complicity of Sudan. Between 2006 in 2008, a peace process was held that managed to establish an end to hostilities, although it was a failure and in December 2008, the Ugandan, Congolese and South Sudanese armies carried out an offensive against the LRA, which caused the breaking up of the group towards the north of DR Congo, the southeast of the Central African Republic and the southwest of South Sudan, where the offensive continued. In November 2011, the AU authorised the creation of a cross-regional force composed of military contingents from these three countries, which deployed in September 2012 and has US logistical support. Since early 2015 this case was not longer consider an armed confnlict due to the sustained reduction in violence in the last years.

Insecurity and crime committed by the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA continued throughout the year in the provinces of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé, and in northeastern DRC, as well as in the prefectures of Haute-Kotto and Mbomou, southeastern CAR, and to a lesser extent in the Sudanese region of Darfur. The group continued to pose a threat to regional security, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Central Africa, although levels of violence continued dropping in line with the trend over the last two years. The group survived thanks to the lack of interstate coordination and opportunistic alliances with other armed groups and illicit trade in ivory, diamonds and gold. According to LRA Crisis Tracker, there were around 200 violent incidents during the year, in which 13 civilians were killed and around 600 people were abducted temporarily or permanently.[15] OCHA stated that in the first quarter of 2015 alone, the number of fatalities rose to 19 and while the number of attacks and deaths remained constant since the implementation of the AU's regional strategy in 2012, the number of abductions, which were generally of a brief duration, continued to increase steadily. In this regard, in September the Enough Project and Invisible Children published a report highlighting that there had been a significant rise in kidnappings in the first eight months of 2015 compared to the same period of 2014, going from 262 abductions to 417, meaning an increase of 60%. On 18 May, the African Union's Peace and Security Council renewed the mandate of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA for another year and in October the United States authorised the renewal of Operation Observant Compass, which lends logistical support to the regional mission. In this regard, supported by MONUSCO and the regional and US initiatives, the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) continued to conduct operations against the LRA in the areas affected. Furthermore, in September The Washington Post revealed that **AFRICOM special forces were working closely with members of the former Central African coalition Séléka in order to capture the leader of the LRA and break up the group.** These Séléka groups were described as a mafia that wanted to gain favour with the military even when the rebels extorted the local population and participated in illegal trade with the LRA.

According to another report released by the Enough Project in November, the LRA is very weak and only has about 120 fighters spread out over three countries in small units that continue to provoke a climate of insecurity, keeping around 200,000 people from their places of origin at the end of 2015.[16] Joseph Kony was allegedly maintaining his base in the enclave of Kafia Kingi in May 2015, a location he may have occupied since 2011. Based on new interviews with defectors from the group, the report indicates that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) know of the existence of the group in Kafia Kingi, though Khartoum denies it. The report also states that Kony may have lost some control over his troops and even says for the first time that part of his bodyguard detail tried to kill him in mid-2015. The group continues to trade in ivory from hunting elephants in Garamba National Park, which is transported through the DRC and exchanged with Sudanese soldiers and

15. See Invisible Children – Resolve, *LRA Crisis Tracker*, http://www.lracrisistracker.com, 1 October 2015.
16. Ledio Cakaj, *Tusk Wars: Inside the LRA and the Bloody Business of Ivory*, Enough Project, 26 October 2015.

traders in Kafia Kingi for food, ammunition and uniforms. The Sudanese soldiers and traders then move the tusks to Nyala (South Darfur) and Khartoum, from where they are exported to Asia. Despite the efforts of the park rangers, who face off with the LRA, the elephant population has dropped significantly. The LRA groups also engage in looting gold and diamond mines in the eastern CAR. In January, senior LRA commander Dominic Ongwen surrendered to the US military and was transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, where he will be tried in January 2016 in the first international court case against an LRA leader.

In 2015, senior LRA commander Dominic Ongwen surrendered to the United States and was awaiting prosecution by the International Criminal Court

Chad	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System International
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, Nigerian Islamist armed group Boko Haram, regional force (MNJTF)

Summary:
The foiled coup d'état of 2004 and the constitutional reform of 2005, boycotted by the opposition, sowed the seeds of an insurgency that intensified over the course of 2006, with the goal of overthrowing the authoritarian government of Idriss Déby. This opposition movement is composed of various groups and soldiers who are disaffected with the regime. Added to this is the antagonism between Arab tribes and the black population in the border area between Sudan and Chad, related to local grievances, competition for resources and the overspill of the war taking place in the neighbouring Sudanese region of Darfur, as a consequence of the cross-border operations of Sudanese armed groups and the janjaweed (Sudanese pro-government Arab militias). They attacked the refugee camps and towns in Darfur, located in the east of Chad, and this contributed to an escalation of tension between Sudan and Chad, accusing each other of supporting the insurgence from the opposite country, respectively. The signature of an agreement between both countries in January 2010 led to a gradual withdrawal and demobilisation of the Chadian armed groups, although there are still some resistance hotspots. In parallel, Idriss Déby continued controlling the country in an authoritarian way. Finally, the activities of the Nigerian group Boko Haram expanded into Chad, posing a threat to its security.

Chad remained immersed in a serious economic crisis resulting from falling oil prices, which led to a social and political crisis and prompted demonstrations throughout the year. This followed the trend of 2014, alongside the **escalation of actions by the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH).** According to various sources, President Idriss Déby is showing signs of fatigue and progressive physical deterioration as a result of the illness afflicting him, so his re-election in the presidential election in April 2016 seemed more disputable, despite having the full backing of all machinery of the state and his party, the MPS. Politically speaking, during the year the government launched a series of initiatives to foster dialogue with political players, particularly in the national framework of political dialogue. On 12 September, around 30 political parties released a joint statement to protest the repeated issuance of summons to opposition leaders by the police. On 26 October, biometric voter registration began in Chad as a measure to combat electoral fraud. This included nearly 6 million voters in 8,092 centres until 9 December. Led by Saleh Kebzabo, president of the Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Renouveau (UNDR) and by Ngarléjy Yorongar, leader of the Fédération Action pour la République (FAR), the opposition is viewing these elections with the hope that it can defeat Idriss Déby, who has been in power since 1990. In late December, Kebzabo called for promoting political dialogue ahead of the electoral process. The economic crisis caused by the fall in the price of petrol, on which 75% of the country's budget depends, plunged further, since the 2015 budget had been based on a price-per-barrel of around 102 USD and the price has dropped to 40 USD. This severely depleted the state coffers, leading to unpaid salaries and disruptions in investment and the construction of infrastructure.[17] This situation triggered many demonstrations during the year by trade unions, professors and students that in some cases were dispersed by the disproportionate use of force, causing various fatalities.

Furthermore, BH escalated its activities during the year. The armed group launched its first attack on Chadian soil in mid-February and has only increased the number of actions since, with serious consequences for human life. In January, Idriss Déby met with the Cameroonian defence minister and announced his contribution to the regional struggle against BH with 2,500 soldiers.[18] In this regard, talks were held between various countries in the region (Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Niger and Cameroon) throughout the year to work together in the fight against BH and to reconfigure the pre-existing Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The MNJTF was approved in August and its headquarters were established in N'Djamena. Prominent operations included BH's attack on 27 May against a Chadian Army position on Choua Island in Lake Chad that killed four soldiers and 33 BH militiamen and BH's first suicide attack in N'Djamena on 15 June, which targeted a police academy, killing at least 30 people and wounding 100. This serious attack prompted an increase in security measures in the capital, the expulsion of around 300 Cameroonians in late June and the closing of Chad's border with Cameroon. At least 60 suspected members of what was allegedly a BH cell in the capital of Chad were arrested in late June. In late July, the Chadian

17. Vincent Duhem, "Tchad: Idriss Déby Itno, une force moins tranquille", *Jeune Afrique*, 30 December 2015.
18. See the summary on Nigeria (Boko Haram) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Army announced the death of 117 BH combatants in various operations. Following these actions, on 3 July the government announced the establishment of a new anti-terrorism law that was heavily criticised because it used the excuse of fighting terrorism to restrict basic rights, according to the opposition and different human rights advocacy organisations.

The drop in income due to low oil prices triggered demonstrations in Chad that joined the escalation of attacks by the Nigerian group Boko Haram

The worst incident of the year occurred in 10 October, killing 41 people in different coordinated suicide attacks in the village of Baga Sola, in the Lake Chad region. Despite the heavy deployment of troops, suicide attacks and bombings continued, prompting the authorities to declare a state of emergency in the Lake Chad region on 9 November for 20 days, though it was later extended to four months because of the persistence of acts of war. A group of countries in the region known as the G5 (Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) met to discuss how to deal with BH from a regional perspective with the support of the UN and the EU. The G5 also met at the second G5 Sahel Summit held in N'Djamena on 20 November, where it agreed to create a joint military force. In December, 27 people lost their lives and another 130 were wounded in a suicide attack committed by four women in a market on Koulfoua Island.

DRC	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:
Between 1998 and 2003, what has been called "Africa's First World War" took place in DRC.[19] The signing of a series of peace agreements between 2002 and 2003 involved the withdrawal of foreign troops and the creation of a National Transitional Government (NTG), incorporating the former government, the political opposition, the RCD-Goma, RCD-K-ML, RCD-N and MLC armed groups, and the Mai Mai militias. From June 2003, the NTG was led by President Joseph Kabila and four vice presidents, two of whom belonged to the former insurgency: Azarias Ruberwa of the RCD-Goma and Jean-Pierre Bemba of the MLC. The NTG drew up the constitution, on which a referendum was held in December 2005. Legislative and presidential elections were held between July and October 2006, in which Kabila was elected president and Jean-Pierre Bemba came second, amid a climate of high tension and accusations of electoral fraud. The formation of the new government in 2007 failed to bring a halt to the instability and disputes taking place in the political sphere. The elections of November 2011, in which a series of irregularities were committed, fuelled the instability.

The DRC was embroiled in growing political instability stemming from the approaching end of the second term of President Joseph Kabila, which was evident in the rise in political violence, repression of the opposition and the excessive use of force in demonstrations. After the publication of the election schedule and the electoral law, in February 2015 the process began that should lead to holding 11 direct and indirect local, provincial and national elections before December 2016. The many challenges and reforms pending and the difficulties related to complying with the schedule raised fears that current President Joseph Kabila would try to postpone the presidential election and thereby prolong his term of office.[20] In January 2015, Parliament passed a draft bill including a provision that made the holding of legislative and presidential elections conditional upon the organisation of a new national census. Moreover, the creation of this census would entail technical and financial difficulties that led many civil society activists and members of the opposition to interpret the provision as a manoeuvre to delay the election schedule. This decision set off major protests in Kinshasa supported by the Catholic Church against the law. The demonstrations were the largest and most serious since fraud was allegedly detected in the elections in 2011 and at least 42 people were killed as a result of the excessive use of force by the security forces. The government finally withdrew the controversial provision, though the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) made implementation of the schedule dependent upon the resolution of various issues that are in part still outstanding, meaning that the regime created conditions that make it virtually impossible to honour the election schedule.

Political violence continued to escalate since then and the government tried to silence dissidents with threats, violence and arbitrary arrests, as reported by different social movements like LUCHA and Filimbi, as well as local and international human rights advocacy organisations. The presentation of Filimbi ("Whistling" in Swahili) at a meeting in Kinshasa on 15 March that also involved Senegalese movements like Y'en a marre and Burkinabe movements like Balai Citoyen ended in the arrest of all participants and the expulsion of Senegalese and Bukinabe activist movements. Activists Fred Bauma (LUCHA) and Yves Makwambala (Filimbi) have been detained since then, despite the many local and international organisations demanding their release. Amidst this political atmosphere, since April Joseph Kabila tried to win supporters to hold a national dialogue between the majority coalition in power, the political opposition and civil society to address the election schedule, include several million voters in the census who had won the right to vote since 2011, the funding of the process and security during the elections.

19. See the summary on DRC (east) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
20. See "DRC faced with the risk of an escalation of political instability and armed conflict in 2016", in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios in 2016).

The opposition was divided over whether or not to participate in the process, which could legitimise reform for the schedule (the dreaded *glissement*, meaning postponement of the election schedule). Some of the political players present demanded an international presence in the process. On 26 June, the Episcopal Conference (CENCO) released a statement welcoming the initiative to conduct a national dialogue respecting the institutional framework in force and proposed postponing the local elections until after the national ones in 2016 due to technical, logistical, legal and other kinds of delays, among others. The local and provincial elections that were supposed to be held on 25 October were postponed because of legal irregularities and a lack of funding and the Constitutional Court ratified this decision. In September, a group of seven political parties (the G7) of the ruling coalition also asked Kabila to hold the local elections after the national and provincial ones. After taking this stance, the G7 was expelled from the government coalition. The government began an investigation of alleged corruption against some of its rivals and aspirants to succeed it, which according to various analysts could be a way of eliminating possible contenders, including the former governor of the powerful Katanga region, Moïse Katumbi. In December, Filimbi and LUCHA organised a meeting with the social and political opposition on Gorée Island in Senegal, facilitated and funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany) and the Brenthurst Foundation (South Africa). The main Congolese opposition leaders finally participated, such as Félix Tshisekedi and Sami Badibanga (UDPS), Vital Kamerhe (UNC), Eve Bazaiba (MLC), Martin Fayulu (FAC), Olivier Kamitatu (G7) and Abbot Léonard Santedi (Catholic Church). Moïse Katumbi did not participate in the meeting, but he had previously met with some attendees like Félix Tshisekedi in Paris on 10 December. No government representative was invited. The result was the creation of a broad opposition coalition after a few days called Front Citoyen 2016, which demands that the presidential election be held in late 2016 as established by the Constitution.[21] Filimbi coordinator Floribert Anzuluni became the coordinator of the platform. This meeting led to a cooling of relations between Senegal and the DRC. Katumbi later announced that he was joining Front Citoyen 2016, as did the human rights organisations ASADHO and Amis de Nelson Mandela. CENCO gave support to Front Citoyen. **In December, a report issued by the UN Human Rights Council stressed an increase in violations of political rights and freedoms committed by government agents and a prevailing climate of impunity**. The report stated that since July, there had been a resurgence of threats, arbitrary arrests and the use of justice as a tool against civil society activists and media employees, indicating a serious shrinking of the political space.

Rwanda	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Rwandan armed group FDLR, political opposition, dissident factions of the governing party (RPF), Rwandan diaspora in other African countries and in the West

Summary:
The arrival of Belgian colonialism in 1916 exacerbated the ethnic differences between the majority Hutu community and the Tutsi minority. The latter was considered superior and held political, economic and social power in the country with the blessing of Belgium to the detriment of the majority of the population. This situation stirred up great resentment and by 1959 the first outbreaks of ethnic-political violence against the Tutsi community had taken place. Following independence in 1962, the Hutu community took power. 1990 marked the start of an armed conflict between the RPF armed group, led by the Tutsi community in Uganda, having fled in 1959, and the Hutu government, although an agreement was reached in 1993. This agreement was not respected. Between April and June 1994, extremist Hutu groups carried out the genocide of around one million people, mostly Tutsi but also moderate Hutu, abandoned by the international community, which withdrew the UN mission that was supposed to supervise the agreement. The RPF managed to overthrow and expel the genocidal government, committing serious violations of human rights. Some sectors of the population refer to this as a second internal genocide, in addition to the crimes committed by the RPF in Congolese territory as it persecuted those responsible for the 1994 genocide (the former Rwandan armed forces and the Interahamwe militias, rechristened as the FDLR) and the two million Rwandan refugees who had fled to DR Congo. Since then, the president, Paul Kagame, has ruled in an authoritarian manner, repressing political dissidence.

The stifling of the political opposition continued and freedom of expression remained absent. The year was marked by the process to reform the Constitution and the constitutional referendum in December that raised the possibility that the current President Paul Kagame could run in the 2017 election and successive elections. The constitutional referendum was held on 18 December with 98% turnout in which **the Rwandan population approved the amendment to the Constitution by 98.4%, allowing the 58-year-old Kagame to run in the 2017 election and potentially lead the country until 2034**. In mid-November, the Rwandan Senate approved various amendments allowing him to run for a new seven-year term, but also reduced the length of each term from seven to five years and maintained the maximum possibility of two terms. However, these changes will only take effect starting in 2024, following Kagame's third term, when he will be able to run for two additional five-year terms. The ruling RPF party pointed out that these reforms were made in response to general public demand, since the conclusions of a national survey revealed in

21. Trésor Kibangula, "RDC: comment le Front citoyen 2016 compte empêcher le 'glissement' du calendrier electoral", Jeune Afrique, 22 December 2015.

Parliament in August showed that only 10 people of the 3.7 million who signed the petition (60% of the census) were opposed to a third presidential term. In June, the Democratic Green Party presented an amendment to the Supreme Court to block the reform of the presidential terms, but it was rejected. The United States and the European Union denounced the amendments as an attempt to undermine democracy in the country and the EU criticised the little time that the parties had to conduct a campaign against the referendum. On 31 December, Kagame announced that he accepted the people's mandate of the constitutional referendum. Moreover, in August a British court rejected a request to extradite the head of the Rwandan intelligence services, Karenzi Karake, to appear before a Spanish court for his alleged role in the massacres that took place during the genocide in 1994. Karake was released on bail in the United Kingdom following his arrest at Spain's request in June. His detention muddied diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Rwanda.

In March, 11 people were given sentences ranging from 10 years to life in prison for conspiring with the Rwandan armed group FDLR to overthrow Kagame. The government accused the UN and the DRC of inaction against the FDLR. Meanwhile, the DRC and Rwanda met in February to discuss the agenda to repatriate the combatants of the pro-Rwandan Congolese armed group M23 who had sought refuge in Rwanda after their defeat by the Congolese Army and MONUSCO in December 2013, although no timetable was agreed. Relations between Rwanda and Burundi became strained as a result of the serious crisis affecting Burundi, since Rwanda pressured its neighbour to open the political space in order to lower tension in the country. Information leaked in December about reports by Refugees International indicating that various Burundian armed groups like the FNL and the Imbogoraburundi were forcibly recruiting combatants from Burundian refugee camps in Rwanda. Moreover, it stated that this was not only occurring with the acquiescence of the Rwandan authorities, but with their active cooperation, aggravating the relations between both countries even more.

Refugees International warned that various Burundian armed groups were recruiting combatants from the Burundian refugee camps with Rwanda's acquiescence

Sudan	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:
Sudan has been immersed in a long-standing conflict stemming from the concentration of power and resources in the centre of the country. Besides the conflicts in the marginalised regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the rest of the country is also undergoing governability problems stemming from the authoritarian regime of President Omar al-Bashir, who came to power after a coup in 1989 and who uses strict control and repression against dissidents through the State's security forces. Tensions worsened in the country with the secession of South Sudan in 2011, since this severely affected the country's economy, 70% of which depended on revenues from oil, mainly located in the south. The Sudanese State coffers saw revenue plummet with the loss of control over oil exports and, later on, due to the lack of agreement with South Sudan over how to transport oil through the oil pipelines crossing Sudan. A financial situation with a high inflation and the devaluation of its currency contributed to the outbreak of significant protests in the Summer of 2012 in several cities around the cities that were put out by the security forces.

In addition to the armed conflicts taking place in the regions of Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, the country has been immersed in a heavy political and social crisis for years, forcing the Sudanese government to undertake a National Dialogue with all stakeholders that has not yet begun. Since January 2014, when President Omar al-Bashir called on all the political parties and insurgent groups to begin the National Dialogue process to build peace in the country and discuss possible constitutional reform,[22] the negotiating process has made little headway, firstly because of the delay owing to the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in April and secondly due to the boycott of different opposition groups and armed movements. The April elections (the first since South Sudan separated from Sudan in 2011) increased restrictions on political freedoms in the country in the pre-election period, leading the main opposition parties to boycott them. The restrictions also prompted reactions from the armed movements, some of which, like the SPLM-N, stepped up their military actions to interfere and sabotage the elections. The elections were finally held between 13 and 15 April in an atmosphere marked by boycott by part of the main opposition parties and low turnout (officially 46%). During the elections, some altercations occurred in different parts of the country. Violence by the rebel group SPLM-N increased in the regions bordering South Kordofan and Blue Nile throughout the pre-electoral period. The results were finally made public on 27 April, handing victory once again to President Omar al-Bashir with 95.05% of the vote. The leaders of the countries of the region and traditional allies like Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and China congratulated al-Bashir on his victory. The observation missions of the AU, the Arab League and the IGAD approved of the elections, while the EU and the Troika (the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway) denounced them as not credible. This

22. See "Sudan's National Dialogue, one of the last hopes for peace in the country", in chapter 5 (Opportunities for peace in 2015) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2015!: Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Icaria Editorial, January 2015.

position was criticised by Sudan, which called the EU representative to the capital.

After the elections, in early July President al-Bashir once again announced the government's intention to promote the National Dialogue process under the mediation of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan, led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki. Following the government's announcement, some opposition political parties like the Islamist Just Peace Forum demonstrated their intention to join it, while others like the National Umma Party (NUP) and the Reform Now Movement were willing to talk, but only if significant changes were made to its content and mediation. Other opposition groups like Islamist Reform Now declared that they would not participate. In August, Thabo Mbeki travelled to the country to try to start the negotiations. In the working meeting on AUHIP activities held in Addis Ababa on 25 August, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) committed to the Sudanese dialogue process and requested a preparatory conference at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa to create the right conditions to start the process and discuss procedural matters, a proposal initially rejected by Khartoum. Meanwhile, in an attempt to get rebel groups to join the process, on 20 August the Sudanese government offered a two-month ceasefire in the areas in conflict, as well as a general amnesty for the leaders of the rebel movements that formed part of the National Dialogue. On 22 September, the government signed two decrees that guaranteed both offers to the rebels. After a meeting with the Troika (the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway), the armed movement coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), which includes groups coming from Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, stated that it would participate in the National Dialogue, affirming its intention to sign a six-month cessation of hostilities truce in its regions of activity. **The National Dialogue began on 10 October, but was boycotted by most of the political opposition and armed groups because there was no agreement on its content**. Hoping to refloat the situation, the government agreed to meet with the rebel groups of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile in Addis Ababa between 19 and 22 November. During the talks, no agreement was reached on aspects related to the ceasefire, the rebels' request to allow the entry of humanitarian aid or the creation of different negotiating tables for the crises in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The SPLM-N demanded a comprehensive table. Reacting to the failure of the negotiations, on 24 November the Sudanese government announced an offensive in all three rebel regions, which prompted the SPLM-N to mobilise its fighters. Some negotiations took place as part of the National Dialogue with different opposition parties in December, while other groups continued boycotting the negotiations if the party Sudan Call was not included in them. The government has excluded Sudan Call from the negotiations. On 31 December, the Sudanese government announced that the National Dialogue would be extended until 10 February 2016 and the ceasefire would be prolonged until 31 January, while the SPLM-N rebels continued to insist that they would not sit down to negotiate on this basis.

The National Dialogue in Sudan that began in mid-October led to little progress or agreements, prompting the government to extend it until February 2016

In other news related to the **International Criminal Court's (ICC) open case against Omar Hassan al-Bashir,** for whom an arrest warrant for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur was issued in 2009, in March the ICC urged the UN Security Council to take the necessary measures given Sudan's failure to cooperate in the investigation of its president. Sudan continued to reject the ICC's requests, repeating that the rulings of the supranational court are not binding on the Sudanese government. The most important episode of the year in this regard occurred in mid-June when President al-Bashir travelled to South Africa to attend the 25th summit of the Heads of State of the African Union (AU) in Johannesburg. **Al-Bashir's presence in South Africa prompted the ICC prosecutors to ask the South African government to arrest him**. The Pretoria High Court issued an interim order to prevent the Sudanese president from leaving the country on 14 June. However, the South African government ignored the ICC's request and the Pretoria High Court's order and allowed al-Bashir to leave South African soil. The EU, the UN and many other organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International made a call urging Jacob Zuma's government to comply with its acquired obligations and commitments and to prevent the Sudanese president from leaving, but this pressure had no effect other than triggering harsh criticism of the South African government. Through its ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), the South African government later revealed its intention to leave the ICC because of what it considers a departure from its objectives and its mandate.

Sudan – South Sudan	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Identity, Resources International
Main parties:	Sudan, South Sudan

Summary:
On 9th July 2011, South Sudan declared its independence as the culmination of the peace process that began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. However, the creation of a new nation did not put an end to the disagreements between Khartoum and Juba due to the large number of issues pending resolution between the

two governments. The main obstacles to stability include the dispute over the oil-rich enclave of Abyei and the final delimitation of the border between the two nations, along with the lack of an agreement on the exploitation of oil resources (oil fields are located in South Sudan but pipelines for oil export are located in Sudan). Mutual accusations regarding the support of insurgent movements in the neighbouring country have contributed to destabilising the situation even further and to threatening the peaceful coexistence of the two countries.

During the year, tensions between Sudan and South Sudan became visible in internal conflicts suffered by each state, creating dynamics of proxy war where each accused the other of backing and maintaining their domestic rebellions.[23] Attempts were also made during the year to address the different **unresolved border issues between both states related to Abyei, 14-Mile Area, Joudat Al-Fakhar, Jebel al-Migainais, Kaka and the enclave of Kafia Kingi**, which amount to 20% of the still undefined border between both countries. The Joint Border Commission (JBC) between Sudan and South Sudan convened in Addis Ababa in early October under the auspices of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP). At the meeting, the JBC announced progress in implementing the actions planned in the Agreement on Border Issues signed by both countries on 27 September 2012. The JBC also confirmed that the negotiations would resume in January 2016. Some incidents occurred in connection with the situation in the **Abyei enclave** during the year, such as the attack on the traditional Ngok Dinka chief's home in the city of Abeyi on 26 November, which killed one child and one member of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). During the year, the UN Security Council **voted unanimously to extend the UNISFA mandate** two times: from 14 July 2015 to 15 December 2015, and from 15 December 2015 to 15 May 2016.

Uganda	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:
President Yoweri Museveni has been in power since 1986, when an insurgent movement he commanded succeeded in overthrowing the government of Milton Obote, and has since ruled the country using authoritarian means and a political system controlled by the former rebel movement, the NRM (the Movement). In the 2001 presidential elections Museveni defeated his main opponent, Kizza Besigye, a former colonel in the NRM, amid allegations of fraud. In a referendum held in July 2005 Ugandans voted to return to a multiparty system. Following an amendment to the Constitution in 2005 to increase the existing limit of two consecutive terms to three, Museveni won the 2006 elections, amid serious allegations of fraud. They were the first multiparty elections that had been held since he had come to power. In the February 2011 presidential elections, Museveni again beat his eternal rival and former ally Kizza Besigye amid new allegations of fraud, which has led to an escalation of social tension and Government repression of the demands for democratic change and protests against the rising cost of living. In parallel, Uganda's military intervention in Somalia increased the threats of the Somali armed group al-Shabaab against Uganda. Finally, various parts of the country are affected by periodic inter-community conflicts over land ownership.

Uganda was immersed in a permanent election campaign ahead of the legislative and presidential elections to be held on 18 February 2016. In power since 1986, President Yoweri Museveni wanted to run for another five-year term of office. Throughout the year, the political opposition tried to agree to present a single candidate as a way to uphold hopes to defeat Museveni. However, various analysts stated that the design of a convincing alternative was burdened by the fact that the main opposition leaders were old figures of the party in power, casting doubt on their legitimacy to criticise a system from which they benefitted for so long.[24] First is Kizza Besigye, who went from being Museveni's personal physician to his defeated election opponent in the last three elections (2001, 2006 and 2011). Second, and most recently, is Amama Mbabazi, his former prime minister (2011-2014) and right-hand man on security issues (he led the ministry of Defence between 2001 and 2006 and the ministry of Security from 2006 to 2011), who fell from grace in 2014 due to his presidential ambitions. Mbabazi has been one of the most influential figures in the ruling party for 28 years. He previously and unsuccessfully attempted to win the NRM's nomination as candidate in the internal primaries, but the NRM closed ranks around Museveni in July. Afterwards, Mbabazi joined the main opposition coalition, The Democratic Alliance (TDA). The TDA had been created in June in order to implement a national unity government and present a joint candidate to run in the presidential election. Although the main political parties seemed to agree on presenting a joint candidate in the election, in late September the discussions between the eight parties that make up the opposition coalition stalled without agreeing on a joint candidate, since all aimed to lead the coalition, even though both main leaders, Besigye and Mbabazi, could unite their candidacies at any time. The deadline for registering with the electoral commission ended on 4 November, thereby kicking off the election campaign. Eight candidates were confirmed: Museveni, Mbabazi, Besigye, four other male candidates and a female candidate. In addition to the difficulties in presenting a joint candidate, there was an atmosphere of pressure and restrictions on the freedom of expression in the country, with many cases of abuse and pressure reported by the media and civil society activists. The security

23. See the summary on Sudan-South Sudan in chapter 3 (Peace processes).
24. Jeune Afrique, "Présidentielle en Ouganda: qui pour défier Museveni?", *Jeune Afrique*, 5 November 2015.

forces blocked or hindered public demonstrations and rallies for both opposition candidates, arresting their supporters and subjecting them to abuse. This led to many clashes between the supporters of both opposition candidates and the security forces, which committed an excessive use of force. Several supporters of Mbabazi and Besigye died and scores were wounded during the year. There were also clashes between the supporters of Museveni and other candidates, such as Mbabazi; in December, for instance, at least 17 people were injured in Ntungamo. Besigye accused the Ugandan police of brutality in October, while the police argued that they were devoted solely to fulfilling the mandate of the Electoral Commission to prevent situations that could lead to altercations between the supporters of different parties or threaten stability. In October, a female member of Besigye's team, in charge of the party's environmental policy, was stripped naked in public and abused as part of the policy of the country's police to discourage women from becoming activists and getting involved in politics, according to several analysts. Meanwhile, the security forces conducted searches in mosques and arrested and tried dozens of Muslims suspected of having links to the armed group of Ugandan origin ADF, which operates on Congolese soil and is waging an open war against the country's security forces.[25]

The International Federation for Human Rights called for an international commission of inquiry to clarify the deaths linked to the incidents at the end of 2015 in Djibouti

Horn of Africa

Djibouti	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed group FRUD, political and social opposition (UAD/ USN coalition)

Summary:
Djibouti is a small country in the Horn of Africa that gained independence from France in 1977. Artificially created by colonialism, for strategic reasons, the new state's main asset is its port, through which most of Ethiopia's foreign trade is routed. Djibouti's situation is also strategic for the control of maritime traffic in the Red Sea, while its proximity to Somalia makes it an attractive option for establishing military missions to control piracy in Somalian waters. The political system is controlled by the Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès (RPP), and operates as a single-party system. Opposition has been allowed since 2002, although it boycotted the 2005 and 2008 elections due to the lack of freedom of expression and government pressure. Grouped into the coalition Union pour l'Alternance Démocratique (UAD), it ran in the elections in 2013 under the new label Union pour la Salut National (USN), but rejected the official results that gave it 10 of the 65 seats in Parliament (the final results were never published). This set off a serious political crisis that was resolved with the agreement on 30 December 2014 under pressure from the United States and the European Union. On the other hand, in the 1990s a civil war took place instigated by the armed group Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie (FRUD), composed of groups from the Afar community. The Afar are excluded from political institutions, which are controlled by sectors from the Somali Issa sub-clan. In 1994, the majority faction of the FRUD reached a peace agreement, but some minority sectors of the armed coalition have remained active ever since.

In **Djibouti, the year was marked by the upcoming elections scheduled for April 2016** and the implementation of the agreement reached in December 2014 between the government and the political opposition following months of negotiations with pressure from the United States and the EU, concerned about instability in the country considered strategic in the so-called "fight against terrorism". The political opposition had to mourn the death of one of its greatest exponents, Ismaïl Guedi Hared, who died in Paris in September. Hared had been the chief of staff of historic President Hassan Gouled Aptidon and was one of the promoters of the agreement in 2014. Since he had been postulated as a possible candidate for the 2016 elections, the USN coalition was divided over the strategy to follow ahead of them. The renewal of the electoral commission is one of the issues that may determine the USN's participation in the elections. Moreover, the unofficial leader of the USN, Daher Ahmed Farah, who has been back from exile in Belgium since 2011, cannot run unless he gives up his Belgian nationality. He has not ruled out boycotting the process as a result.[26]

The announcement made by President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh on 3 December that he would run for a fourth term in the presidential election was rejected by part of the political opposition and sparked peaceful protests on 14 December. Around 50 members of the opposition were arrested between 13 and 16 December and the subsequent police intervention in a religious and cultural gathering of the Yonis Moussa community of the Issa clan, in Buldhoqo, in the outskirts of the capital, took on political overtones as a result of government repression that killed seven people and left 40 wounded, according to official figures. According to the Djiboutian League of Human Rights (LDDH), however, 30 people lost their lives and 150 people were injured. Supported by exceptional measures taken following the attack in Bamako (Mali) on 20 November, which banned gatherings in the street, the security forces decided to intervene to break up the event against the worshippers' will, provoking rejection from hundreds of nomads participating in it who had come

25. See the summary on the DRC (east-ADF) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
26. Samy Ghorbal, "Djibouti: après la disparition d'Ismaïl Guedi Hared, l'opposition se divise", *Jeune Afrique,* 28 November 2015.

from the Ethiopian border. The government announced that at least 50 police officers had been injured as a result of the "deliberate action orchestrated by foreign forces". The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) called for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry. Finally, on 26 November, China announced its plans to set up its first military base overseas after reaching an agreement with Djibouti.[27] Meanwhile, UNHCR announced an increase in Yemeni refugees arriving to the country. The number of refugees in Djibouti is estimated at 30,000 people. In a country with 900,000 inhabitants, this means that 3.33% of the people living there are refugees.

The United Nations said that 9% of the 4.5 million inhabitants of Eritrea have left the country in recent years

Eritrea	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, internal political and social opposition, political-military opposition coalition EDA (EPDF, EFDM, EIPJD, ELF, EPC, DMLEK, RSADO, ENSF, EIC, Nahda), other groups

Summary:
The single-party regime that has remained in place in Eritrea since 1993 (the former insurgency that contributed to the collapse of Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime in Ethiopia in 1991), is highly authoritarian in nature, silencing and suppressing the political opposition. The government, led by the old guard from the time of independence, has a series of opposition movements to contend with that are calling for progress in democracy and the governability of the country, respect for ethnic minorities and a greater degree of self-government. They also demand official language status for Arabic, an end to the marginalisation of Islam in the country and a halt to the cultural imposition of the Tigray community, or Tygranisation, carried out by the PFDJ, which controls all the mechanisms of power. This situation, added to Eritrea's policy in the region of the Horn of Africa, has led the country towards increasing isolationism. In December 2009 the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo, air travel ban and asset freeze on the country's highest-ranking officials due to their support of the Somalian armed group al-Shabaab.

There were no changes in the situation in Eritrea during the year. Regarding the arms embargo and other sanctions imposed on the country, the UN Security Council ended up renewing the sanctions until November 2016 and extended the mandate of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group until December 2016 after receiving the latter's report stating that it found no evidence that Eritrea was supporting al-Shabaab, the main motivation for the sanctions in 2009. However, it did discover that Eritrea continued to support and give refuge to certain regional armed groups, including a recently formed unified front of Ethiopian armed opposition groups, the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM), and the group's military leader Ginbot Sebat. The report also remarks that the country's new strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE is bringing it compensation that could be diverted to other purposes by the government and that Eritrean soldiers are fighting with the UAE's contingent on Yemeni soil. Furthermore, the country continues to maintain an informal economy controlled by the PFDJ, a complete lack of financial transparency, especially with regard to income from mining, and the imposition of extra-territorial taxation on citizens living abroad.[28] The Eritrean government called for the sanctions to be lifted because the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group found no evidence of support for al-Shabaab. The Security Council indicated that it is waiting for Eritrea to cooperate with the Group to demonstrate that it is not violating the terms of the UN resolutions.

On the other hand, the United Nations said that around 400,000 people, about 9% of the population of 4.5 million, have fled the country in recent years. According to UNHCR, more than a quarter of the 132,000 people who arrived in Italy between January and September were Eritrean. Humanitarian groups said that Eritreans account for most of the over 3,000 people who have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea this year. The number of Eritreans seeking asylum in Europe has quadrupled since 2011 and reached 46,000 people in 2014. Extreme poverty, lack of opportunities, repression and the curtailing of freedoms by Isaias Afewerki's regime are the causes of this mass exodus.

In early June, the UN commission of inquiry released its report on the human rights situation in Eritrea, which found that **systematic, widespread and serious human rights violations had been and continue to be committed in the country under the government's authority. Some of these violations could constitute crimes against humanity**. The report details how the government has created and sustained repressive systems to control, silence and isolate civilians, depriving them of their essential freedoms systematically and arbitrarily. The commission's report also describes how the population is being subjected to national service systems and forced labour under the pretext of defending the integrity of the state, which involve serious abuses, exploitation and even slavery. Finally, in mid-March, a special commission of the UN Human Rights Council announced that the Eritrean government was using its

27. Perlez, Jane, and Buckley, Chris, "China Retools Its Military With a First Overseas Outpost in Djibouti", *The New York Times*, 26 November 2015.
28. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea submitted in accordance with Resolution 2182 (2014) of the Security Council: Eritrea*, UN Security Council, S/2015/802, 20 October 2015.

confrontation with its enemy Ethiopia as a pretext to commit numerous human rights violations and repress the opposition.

Ethiopia	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government (EPRDF coalition, led by the party TPLF), political and social opposition, various armed groups

Summary:
The Ethiopian administration that has governed since 1991 is facing a series of opposition movements that demand advances in the democracy and governability of the country, as well as a greater degree of self-government. The government coalition EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) is controlled by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party, of the Tigrayan minority, that rules the country with growing authoritarianism with the consent of the Amhara elite. There is discontent in the country with the ethnic federal regime implemented by the EPRDF which has not resolved the national issue and has led to the consolidation of a strong political and social opposition. Along with the demands for the democratization of the institutions, there are political-military sectors that believe that ethnic federalism does not meet their nationalist demands and other sectors, from the ruling classes and present throughout the country, that consider ethnic federalism to be a deterrent to the consolidation of the Nation-State. In the 2005 elections this diverse opposition proved to be a challenge for the EPRDF, who was reluctant to accept genuine multi-party competition, and post-election protests were violently repressed.

Tensions linked to the atmosphere of repression and the restrictions on freedom of expression rose in the country. The elections of the 547 MPs of Parliament and the regional assemblies of Ethiopia were held on 24 May, in which the ruling EPRDF party won a major victory. These are the fifth elections since the fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991 and the first since the death of historical leader Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in 2012. **The EPRDF and its allies got all the seats in Parliament, including the sole seat won by the opposition in 2010**, held by the party Unity for Justice and Democracy (UJD), which joined the Medrek coalition in the current elections. Fifty-eight parties had registered to run in these elections, of which only Medrek and Semawayi (Blue Party) truly represented the opposition to the government. Although the AU declared that the elections had taken place in a calm atmosphere and were credible, sources from Medrek, Semayawi and various human rights advocacy organisations found that dozens of politicians and supporters of opposition parties were threatened, harassed, assaulted and arrested by the police. In 2014, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranked Ethiopia the fourth most repressive country in the world regarding the media (and the second most repressive African country after Eritrea).

The Committee to Protect Journalists ranked Ethiopia the fourth most repressive country in the world regarding the media

US President Barack Obama visited the region and attended the AU summit in late July, which helped to boost Ethiopia and Kenya's foreign policy in relation to al-Shabaab and Somalia. On the eve of his visit, Ethiopia freed five bloggers and journalists imprisoned for over one year as a sign of goodwill. According to the CPJ, dozens of journalists remain in prison, and after the elections pressure on independent media outlets, the arrest of journalists and the persecution of the opposition continued. The government confirmed that **in early July, a newly formed armed group, Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement (AGUDM), committed its first act of war in the state of Tigray, bordering Eritrea, which caused 50 fatalities**. The AGUDM has its roots in the political party Ginbot 7, declared a terrorist group in June 2011 along with the ONLF and the OLF under the controversial anti-terrorism law.

Meanwhile, in mid-September government sources confirmed the surrender of rebel leader Mola Asgedom, who had taken refuge in Eritrea along with around 800 combatants of his armed group, the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM). The TPDM represented the main military wing of the Ethiopian opposition coalition in Eritrea. Their desertion came a few days after the formation on 7 September of an opposition coalition called the United Movement for the Salvation of Ethiopia through Democracy (UMSED), composed of the TPDM, the AGUDM, the Afar People's Liberation Movement (APLM) and the Amhara Democratic Force Movement (ADFM). Mola had been appointed vice president of the coalition. The banned media outlet Ethiopian Review offered a different version of the events, claiming that there was a plan to attract Ethiopian opposition leaders to Eritrea from the United States with the promise of leading an opposition coalition and that Mola was captured by Ethiopian secret service agents who had infiltrated the TPDM. Finally, five political and military movements opposed to the Ethiopian government met in Oslo (Norway) on 24 October and announced the formation of the People's Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (PAFD). Delegates participated from all five organisations: the Gambella People's Liberation Movement (GPLM), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) and the Sidama National Liberation Front (SNLF). The aim of these forces inside and outside Ethiopia was to establish an alliance to coordinate their activities to put an end to the oppressive regime in the country and guarantee the right to self-determination. Finally, in November the government cautioned that the number of people dependent on food aid had risen to 10 million as a result of drought.

Ethiopia (Oromiya)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internal
Main parties:	Central government, regional government, political opposition (OFDM, OPC parties) and social opposition, armed opposition (OLF, IFLO)

Summary:
Ethiopia has experienced secessionist movements or rejection of central power since the 1970s. The Oromo OLF emerged between 1973 and 1974 and operates in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, in the centre and south of the country, against the Mengistu dictatorship and with the goal of establishing an independent State for the Oromo community. Despite differences, the political and armed nationalist movements of the Oromo participated together with other insurgent groups in the country to overthrow the Mengistu regime in 1991. However, the OLF split away in 1992 from the transitional Government led by Meles Zenawi's TPLF party, that controls the coalition in power, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and has initiated an armed struggle against the central Government and against other Oromo pro-government political movements, and demands independence for the Oromo community. On several occasions it has collaborated with the ONLF from Ogaden in actions against the central Government.

The armed group OLF escalated armed actions against the government while the security forces stepped up repression against the Oromo community. The OLF carried out various armed actions during the year that killed scores of members of the security forces and the main party of the government coalition (TPLF), especially in the third quarter of the year. In July, the OLF also questioned US President Barack Obama's visit to Ethiopia, saying that it was incompatible with the democratic principles of the US government, since its support for the Ethiopian regime justified its policies of repression, economic exploitation and violation of human rights. Meanwhile, according to Amnesty International, at least 5,000 Oromo people were arrested between 2011 and 2014 for their political opposition, for exercising their freedom of expression or for voicing their opinion. They included thousands of participants in peaceful demonstrations, hundreds of members of the political opposition and hundreds of people who were arrested simply for expressing their opinion, accused of belonging to the OLF. Furthermore, tension rose due to the opposition of Oromo students and other groups to the government project known as the Master Plan, which aims to expand the capital, Addis Ababa, into Oromo territory and entails mass expropriations. In December, HRW reported that at least 75 people had lost their lives due to the security forces' repression and use of firearms in anti-government protests by thousands of Oromo students in the region of Oromia that began in November. Four police officers were also reportedly killed and hundreds of people were injured. An unknown number of people were arrested. The deputy chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress, Bekele Gerba, claimed that 80 civilians had been killed.

Kenya	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System, Resources, Identity, Self-government Internationalised Internal
Main parties:	Government, ethnic militias, political and social opposition (political parties and civil society organisations), armed group SLDF, Mungiki sect, MRC party, Somali armed group al-Shabaab and groups that support al-Shabaab in Kenya

Summary:
Kenya's politics and economy have been dominated since its independence in 1963 by the KANU party, controlled by the largest community in the country, the Kikuyu, to the detriment of the remaining ethnic groups. In 2002, the authoritarian and kleptocratic Daniel Arap Moi, who had held power for 24 years, was defeated by Mwai Kibaki on the back of promises to end corruption and redistribute wealth in a poor agricultural country whose growth is based on tourism. However, Kibaki's subsequent broken promises fostered a climate of frustration, which meant that the opposition leader Raila Odinga became a threat to Kibaki's hegemony of power. Odinga did not base his campaign on tribal affiliation but rather on change and on the building of a fairer society. The electoral fraud that took place in 2007 sparked an outbreak of violence in which 1,300 people died and some 300,000 were displaced. This situation led to an agreement between the two sectors through which a fragile government of national unity was created. A new presidential election in 2013 was won by Uhuru Kenyatta, who was tried by the ICC in connection with the events of 2007, though the court dropped the charges in 2015. In parallel, several areas of the country were affected by inter-community disputes over land ownership, also instigated politically during the electoral period. Furthermore, the illegal activities of the Mungiki sect, Kenya's military intervention in Somalia has triggered attacks by the Somalian armed group al-Shabaab in Kenya and the subsequent animosity towards the Somalian population in Kenya, presenting a challenge to the country's stability. Another factor in 2012 has been the growing government pressure on the secessionist movement Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), whose goal is the independence of the country's coastal region.

Instability and violent actions by the armed group al-Shabaab persisted throughout the year, along with military operations, abuse and arrests by the security forces. In September, the government launched Operation Linda Boni in an attempt to drive al-Shabaab and its supporters out from the coastal enclave of Boni forest, in Lamu County, one of the focal points of the fighting in the northeast of the country. In late November, the government announced the destruction of six camps belonging to al-Shabaab in Boni, although no casualties were reported. In a

message released at the end of Ramadan (17 July, Eid al-Fikr), the leader of al-Shabaab, Ahmed Diriye (also known as Ahmed Umar Abu Ubaidah) announced the group's intention to intensify operations outside Somalia and especially in Kenya. In this regard, the most prominent event of the year was the **attack on Garissa University College on 2 April, for which al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. The most serious attack in the country since 1999, it claimed the lives of 148 people.** Kenya's military offensive in Somalia was harshly criticised by the political opposition and following the attack students staged vociferous protests and demonstrations to demand more security in the country and criticise the government of Uhuru Kenyatta, whose policy in relation to al-Shabaab and Somalia thus far has only aggravated the situation on Kenya, according to various analysts. Kenya established a curfew in the northeast and along parts of the coast after the events, which it lifted in late June. After the attack, al-Shabaab continued to carry out different attacks in various locations and mosques in remote areas in the counties of Mandera, Garissa and Lamu.

Moreover, a report issued by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) in September called *The Error of Fighting Terror with Terror* detailed the abuses committed by the government security forces in counter-insurgency actions, including 81 cases of forced disappearance and 25 cases of extrajudicial execution. The report also denounced the use of mechanisms of torture and the cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners in what the Kenyan government has called "the war on terror". In March, the ICC announced that it was dropping the charges against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta. The case against him had run up against many obstacles and many witnesses had withdrawn, hindering its progress and ultimately preventing the ICC's trial of its highest-ranking defendant. In mid-April, the government announced the beginning of the construction of a wall separating Kenya and Somalia that received harsh criticism from the opposition and the international community. A Kenyan police report in February stated that 312 people had been killed and 779 had been wounded in attacks perpetrated by the Somali armed Islamist group al-Shabaab or by groups supporting the insurgency between 2013 and 2014, with the trend rising as it continued in 2015. The counties most affected by the violence are located beside the Somali border. A report by Journalists for Justice published in November indicated **the involvement of senior officers of the Kenyan Armed Forces in the illegal trade in sugar and charcoal in Somalia and described how this business provided al-Shabaab with a vital source of income**, prompting much criticism and general questioning about Kenya's presence in Somalia.[29] Sugar is taxed heavily in Kenya, so significant profit margins for illegal imports coming from Somalia would have filled the pockets of military officers and leaders.

Al-Shabaab executed 148 people at Garissa University College in the most serious attack in Kenya since 1999

Maghreb – North Africa

Morocco – Western Sahara	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International[30]
Main parties:	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front

Summary:
The roots of the conflict can be traced to the end of Spanish colonial rule in Western Sahara in the mid-1970s. The splitting of the territory between Morocco and Mauritania without taking into account the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people or the commitment to a referendum on independence in the area led to a large part of the territory being annexed by Rabat, forcing the displacement of thousands of Sahrawi citizens, who sought refuge in Algeria. In 1976, the POLISARIO Front, a nationalist movement, declared a government in exile (the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic - SADR) and launched an armed campaign against Morocco. Both parties accepted a peace plan in 1988 and since 1991 the UN mission in the Sahara, MINURSO, has been monitoring the ceasefire and is responsible for organising a referendum for self-determination in the territory. In 2007 Morocco presented the UN with a plan for the autonomy of Western Sahara but the POLISARIO Front demands a referendum that includes the option of independence.

The tension over Western Sahara evolved similarly to in previous years, in a context of stalled negotiations between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front. In his annual report in April, coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the conflict, the UN Secretary-General stressed that the parties should seriously commit to a negotiated solution to put an end to the status quo. In this regard, the UN's evaluation of the situation on the ground confirmed that while the ceasefire is being upheld, **the overall climate remains characterised by periodic Sahrawi demonstrations on land controlled by Morocco and by deterioration in the living conditions of the Sahrawi population in refugee camps in Algeria** due to unemployment, lower remittances and declining international aid. As in previous reports, Ban Ki-moon warned of the risk that frustration at the lack

29. Journalists for Justice, *Black and White: Kenya's Criminal Racket in Somalia*, International Commission of Jurists, Nairobi, November 2015.
30. Although Western Sahara is not an internationally recognised state, the tensions between Morocco and Western Sahara are classified as "international" and not internal as this is a territory which is awaiting decolonisation and which is not recognised as belonging to Morocco either under international law or in any United Nations resolution.

of prospects of a solution to the conflict might favour increasing instability or the approach of extremist or criminal networks increasingly active in the Sahara and Sahel regions. The UN-led diplomatic process was complicated by Morocco's objections to the Secretary-General's last report (2014) and to the approach taken in the negotiating process, which in early 2015 led to Rabat's refusal to deploy the new head of MINURSO. Kim Bolduc could only travel to Laayoune following a conversation between the king of Morocco and Ban Ki-moon. In this context, Algeria and the Polisario Front complained that Rabat was able to put pressure on the UN's approach to the Sahrawi issue. In the following months, the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, took three trips to the region (in February, September and November), but there were no reports of progress or the possibility of resuming direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front.[31] According to reports at the end of the year, **Morocco wanted Algeria to become formally involved in negotiations over the Sahrawi issue, but Algiers would not be willing to "bilateralise" the dispute.**

It is also worth mentioning that information re-emerged throughout 2015 related to Morocco's policies in Western Sahara concerning human rights issues and resource management in the territory, among other matters. In May, Amnesty International released a report denouncing 173 cases of torture in Morocco and Western Sahara, including beatings, waterboarding and the use of psychological and sexual violence, in actions aimed at silencing dissent that are not diligently investigated by the judicial system. The result of research conducted in 2013 and 2014, the report includes testimonials of people arrested during demonstrations in Laayoune. Regarding resource management, in December the Court of Justice of the European Union issued an opinion cancelling the 2012 trade agreement between Morocco and the EU for including the territory of Western Sahara. Previously, during a trip to Laayoune to mark the 40th anniversary of the Green March, in his third visit to the area since assuming the throne in 1999, King Mohamed VI had stressed that the profits obtained from mineral resources in the area would be invested locally and that there would be major investments in infrastructure in the region, while insisting that there would be no concessions on matters of sovereignty.

Tunisia	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups including the Uqba bin Nafi Battalion and the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades (branch of AQIM), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS).

Summary:
Since becoming independent in 1956 until the start of 2011, Tunisia only had two presidents. During three decades Habib Bourghiba laid the foundations for the authoritarian regime in the country, a regime that continued after Zine El Abidine Ben Ali came to power in 1987 after a coup. The concentration of power, the persecution of the secular and Islamist political opposition and the iron grip on society that characterised the country's internal situation were in starch contrast to its international image of stability. Despite reports of corruption, electoral fraud and human rights violations, Tunisia for years stood as a privileged ally of the West. In December 2010, the outbreak of a popular revolt sowed the regime's contradictions, and led to the hall of Ben Ali's Government at the start of 2011, inspiring mobilisations against authoritarian governments in the whole of the Arab world. Since then, Tunisia has lived immersed in a bumpy transition process where the tensions between the secular and Islamist sectors have become clear. Meanwhile, the country has been the scene of greater activity by armed groups, including branches of AQIM and ISIS.

The situation in Tunisia deteriorated in 2015, primarily as a consequence of a series of attacks perpetrated by jihadist armed groups at different times of the year, but also partially because of rising political tension. **The death toll in the different episodes of violence that took place in the country during the period exceeded 120,** according to unofficial counts based on media reports. ISIS claimed responsibility for the three most destabilising attacks, which took place in March, June and November and altogether claimed 72 lives. The first attack occurred in the capital and targeted the Bardo Museum, which is near the Parliament building where reform to the anti-terrorism law was being discussed. The attack by three armed men killed 23 people, mostly foreign tourists. Two of the assailants were also among the dead. The second attack affected a tourist complex in the coastal town of Sousse at the end of the first quarter, leaving 39 people dead. The action was carried out by a young man who shot dozens of people on the beach and the hotel premises, primarily targeting foreign tourists. According to reports, both the attacker in Sousse and the assailants in the Bardo Museum had been to a jihadist training camp in neighbouring Libya. The third attack shook the country near the end of the year, targeting a bus of the presidential guard in the capital with a bomb that killed 12. Additional acts of violence occurred periodically throughout the year that killed and injured scores of more victims and were linked to security force operations against suspected insurgent cells or the actions of militants belonging to different armed groups, including the Uqba bin Nafi Battalion (or Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades), considered AQIM's branch in Tunisia, and Jund al-Khilafa, the declared branch of ISIS in the country. Some of these incidents took place in areas like Mount Chaambi and Bouchebka (bordering Algeria), Sbeitla (northwest) and Jebel Semmama (centre). One such clash claimed the lives of two soldiers and 10 combatants in the central area of Kasserine in April.

31. See the summary on Morocco – Western Sahara in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

Following the attack on the Bardo Museum, the Tunisian authorities adopted a series of measures to try to respond to the security threats. A state of emergency was declared in July that gave the authorities powers to prohibit public events and impose greater controls. This was extended until early October, weeks before the attack on the presidential guard, after which it was reinstated. In late December 2015, it was renewed for two more months. Moreover, the government implemented other measures that caused controversy, like the new anti-terrorism law, the restoration of the death penalty after a 25-year de facto moratorium and the closing of mosques operating outside state control. Critical opposition groups, civil society organisations and human rights advocates complained that many of these and other provisions, like the possibility of suspects being detained for 15 days without legal assistance and a vague definition of "terrorism", could be used to curtail freedoms, favour situations of impunity and persecute dissidents. After each major attack that occurred in 2015, the government dismissed several senior officials (following the attack in Sousse, the authorities acknowledged their security flaws and belated response) and intensified its campaign of mass arrests. **Thousands of people suspected of having links to insurgent activities were arrested throughout the year amidst concern about the dynamics of radicalisation and the return of some of the many Tunisians who have been fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Iraq and Syria** (Tunisia is the top country of origin of the foreign fighters who have joined ISIS). Meanwhile, the Tunisian government also tried to strengthen border controls, especially in the areas adjacent to Libya, given the marked instability in the neighbouring country. In this context, Tunisia announced the construction of a barrier on the Libyan border, mobilised several land military units along the southern border and seized arsenals with weapons of various calibres.

ISIS claimed responsibility for three attacks in Tunisia that killed over 70 people over the course of 2015

The attacks in Tunisia were seen as an attempt to destabilise a country that faces many difficulties, yet has still emerged as a benchmark for its ability to advance along the path of democracy following the revolts that shook the Arab World starting in 2011. However, Tunisia also encountered many problems along the way in 2015. Early in the year the new coalition government, composed of various political forces including President Beij Caid Essebsi's party (Nidaa Tounes) and the Islamists of Ennahda, assumed power after overcoming some disagreements. Yet as the year went on, difficulties became apparent due to the inability to improve the economic situation, a growing atmosphere of social unrest, which led to protests that sometimes turned into clashes with the police in the southern part of the country, reports of attempted political assassinations and severe friction within Nidaa Tounes, including legislators' threats that they would leave the party, ending its parliamentary majority and making Ennahda the leading legislative force.[32] Power in Nidaa Tounes was held by the leader's son, Hafedh Caid Essebsi, whose detractors accuse him of manoeuvring to rise in position and succeed his father and to orchestrate aggression against a few MPs, and by Secretary General Mohsen Marzouk, who ended up resigning from the party in mid-December. Ennhada also suffered from internal divisions. At the end of the year, former President Moncef Marzouki said that the situation in the country was catastrophic and announced the creation of a new political party, Al Irada (Will). **These developments in the country partly overshadowed the distinction of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the National Dialogue Quartet,** composed of the Tunisian General Labour Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Tunisian Human Rights League and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers, for the role it played in preventing the Tunisian transition from derailing in 2013.

Southern Africa

Lesotho	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties

Summary:
Lesotho is one of three existing monarchies in Africa, along with Swaziland and Morocco. Since achieving independence in 1966, after being a British protectorate, Lesotho, which had previously been known as Basutoland, has been immersed in continuous disputes between the monarchy, the democratic Parliament and the military, which have resulted in different corps d'état and changes of system. The country's constitutional monarchy currently coexists with a parliamentary democracy based on a system of proportional representation that has sought to guarantee representation of the opposition since 1999. However, it has failed to prevent historical disputes and political instability. In February 2015, Pakalitha Mosisili became the prime minister of Lesotho after disputed national elections that he won by beating out the prime minister at the time, Tom Thabane. One of the first steps taken by Mosisili was to dismiss Maaparankoe Mahao from commanding the Armed Forces due to his ties and relationship with the previous government. Tlali Kamoli was appointed the new commander-in-chief of the military. Kamoli had been head of the Army until August 2014, when he was removed from the Armed Forces because of the attempted coup d'état against Thabane, who expelled him and replaced him with Mahao. Since then, the kingdom of Lesotho has been embroiled in a political crisis that has affected the country's stability.

32. In fact, this situation came to pass in early 2016 and Nidaa Tounes lost it status as the majority party in the Tunisian Parliament.

Tension rose during the year in Lesotho, involving both the government and the military. The Kingdom of Lesotho held general elections on 28 February 2015 that gave a very tight victory to the party of former Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, the Democratic Congress, beating out incumbent Prime Minister Tom Thabane. The electoral observation mission deployed in the country by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) declared the elections valid. The slim margin of victory forced Mosisili to form a coalition government with six other minor parties. One of the first measures taken by the new government was to dismiss the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, Maaparankoe Mahao, and replace him with Tlali Kamoli, who had been the commander of the Army until he was removed from office after the attempted coup d'état perpetrated in August 2014 against Thabane's government. **This situation heightened political tension in the country, which experienced its most delicate moment of the year with the murder of the former commander Mahao by the national Army on 28 June** in an operation that it claimed was orchestrated to stop alleged coup plotters. The government of Pakalitha Mosisili had begun the political persecution of members of the military considered close to Mahao, arresting 45 soldiers suspected of planning to mutiny against the government. The tense atmosphere following Mahao's murder prompted three opposition leaders to flee the country, including former Prime Minister Thabane, who sought refuge in South Africa. Various countries in the region and abroad condemned these actions, like the United States, expressing concern about the situation and calling for urgent measures to reform the security sector. The SADC sent its deputy president and facilitator, Cyril Ramaphosa, and South African Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula to Lesotho to mediate and consult with Prime Minister Mosisili. Following many different bilateral meetings with the presidents of Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Botswana, the organisation held an extraordinary session of what is known as the SADC Double Troika (Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation) to study the situation. Held in Pretoria on 3 July, the meeting was attended by the presidents of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Bostwana, as well as representatives from Malawi and Namibia and Lesotho's Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili. A series of agreements was reached at the meeting, including the creation of an independent commission to investigate the circumstances of Mahao's death, which will be presided over by Motswana judge Mpaphi Phumaphi. The meeting was also an occasion for calling for Lesotho to carry out reforms in the security sector and to introduce constitutional measures to restore political stability in the country. Mosisili's government agreed to enact the reforms proposed by the SADC. The investigating commission finally submitted its report to the SADC in December and planned to deliver it to Lesotho in January 2016. Some sources have leaked that the report contains some recommendations that Mosisili's government are unlikely to welcome, such as the resignations of Defence Minister Tseliso Mokhosi and the commander of the Army, Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli.

Madagascar	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, Resources Internal
Main parties:	High Transitional Authority, opposition leaders, state security forces, dahalos (cattle rustlers), self-defence militias, private security companies

Summary:
Since the end of the communist regime in the 1990s, the island has been affected by bouts of political turmoil. The unconstitutional seizure of power by the former mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, with the support of the army, triggered a new political crisis in March 2009. The difficulties in reaching a power-sharing agreement among the main political leaders led to an institutional stalemate, with sporadic outbreaks of violence taking place. Besides, since the middle of 2012 a spiral of violence grew in the south of the country stemming from rustling and plundering of the dahalo (rustlers in Malagasy) against civil population, which led to an excessive intervention by the security forces, the establishment of self defence militias and the hiring of private security companies to suppress the crisis.

Throughout the year, Madagascar was immersed in a climate of political instability caused by strain between the legislative branch and President Henry Rajaonarimampianina. Malagasy MPs tried to impeach President Rajaonarimampianina in May, accusing him of reneging on his election promises and ignoring the traditional separation between church and state by yielding to the influence of ecclesiastical institutions when engaged in politics. Parliament voted on a motion of censure against the president, which was backed by 121 of the 125 legislators present in the chamber. In early June, President Rajaonarimampianina had launched his defence against the aforementioned parliamentary censure that threatened his position, accusing the institution of bringing instability to the island. The motion was later referred to the Constitutional Court, which finally decided to strike it down. After learning of the Constitutional Court's ruling, the minister of Defence demanded that the political forces accept it and asked that the Army not be called to intervene. Former President Marc Ravalomanana supported the call for dialogue and a deal was made between the president and Parliament to ensure stability. On 1 July, Prime Minister Jean Ravelonarivo also faced a parliamentary motion accusing him of failing to solve the socio-economic problems in the country, though the initiative was rejected two days later. In early September, based on an agreement seeking national stability, the president

signed a **Responsibility Pact with the National Assembly** in which he promised not to dissolve Parliament while it agreed to stop attacking the executive branch.

Two electoral processes also took place during the year. Municipal elections were held on the island on 31 July. The ruling party, New Forces for Madagascar (HVM), won in most municipalities in rural areas. Moreover, elections to the Senate were held on 29 December in a peaceful atmosphere with high turnout. At the end of the year, the stability pact between the president and Parliament facilitated legislative approval of the general budget for 2016, ensuring stability in the country.

Meanwhile, the national reconciliation process begun in December 2014 also made progress during the year. Facilitated by the Malagasy Christian Council of Churches (FFKM), the process aimed to reconcile between current President Rajaonarimampianina and his predecessors, former presidents Andry Rajoelina, Marc Ravalomanana, Albert Zafy and Didier Ratsiraka. During the second quarter, the government announced the end of the house arrest of former President Ravalomanana as part of the reconciliation and peace process. Former President Ravalomanana had been arrested in October 2014, a few days after returning from the country since his ouster in the coup d'état in 2009. His arrest led to riots and protests at the time and set the stage for the current political crisis in the country. Rajaonarimampianina made the announcement after reporting that Ravalomanana has recognised the legitimacy of the current government. National Reconciliation is one of the main points in the mediation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional group to which the island nation belongs.

Mozambique	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, RENAMO armed group

Summary:
The coup against the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and the guerrilla war between the Marxist-Leninist FRELIMO insurgence drove Mozambique to gain independence from Portugal in 1975. Then Mozambique entered a civil war between the FRELIMO Government and the armed group RENAMO, the latter supported by the white minorities governing in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the apartheid South Africa, in the context of the Cold War. The country was also deeply affected by famine and horrendous financial management issues. In 1992 the parties reached a peace agreement that was seen as an example of reconciliation, mediated by the Sant'Egidio Community, ending 16 years of war with one million dead and five million displaced and marking the dawn of a period of political stability and economic development albeit the large inequalities in the country. The leader of RENAMO, Alfonso Dhlakama, has been unable to turn his party into an organised and structured platform that could reach power and since the first elections in 1994 it has gradually lost its share of political power to FRELIMO and other parties such as the MDM (a breakaway party of RENAMO). In parallel, a growing chorus of voices denouncing fraud and irregularities during the successive elections, some of which were verified by international observers, have gone hand in hand with a growing authoritarianism and repression against the opposition, as well as FRELIMO taking over the State (besides the media and the economy). In 2013 RENAMO conditioned its continuity as a political entity to a set of reforms, mainly the national electoral commission and a more equitable distribution of the country's wealth, and threatened to withdraw from the peace agreement signed in 1992.

Political tension rose between the political opposition party RENAMO and the new FRELIMO government during the year due to the election results and the opposition's demand to govern provinces where it had won a majority in the presidential election. On 15 January, Mozambique inaugurated the new government that won the elections on 15 October 2014, handing victory once again to the FRELIMO party. Filipe Nyusi became the new president of the country despite the rejection of the main opposition group and former armed group, RENAMO, presided over by its historical leader Afonso Dhlakama. Members of RENAMO boycotted parliamentary activity and threatened to create an independent republic in the six provinces (Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambezia, Nampula and Niassa) where it obtained a majority, located in the centre and north of the country. In February, following talks between Dhlakama and President Nyusi, the RENAMO MPs ended their parliamentary boycott and presented a proposal to the chamber to create an autonomous province of which Dhlakama would be the provincial president, threatening to overthrow the government if it was not accepted. The national legislature rejected the draft bill for provincial autonomy in April, viewing it as unconstitutional. This prompted Dhlakama to threaten the government again, giving it two months to approve it or he would take the provinces demanded by force. At a meeting held in Beira, capital of the province of Sofala, to discuss the situation of the "provincial municipality" draft bill in June, RENAMO's National Committee threatened Nyusi's government again.

In this scenario of dispute, the peace talks agreed in September 2014 remained stagnant in the first quarter. After over 100 rounds of meetings, the road map agreed regarding the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of RENAMO militia combatants made no headway during the year, mainly due to the fact that RENAMO demands the equal distribution of security command positions (police and military) before it turns in its list of militia combatants to integrate into the security forces. The lack of progress in the DDR programme led the Mozambican government to refuse to extend the mandate of the international military observation mission (EMOCHM) charged with overseeing the cessation of hostilities agreement.

Although the peace talks continued to make progress in other negotiating tables during the third quarter, the suspension of the EMOCHM mission, together with the disagreements about provincial autonomy and the rise in incidents and ceasefire violations, prompted Dhlakama to announce that he was pulling out of the peace talks in August. Although Nyusi's government later tried to get the peace talks back on track, the year ended without both parties resuming them.[33]

Various violent incidents occurred throughout the year that involved a violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement. Prominent among them was the RENAMO militia's ambush of government forces in the western province of Tete on 14 June that claimed the lives of over 35 members of the security forces, according to RENAMO, although the government denied these figures and lowered them to only two fatalities. Furthermore, various incidents between the police and RENAMO were reported in the central province of Manica in September. In one, the convoy in which opposition leader Dhlakama was travelling was attacked. On 9 October, the security forces detained Dhlakama at his home for several hours, disarming and arresting his bodyguard detail. This forced the opposition leader into hiding. These events heightened tension in the country. On an optimistic note, on 15 September **the government of Mozambique officially declared the country free of landmines**. The British NGO in charge of the demining work, The Halo Trust, reported that it had removed over 171,000 landmines from a total of 1,100 fields since the programme began in 1993. The data presented by the Mozambican government established that the demined area consisted of 17 million square metres of land that will now be put to agricultural use. The country has become the first of the five most heavily mined countries in the world to meet its demining obligations provided in the Ottawa Convention (the other four are Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola and South Sudan), although it required ten additional years than planned in the Convention to eradicate them.

Tension in Mozambique persisted between the FRELIMO government and the main opposition group, RENAMO, stalling the peace talks

West Africa

Burkina Faso	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, state security forces, civil society, armed groups operating in the Sahel region

Summary:
A former French colony, Burkina Faso has faced several military coups and many socio-economic challenges since winning independence in 1960. A landlocked country, it is vulnerable to volatility in global prices for materials like cotton. The period under President Blaise Compaoré, who came to power through a military coup in 1987 and won successive elections, gradually faced numerous sources of tension linked to the lack of human rights, allegations that the country had participated in conflicts in neighbouring countries, rising prices, a worsening quality of life for the population and criticism of the president's attempts to remain in power. Protests increased in 2011 and there were several military mutinies, generating a serious crisis of confidence between the government and various groups. In late 2014, Compaoré stepped down amidst widespread public protests against his plans to eliminate presidential term limits and after the Army seized power. Given society's rejection of the military coup, it gave way to a transition process under shared leadership including the Armed Forces.

Burkina Faso experienced a year marked by the transitional government after the fall of the regime of Blaise Compaoré in 2014; the failed coup d'état attempted by the Presidential Security Regiment (RSP); and the peaceful holding of elections that returned the institutions to civilian control. At the start of the year, national politics were marked by tensions that appeared between the elite presidential corps, the RSP, and the government led by Michel Kafando. In February, Prime Minister, Yacouba Isaac Zida, demanded the dissolution of the security corps due to its close links to the former regime of Blaise Compaoré. The presidential guard demanded that it be maintained and called for Zida's resignation, generating a tense situation that was resolved with the acceptance of some of the military corps' demands related to appointment to certain posts and to keeping Zida in office. The agreement sparked social demonstrations against it, with protestors demanding the dissolution of the RSP. Despite this source of tension, the transition process continued without incident. President Kafando later announced that presidential and legislative elections would be held on 11 October, putting an end the transition period. Meanwhile, the first quarter saw the beginning of the work of the National Reconciliation and Reform Commission (NRRC) presided over by Archbishop Paul Ouédraogo. Moreover, in March the government ordered the exhumation of the remains of former President Thomas Sankara. In April, modifications to the electoral code were announced to prevent the allies of former President Compaoré from running for public office in the elections. Kafando justified the measure as a temporary exclusion, solely applicable to the upcoming elections. The decision led to an increase in political tension and the suspension of Compaoré's allies in participating in the transitional institutions of the country. On 10 September, the Constitutional Council approved the final list of candidates to run in the elections. Candidacies linked to the previous regime were excluded, including

33. See the summary on Mozambique in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

those of two former ministers of Compaoré: former Foreign Minister Djibril Bassolé and former Minister of Sport Yacouba Ouédraogo.

Meanwhile, tensions with the RSP broke out again in June, when Prime Minister Zida accused it of plotting a coup d'état. The accusation triggered a political crisis between the transitional authorities and the RSP, which demanded the prime minister's resignation. President Michel Kafando kept Zida in office, but relieved him of his duties as defence minister, which he transferred to Colonel Sidi Paré on July 27. Later, on **16 September, members of the RSP stormed a cabinet meeting and arrested President Kafando and Prime Minister Zida, declaring a coup d'état** on behalf of the National Council for Democracy. The RSP dissolved the institutions and the transitional government and appointed General Diendéré Gilbert, Compaoré's right hand man during his rule, as the new president. In a statement, the military officers justified the coup because the candidates loyal to Compaoré had been excluded from participating in the presidential and legislative elections. They also announced the establishment of measures to prevent the RSP from being disbanded, since on 14 September the National Reconciliation and Reform Commission (NRRC) had issued a report recommending its dissolution. In response to the military coup, civil society, led by the Balai Citoyen ("Citizen's Broom") movement, took to the streets of the major cities to defend the transition. Different international agencies and states, including the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, France and the United States, categorically condemned this new attempt to destabilise the country. Internal and external pressure forced those behind the coup to the negotiating table with the mediation of ECOWAS, achieving an agreement to return to normalcy. The government was finally restored on 23 September, one day after the Burkinabe Army entered Ouagadougou to pressure the RSP to lay down its arms. During the first meeting of the Council of Ministers on 25 September, a decree was signed dissolving and disarming the RSP. Sidi Paré was removed from office as security minister and a commission was created to determine who was responsible for the incident. The coup occurred on the same day that the results of former President Sankara's autopsy were supposed to be made public, sparking rumours of links between both events. After the failed coup attempt, Diendéré, who had sought temporary refuge in the Vatican Embassy, was arrested and charged along with former Foreign Minister Djibril Bassolé and 21 other people for undermining state security. The leader of the coup was also charged with ten other crimes, including crimes against humanity that could bring him the death penalty. Moreover, at the end of the year, former President Blaise Compaoré was indicted in the case investigating the death of former President Thomas Sankara along with General Gilbert Diendéré, for whom an international arrest warrant was issued.

The coup d'état in Burkina Faso on 16 September was unable to destabilise the transition process, which ended with the successful holding of the presidential election

After the failed coup attempt, the government announced a new date for the presidential and legislative elections that were supposed to take place on 11 October, but were postponed by the coup and were finally held on 29 November. The elections enjoyed a turnout of 60% and were held in a peaceful atmosphere free of any outstanding incidents. They were validated by the various national and international bodies of observers and the results were recognised by all the political forces. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, the candidate of the People's Movement for Progress (MPP), won the presidential election in the first round with 53.49% of the vote, beating out Zéphirin Diabré, the candidate of the Union for Progress and Reform (UPC), who won 29.65%. The results of the legislative elections were more scattered, with no political party obtaining an absolute majority, forcing the parties to negotiate to form a government. The new government presided over by Kaboré was sworn in on 29 December, ending the transitional stage and opening up a new political scenario in the country.

Cameroon	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System, Resources International
Main parties:	Government, regional force (MNJTF), Nigerian armed Islamist group Boko Haram, attacking groups from CAR

Summary:
Cameroon has seen how the instability plaguing its neighbours has affected its own internal stability. The conflicts in northern Nigeria and the Central African Republic, with which Cameroon shares a fundamental part of its national borders, have increasingly encroached on Cameroonian soil, boosting the armed activity of the Islamist group Boko Haram in Cameroon's Far North Region. The country's inclusion in the regional alliance to battle Boko Haram, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), with which it participates in the combat mission with troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Benin, has provoked an increase in attacks and violence by Boko Haram on Cameroonian territory. Meanwhile, the effects of the crisis in the Central African Republic also influence the domestic sphere in Cameroon, which receives significant flows of refugees and suffers attacks and assaults by criminal gangs in the border provinces.

Stability in Cameroon was severely affected by the impact of external Main parties: on the border with Nigeria, this was due to the actions of the radical Islamist group Boko Haram (BH) and on the border with the Central African Republic, it was due to incursions by bands

of assailants from the neighbouring country. In 2014, Cameroon had been the target of attacks perpetrated by the armed group of Nigerian origin Boko Haram (BH), which led the government to propose an anti-terrorism law that was backed by Parliament in 4 December 2014, prompting criticism from the opposition, which considered it repressive. The enactment of the new legislation was met with new attacks by BH in the border provinces that mainly focused on the Far North Region, killing an undetermined number of civilians. Jihadist casualties reached 41 in December and 50 in a single attack on a military barracks in Kolofata in January 2015. Many abductions were also denounced, including of at least 80 civilians in the province of Mayo Sava. The wave of incidents came amidst threats by Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau against Cameroon, Niger and Chad for announcing the creation of the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) together with Nigeria to battle the BH insurgents. Among the different attacks in February, 86 civilians and seven soldiers were killed in Fotokol on 4 February and 21 rebels lost their lives in fighting with Cameroonian troops in Tolkomari on 21 February. These threats and the deterioration of the situation prompted the government led by Paul Biya to request international assistance, which was answered by Russia, the United States and France. Due to what was happening across the region, the MNJTF's counter-insurgency activity forced BH to change its methods of war, seizing large swathes of the armed group's territory. This forced BH to modify its war tactics, shifting from direct confrontation and territorial control to assiduously perpetrating suicide attacks using women and girls. In mid-July, four attacks of this kind occurred in Fotokol and Maroua, killing 40 people. The Cameroonian government responded by banning the use of the burqa, expelling hundreds of undocumented Nigerians and sending 2,000 more soldiers to the area. On 14 October, US President Barack Obama confirmed that 300 soldiers and military materiel were being sent to help Paul Biya's government in its struggle against the Islamist insurgency. The US troops, which officially had been issued no combat missions but were there as advisors, were deployed in the city of Garoua in the North Region. Dozens of attacks and clashes between BH and the Cameroonian Army continued to be reported in the closing months of the year. According to the Cameroonian government, they dealt many losses to the armed organisation.

Similarly to the incidents with the armed group BH in the far northern part of the country, three other provinces bordering the CAR **(the North, Adamawa and East regions) maintained a climate of heightened instability due to the assaults and crimes of highwaymen from the CAR known as *zaraguinas***. Incidents in different points on the border were constant, involving assaults, kidnappings, deadly firefights and other events that prompted the local communities to create their own self-defence groups due to the deteriorating security situation in the area. According to the data provided by the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, by the end of 2015 the instability produced by the conflict with BH and the crisis in the CAR had **Internaly displaced a total of 158,000 people in the Far North Region. Moreover, 323,000 refugees had arrived, mostly from the CAR, while 62,861 refugees came from Nigeria.** In addition, 18,000 people were able to return to their homes in 2015, which was the most positive note of the year.[34]

Côte d'Ivoire	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, militias loyal to former President Laurent Gbagbo, mercenaries, UNOCI

Summary:
The political, economic and social discrimination against northern Ivorians is at the core of the serious crisis that began in the country in the 1980s. Following an initial conflict in 2002 and the resumption of armed violence in 2010, triggered by the presidential elections, stability in the country remains fragile. The end of war in April 2011 and the formation of a new government presided over by Alassane Ouattara (of northern origin) created expectations for change. Justice and reparation for victims, the transformation of discriminatory laws, the resolution of disputes regarding land ownership and the reform of the security sector are some of the great challenges facing the country. The presence of a large number of light weapons, the persistence of violence in the west and the unstable border with Liberia, where mercenary groups remain active, are endangering a fragile peace.

The national situation was marked by political tensions and movements generated by the presidential election campaign, in what was the first presidential election since the crisis broke out in 2010, as well as by the **progress made in the different judicial processes** under way since the crisis began. The holding of the presidential election in October sealed a year of political wrangling and some violent incidents. In terms of the presidential race, political divisions became apparent within both major parties during the first quarter. For instance, **pro-Gbagbo groups of the Ivorian Patriotic Front (FPI) forcibly expelled party chairman Pascal Affi N'Guessan and replaced him with Aboudramane Sangaré** in March, setting off internal disputes and bringing the case to court. Cracks also appeared within the ruling coalition. Also in March, parts of the PDCI opposed to President Ouattara created their own coalition, the National Coalition for Change (CNP), while Ouattara was approved as a candidate for the presidential election. The CNP tried to mobilise the people to block the possibility of Ouattara's re-election, producing various incidents in which four people lost their lives as part of the demonstrations called in Abidjan, Gagnoa, Guiglo

34. OCHA, *Cameroon Humanitarian Overview*, 4 January 2016.

and Daloa on 9 June. Amidst this climate of tension, on 10 September the Constitutional Court issued the final list of candidacies approved to run in the elections. Ten of the 33 candidacies submitted were approved, including those of Ouattara and Affi N'Guessan, the latter of which represented the FPI during the party's internal crisis, although the wing headed by Aboudramane Sangaré refused to recognise him as a presidential candidate. The possibility of Ouattara's re-election led to new protests by the opposition, with some people killed and dozens wounded in different parts of the country. The presidential election was finally held on 25 October and the team of international observers from ECOWAS reported that it took place in an atmosphere of peace and transparency. Voter turnout was 54.63%. Alassane Ouattara won handily, with 2,118,229 votes (83.66%), while his rival Affi N'Guessan only won 9.3%, according to data provided by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), ruling out a runoff round. On 2 November, the Constitutional Court validated the results and confirmed Ouattara's re-election.

Moreover, in relation to the different judicial processes open after the post-election crisis in 2010, during the first quarter a national court sentenced **Simone Gbagbo, the wife of former President Laurent Gbagbo, to 20 years in prison. She was found guilty of threatening the security of the country, disrupting public order and organising armed groups.** The trial of her husband, the former president, will begin at the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 28 January 2016 along with the trial of the former minister of culture and leader of the Young Patriots, Charles Blé Goudé. Both men have been charged with crimes against humanity. Meanwhile, some local activists warned of the risks of a perception of bias in the transitional justice process by focusing on the leaders of one of the groups, the supporters of Gbagbo, but not on all. In August, the organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report asking the ICC to expand the number of investigations into the post-electoral violence, looking not only into cases of violence committed in the capital, Abidjan, but also into those that occurred in the provinces. It also asked the body to expand its investigations into the other side participating in the violence. Finally, in the case opened in France against Michel Gbagbo, the son of the former president, over illegal arrest and mistreatment in 2011, on 5 December the judge issued an arrest warrant for the president of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, Guillaume Soro, after he repeatedly refused to respond to various court summons. This sparked protest among the Ivorian authorities because Soro has diplomatic immunity. Finally, in terms of security, some violent incidents took place throughout the year in the west, in the area bordering Liberia. Early in the year, two soldiers lost their lives in an attack against security forces in the village of Dahyoke. On 2 December, another attack on two military camps in Olodio claimed the lives of seven soldiers and four assailants. Three Ivorian citizens were also later arrested in a refugee camp in Liberia. Concerning the situation of ongoing instability and violence, on 24 July **the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN mission in the country, ONUCI, for one year**.

A court from Côte d'Ivoire sentenced Simone Gbagbo, the wife of former president Laurent Gbagbo, to 20 years in prison for threatening the security of the county following the post-electoral crisis in 2010

Guinea	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, Armed Forces, political parties in the opposition, trade unions

Summary:
The army took advantage of the death of President Lansana Conté in December 2008, after more than two decades in power, to carry out a new coup d'état and form a military junta. The holding of elections in 2010, won by the opposition leader Alpha Condé, paved the way for a return to the democratic system. However, the elections were marred by violence and by the coming to the fore of identity-related tensions between the country's main ethnic communities. The country remains unstable due to the lack of a strategy for national reconciliation and obstacles to the reform of the security sector, with an army that is omnipresent in Guinean political activity.

Political tension rose in the country around the electoral period, with different opposition demonstrations in which scores of people were wounded. In March, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced the dates of the elections, with the presidential election coming on 11 October and the local elections in the first quarter of 2016. As dialogue between the government and the opposition remained stalled, the opposition harshly criticised the schedule, announcing measures of pressure such as a boycott on Parliament and refusal to recognise the electoral commission and the local authorities, as well as a call for demonstrations in the streets. Various opposition protests had previously been organised during the first quarter of the year, including mobilisations in the city of Labé against reforms affecting the civil service that wounded around 50 people in early February. After months of tension, demonstrations and clashes, in which the government and the opposition opened a dialogue to discuss issues related to the electoral law, on 20 August an agreement was signed to guarantee greater representation for the opposition in local governments and to reform the CENI and update the census. The agreement between the government and the opposition helped to lower tensions and ensured that the presidential election would be held in a more stable atmosphere. On 1 September, the Constitutional Court published the definitive list of eight candidates for the elections, including current President Alpha Condé, of the

Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party, and opposition leaders Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), Sidya Toure of the Union of Republican Forces (UFR) and Lansana Kouyate, candidate of the Party of Hope for National Development (PEDN). After an election campaign marked by accusations between the different parties and pre-electoral violence that claimed the lives of over 10 people, on 11 October six million Guineans went to the polls for the first round to elect the new president. The election was held in a tense climate, with the national borders closed, traffic restricted and no prominent incidents reported. The EU and the AU sent observer missions to ensure transparency and smooth operations on election day. Around 19,000 members of the security forces were also deployed. Bakary Fofana, the president of the CENI, released the election results on 17 October. With turnout at 68%, Alpha Condé won with 57.84% of the votes, compared to 31.45% gained by his direct rival Cellou Dalein Diallo. The opposition did not recognise the results, claiming fraud and demanding that the election be repeated while calling on the people to demonstrate peacefully. However, the EU observation mission said that the election was free, transparent and valid, and that the irregularities encountered and the organisational difficulties did not invalidate the results. The Constitutional Court confirmed Condé's victory on 1 November, ratifying the CENI's results. The year ended with popular demonstrations and the opposition's rejection of the election results, which did not prevent the new government from taking office between 14 and 21 December. Condé appointed Mamady Youla to be the new prime minister.

Guinea-Bissau	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Transitional government, Armed Forces, political parties in the opposition, international drug trafficking networks

Summary:
The history of Guinea-Bissau since it achieved independence from Portugal in 1974 is scattered with violence and coups d'état that have prevented the country from achieving political stability as well as thwarting all attempts to implement democracy. The strong influence of the armed forces on the country's politics and the confrontation between parties that represent different ethnic groups constitute a major hurdle to achieving peace. The breakdown of the stability pact signed in 2007 by the main political parties represented another lost opportunity for ending the spiral of violence that dominates political life. The growing impact of international drug trafficking networks in West Africa further complicates the crisis. The assassination of the president, Joao Bernardo Vieira, in March 2009, marked the start of a fresh period of instability. In April 2012 the Army carried out a new coup after the first round of the legislative elections when the candidate of the PAIGC, the party in power, won and was questioned by the opposition, despite of the backing from international observers. After the coup, a new transition period started.

Guinea-Bissau experienced a year marked by political tension between the president and the prime minister. The first quarter of the year was characterised by the permanent crisis between President José Mario Vaz and Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira, which led to Pereira's dismissal by the president in August. Pereira's dismissal opened new tensions and a major political crisis in the government. On 20 August, the president appointed Baciro Djá to be the new prime minister. However, with votes from part of the ruling party, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Parliament opposed the appointment and passed a resolution demanding Dja's resignation and Pereira's return. It also accused the president of staging a constitutional coup. On 8 September, the Constitutional Court declared Djá's appointment unconstitutional. That same day, President Vaz accepted the Court's decision and removed Djá from his position. The PAIGC proposed Carlos Correia, who had previously been vice president, and he was appointed prime minister on 17 September with the mediation of ECOWAS. The UN Security Council congratulated the country for selecting Carlos Correia as prime minister and said that it was a major step towards achieving political stability. At the same time, it praised both the government for respecting the Constitution and the country's internal regulations and the military for not interfering. The commander-in-chief, General Biague na Ntan, had already announced that the military would refrain from intervening in political affairs on 10 August, just after the beginning of the crisis. ECOWAS recommended that the authorities of Guinea-Bissau should revise the Constitution and its semi-presidential system, since it has generated much instability between presidents and prime ministers. Correia's arrival did not end the political tension, since President Vaz refused the new government cabinet that he proposed, leading to new mediation by ECOWAS. Finally, the tension was resolved by the appointment of the new cabinet by decree on 12 October. The new government presented its programme to Parliament on 23 December, but it was rejected by the opposition and by part of the PAIGC, forcing the government to resubmit it in early January to begin governing.

Niger	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System International
Main parties:	Government, political opposition (Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic) and social opposition, armed group MUJAO, armed group Those Who Sign in Blood, armed Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram, regional force (MNJTF)

Summary:
The elections in January and May 2011 restored the democratic system in the country after the military junta

complied with the timetable set for returning power to civilians. A coup d'état in 2009 toppled the government of Mamadou Tandja after he began a series of constitutional reforms to hold on to power. Despite the normalisation of the situation in the country, instability persisted in the north due to the presence of cells belonging to the Algerian armed group AQIM and especially along the border with Nigeria owing to the impact of the armed activities of the group Boko Haram, which stepped up its attacks on Nigerien soil while the government joined the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to battle the insurgency.

The political situation was marked by the growing impact of the conflict with Boko Haram (BH) in the country, especially in the region of Diffa, as well as by the political and social tensions stemming from the announcement of elections planned for February 2016. Niger started out the year embroiled in the humanitarian crisis caused by BH's attacks in the Diffa region, located in the southeastern part of the country, which forced the government to request international aid due to the arrival of around 150,000 refugees from Nigeria and to declare a state of emergency in the area. On 6 February, the Nigerien Army responded forcefully to the rebels' attacks at the start of the year mainly in the cities of Bosso and Diffa, killing at least 100 insurgents. Niger joined the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to combat BH in all countries in the region (Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Niger and Cameroon), with the national Parliament approving to send 750 soldiers in February. BH responded by stepping up its attacks in the countries participating in the MNJTF and on 25 April the group attacked the Nigerien military base on Karamga Island in Lake Chad, killing 50 Nigerien soldiers, 26 civilians and 156 insurgents in the first major battle of the year. In reaction, on 30 April the Nigerien government launched a military operation in the Lake Chad region, giving the residents 72 hours to evacuate the area. The action displaced 25,000 civilians. In early May, the government reported the arrests of 643 people in February and March who were suspected of collaborating with BH. In the following months, the situation dragged on with no major changes, accentuating the crisis in Diffa. The year ended with a decrease in attacks by the Islamist group BH, although insecurity persisted in the regions bordering the Nigerian states of Yobe and Borno. The data provided by OCHA on the impact of the conflict on the **forced displacement of people** in 2015 estimated that around 66,000 people were Internaly displaced and that close to 64,000 refugees from Nigeria had reached Nigerien soil.

Regarding the domestic political scene, on 29 July the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced the dates for holding the presidential election in 2016, with the first round on 21 February and the runoff round on 20 March. It also set local elections for 9 May. The announcement was criticised by the opposition due to the lack of agreement on the dates proposed. On 13 September, the Nigerien Democratic Movement (MODEN) nominated Hama Amadou to be its presidential candidate. Amadou has been president of the National Assembly and was in exile in France to escape charges of child trafficking in the country. He returned to the country on 14 November to run in the presidential election and was arrested upon his arrival in Niamey. The end of the year was marked by the rise in political tension between the government and the opposition. Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou declared the arrest of nine military officers and some civilians and journalists accused of plotting a coup d'état. The opposition blasted this announcement, questioning whether the government was trying to manipulate the political atmosphere prior to the election.

Nigeria	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	Identity, Resources, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, farmers and livestock raisers, community militias

Summary:
Since 1999, when political power was returned to civilian hands after a succession of dictatorships and coups, the government has not managed to establish a stable democratic system in the country. Huge economic and social differences remain between the states that make up Nigeria, due to the lack of real decentralisation, and between the various social strata, which fosters instability and outbreaks of violence. Moreover, strong inter-religious, inter-ethnic and political differences continue to fuel violence throughout the country. Political corruption and the lack of transparency are the other main stumbling blocks to democracy in Nigeria. Mafia-like practices and the use of political assassination as an electoral strategy have prevented the free exercise of the population's right to vote, leading to increasing discontent and fraudulent practices.

In addition to the situation of war in the northern part of the country between troops from Nigeria and other neighbouring countries and the armed group Boko Haram,[35] **the political situation in Nigeria was also marked by tension linked to the different elections in the country during the first quarter of the year, as well as by intercommunity violence in various regions and the escalation of tension in southern regions (Igboland and Niger Delta**). Pre-electoral tension and violence rose considerably early in the year, forcing the government to postpone the presidential and federal parliamentary elections planned for February to 28 March and putting off the elections for governors and state parliaments until 11 April. The decision was announced on 7 February by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), purportedly for security reasons. It then claimed that the intensification in security operations against BH

35. See the summary on Nigeria (Boko Haram) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

and the major deployment of military resources had reduced the military's support for the police during the elections. By then, pre-electoral violence had already involved clashes between the supporters of rival parties, leading to various incidents. **The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported 58 fatalities between December 2014 and mid-February**. The presidential election was finally held on 28 March. The winner was the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), former General Muhammadu Buhari, who received 15 million votes (52.4% of those cast), while incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan finished second with around 13 million votes (43.7% of those cast). The political party in third place won around 53,000 votes. Different domestic and foreign observation bodies recognised the election as transparent and valid (INEC, ECOWAS, EU, Commonwealth, AU). Meanwhile, **the NHRC reported at least 50 fatalities during and in the aftermath of the election**. Buhari's victory was publicly acknowledged on 31 March by outgoing President Jonathan and was made official on 1 April, making Buhari the first opposition candidate to win a presidential election, ending 16 years of rule by the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The transfer of power was conducted peacefully through a non-violence agreement signed between Jonathan and Buhari on 26 March, in which both leaders committed to avoid repeating the scenario of violence produced by previous elections. The new president also sent out a message of national reconciliation, urging all forces to work in the same direction. After the national election, the country called new elections to elect state governors and the representatives of the National Assembly on 11 and 25 April, respectively. The APC won again, carrying 20 of the 29 states where the elections were held. During the elections, the INEC reported a total of 66 violent incidents across the country and the NHRC cited 55 murders and around 200 people killed in the violence before and after the elections.

Muhammadu Buhari became the first opposition candidate to win a presidential election in Nigeria, ending 16 years of rule by the PDP

Alongside the situation of political tension generated by the elections, **intercommunity violence** continued to plague some regions of the country. The yearly report issued by the Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2015*,[36] ranked Nigeria third out of 162 countries considered with regard to the level of violence, where the violence of Boko Haram, considered the deadliest group in all of 2014 by the *Global Terrorism Index,* was joined by the fighting of Fulani militias and herdsmen, leaving a toll of 1,229 deaths in 2014, compared to 63 deaths in 2013. Pending global data, violence fell in 2015 when compared with 2014, but still remained present in the country. In addition to other intercommunity episodes not necessarily produced by Fulani herdsmen, prominent acts of violence reported in Nigeria throughout the year included around 30 people killed between mid-January and the end of the month in various attacks in Taraba State involving Fulani herdsmen; over 80 people killed in other attacks in the centre of Benue State in mid-March; at least 70 people killed in six attacks attributed to territorial disputes between farmers and semi-nomadic herders in Plateau State, central Nigeria, between 25 April and 11 May; around 70 people killed in July due to incidents related to intercommunity political violence in the states of Benue, Plateau, Niger, Nasarawa, Zamfara and Rivers; 19 people killed in a firefight between Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers in the village of Kadunung on 15 September; and 35 people killed in an attack allegedly carried out by Fulani herdsmen in Niger State on 22 September. Moreover, in what may have been the bloodiest battle of the year, fighting in Zaria, Kaduna State, between the Nigerian Army and members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria on 12 and 13 December left around 100 people dead and sparked angry protests in the northern states.

Finally, in the closing months of the year, **significant incidents were reported again in the southern Igbo regions, where the pro-independence movement of Biafra is active**, due to the arrest on 19 October of Nnamdi Nwannekaenyi Kanu, the leader of the separatist organisation Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and director of Radio Biafra, who was charged with sedition, inciting ethnic hatred and treason, crimes that could bring him the death penalty if convicted. The arrest of Kanu and other followers on 19-20 October prompted many demonstrations in the region, which grew until triggering violent incidents on 2 December, where eight protestors and two police officers lost their lives in the blockade of the River Niger Bridge in Onistsha, Anambra State. During the incidents, which included the burning of the central mosque, the demonstrators demanded Kanu's release and independence for Biafra. On 17 December, the Supreme Court ordered Kanu's immediate release, but the next day Buhari's government filed six new charges against him to prevent it.

Nigeria (Niger Delta)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Resources, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, MEND, MOSOP, NDPVF and NDV armed groups, Joint Revolutionary Council, militias of the Ijaw, Itsereki, Urhobo and Ogoni communities, private security groups

Summary:
Instability in the Niger Delta is the result of the loss of livelihoods of the population due to oil activity in the area.

36. The Institute for Economics and Peace, *2015 Global Terrorism Index*, November 2015.

The lack of financial compensation, development and marginalization of communities led them to demand greater participation in the profits of oil exploitation. Armed groups arose in the 90s and carried out attacks on oil installations and military posts and the kidnapping of workers. The Government's response was military, with the permanent presence of the special forces in the Delta region, accused of committing numerous human rights violations. In 2009 the government decreed an amnesty for all armed groups that decided to stop violence. The offer of rehabilitation programs encouraged the leaders of many of these groups to disarm, which led to a significant pronounced reduction of armed violence in the area. However, the stagnation of reintegration and development project promised by the government could lead to a return to armed struggle.

Similarly to what happened in the rest of the country, the Niger Delta remained on alert due to the elections held in the first quarter of the year. In early 2015, local analysts and media outlets pointed to the risk of violent clashes between the supporters of rival political groups in the region, including between followers of President Goodluck Jonathan and the governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi. The governor of Rivers warned of an unprecedented flow of weapons in the Niger Delta ahead of the elections, as well as the risks of a return to the levels of violence of the 2000s. In this regard, the leader of the Ifalibabou Revolutionary Movement (IRV), General Sese, said that the third stage of the amnesty and reinsertion programme had hardly included any member of the IRV, which opened the door to their potential capture by opposition groups to provoke social tension. Different episodes of violence broke out in the Delta region in the months prior to the election. According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), different murders were reported in the states of Akwa Ibom, Edo and Rivers during the presidential election, and clashes took place between supporters of rival political groups that wounded various people in the states of Delta, Edo and Imo, prompting complaints related to the theft of ballot boxes and election materials. The presidential election was finally held on 31 March, with some minor incidents that did not invalidate the results. The election was won by the **opposition party** All Progressives Congress (APC), led by Muhammadu Buhari**, which triumphed in 21 of the 37 Nigerian states but lost in eight of the nine states in the Niger Delta region. Its sole victory there was in Ondo State, the westernmost state in the region**. Elections for the governors and representatives of the National Assembly took place later, on 11 and 25 April, respectively, and also drew attention to violence in the Delta region, where the voting period had to be extended due to different irregularities and clashes. Rivers State, which was the main flashpoint of tension, was won in the end by Nyesom Wike, the candidate of former President Jonathan's People's Democratic Party (PDP). He beat out the APC, which had governed the state under Rotimi Amaechi. In statements made during his inauguration on 29 May, President Buhari said that he would maintain the amnesty and reinsertion programme for the combatants of armed groups in the Niger Delta, urging them to embrace peace and allow the development of the region. In early August, the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) for the Niger Delta announced President Buhari's approval to start making delayed payments to the former combatants benefitting from the programme aimed at rehabilitating and reintegrating them into society. As a result of the reduction of violence in the region, oil production in the country rose from 900,000 barrels to over two million per day. Regarding the PAP's announcement, former combatants in the Niger Delta continued to demand investment in developing the region from the federal government as the only solution to prevent new episodes of violence.

Meanwhile, the Anglo-Dutch oil company Shell admitted responsibility for two major oil spills that occurred in 2008 after a three-year trial, reaching an agreement in January 2015 by which the company's branch in Nigeria must pay 70 million euros to the victims of the spills and pay for the cleanup efforts. Local and international organisations like Amnesty International expressed satisfaction, but pointed to the negative effects of the time that has passed. In this regard, the Nigerian president created a trust fund initially composed of 10 million USD to clean the Ogoni region, as recommended by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP).[37] The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) congratulated the government on the announcement and requested clarification on the source of the funds. Moreover, members of the oil-producing communities in the region brought the Nigerian federal government before the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) so it would declare the allocation of oil to private Nigerian companies illegal and a violation of their fundamental rights.

2.3.2. America

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

Haiti	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, MINUSTAH, former military officers

Summary:
Once the former president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, had left the country in February 2004, thus avoiding armed confrontation with the rebel group that had taken control of most of the country, the Multinational Interim Force (MIF) and the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) were both deployed to assist the

37. United Nations Environment Programme, *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland,* 2011.

interim government in restoring order and security. A period of greater political, social and economic stability followed the election of a new president, René Préval, in early 2006. However several problems have yet to be addressed: allegations of human rights violations against the MINUSTAH; high crime rates; the control of certain urban areas by armed gangs; difficulties in the process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; the demands of former soldiers to reinstate the armed forces; and high levels of corruption, poverty and social exclusion.

The year began with major anti-government demonstrations due to the political crisis in late 2014, but the situation gradually stabilised with the appointment of a new prime minister and the formation of a new government, a new Provisional Electoral Council and an electoral schedule to hold legislative, presidential and local elections, one of the key factors in the socio-political crisis that has gripped Haiti in recent years. The year 2015 began with the expiration of the mandate and subsequent dissolution of Parliament after the lengthy dispute between the executive and legislative branches of government blocked the electoral law needed to hold the elections. Faced with this situation, as stipulated by the Constitution, President Michel Martelly began to rule by decree and new Prime Minister Evans Paul was confirmed in office automatically, without being approved by both houses of Parliament. Shortly after Parliament was dissolved on 13 January 2015, Martelly had announced an agreement with the opposition to hold the elections before the end of 2015 and to form a coalition government in late January at the same time, which established a Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) whose main task would be to organise the elections. In mid-March, the CEP made the electoral schedule public, with the legislative elections to be held on 9 August, the presidential election on 25 October and the local elections (and runoff presidential and legislative elections) on 27 December. The Organisation of American States (OAS) expressed its willingness to deploy an electoral observation mission to the country. On 9 August, Haiti held the first round of the parliamentary elections to choose two thirds of the 30 seats in the Senate and all seats in Congress. A total of 5.8 million voters went to the polls to decide among 1,800 candidates from 128 parties. Turnout was 18%. The OAS, which had sent 28 election observers, reported that while some problems and acts of violence had occurred, there were not serious enough to delegitimise the process and declared it valid. Regarding the incidents reported on election day, Pierre-Louis Opont, the director of the CEP, acknowledged that 54 polling stations (5% of the total) had to be closed for security reasons. Due to the massive irregularities detected at 25 polling stations, the CEP decided to repeat the vote at them. This took place on 25 October, coinciding with the runoff elections, the local elections and the first round of the presidential election. On that day, the country held all three elections in a peaceful atmosphere and with greater turnout. The CEP received 162 complaints that led it to delay publishing the results in a climate marked by many civic protests demanding independent evaluation. On 24 November, the CEP published the final results of the presidential election, in which current President Martelly could not run again and the ruling party's candidate, the Haitian Tèt Kale Party's (PHTK) Jovenel Moise, won 32.76% of the votes and Jude Celestin, of the Alternative League for Haitian Progress and Empowerment (Lapeh), received 25.29%. Both candidates were supposed to square off in the runoff presidential election initially planned for 27 December. However, the opposition's accusations of massive fraud, in addition to Jude Celestin's refusal to run in the second round, triggered a serious political crisis in the country that forced the government to postpone the date of the runoff election twice, until 24 January, and to appoint an Independent Electoral Evaluation Commission (CEEI) to replace the CEP and search for a solution to the electoral crisis. The new key date in the electoral schedule is 7 February 2016, which is when the country should have a new president, 119 legislators and 140 municipal authorities in charge of setting a new course.

Accusations of massive fraud in the first round of the presidential election in Haiti triggered a political crisis in the country and forced the postponement of the second round

On the other hand, the MINUSTAH mission, whose footprint in the country had been planned to shrink considerably, withdrawing from six of the 10 regions in the country and cutting the number of troops roughly in half ahead of the summer, finally agreed to maintain an important presence due to the persistence of tension because it was an election year. However, the mission did announce that it was cutting its budget by 22%. During the second quarter of the year, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services published a report stating that it had received 480 complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse by members of peacekeeping missions between 2008 and 2013, where most of the cases reported came from Haiti, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.[38] **In Haiti, the reports from last year cover 231 cases of people who have complained of being forced to maintain sexual relations with members of the MINUSTAH mission in exchange for material aid.** This situation, which was condemned by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, increased the Haitian people's criticism and disaffection towards the mission.

38. Office of Internal Oversight Services, *Evaluation of enforcement and remedial assistance efforts for sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations and related personnel in Peacekeeping Operations*, 15 May 2015.

Mexico	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition (farmer, indigenous and student organisations and trade unions) and armed opposition groups (EZLN, EPR, ERPI, FAR-LP)

Summary:
The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) governed Mexico for over 70 years (1929-2000), consolidating a state based on corruption, impunity and repression towards opposition movements. The North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada entered into force on 1 January 1994, symbolising the success of neoliberal policies promoted under the government led by Carlos Salinas de Gortari. On the same day, in the southern state of Chiapas, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) became known as a social and armed movement denouncing poverty and the Mexican government's exclusion of indigenous peoples. After 12 days of fighting, peace talks began under the mediation of the bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Samuel Ruiz, which ended with the signing of the San Andrés Accords on 16 February 1996. However, the peace agreement went unheeded and a low-intensity conflict has been maintained in the area against the resisting Zapatista communities ever since. Other insurgent groups later emerged in the neighbouring states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, including the EPR, the ERPI and the FAR-LP. At the same time, the situation of political and social tension in Mexico has also been accompanied by fighting and demonstrations by different groups, like farmer, indigenous and student organisations, teacher unions, workers in the electric sector among others. The PRI lost power in 2000 at the hands of the National Action Party (PAN), which under the presidency of Felipe Calderón declared war on drug trafficking in 2006, beginning a conflict whose violence has affected the entire society. During the subsequent government of Enrique Peña Nieto (PRI), who was elected president in 2012, allegations of human rights violations, including cases of extrajudicial execution, forced disappearance and torture have recurrently taken place under the umbrella of the security forces' actions against the organised crime rocking the country.

The year was marked by social demonstrations to mark the first anniversary of the disappearance of 43 students from the rural Ayotzinapa school in Iguala, Guerrero state, on 27 September 2014, where six people were also killed and over 20 were wounded. Given the lack of progress in the investigation and the pressure from human rights organisations and family members of those missing, the Mexican government led by Enrique Peña Nieto gave approval to conduct an independent investigation into the case. A team composed of five international experts called the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) was appointed by the Organisation of American States' (OAS) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to conduct a new investigation into what happened to the students. After six months of investigation, the GIEI issued its report on the Ayotzinapa case on 6 September, concluding that the official version of the disappearance of the Mexican students was not accurate, invalidating the theory forwarded by the Mexican attorney general's office (PGR), which held that the students' bodies were incinerated in the Cocula crematory at high temperatures, which is why they could not be found.[39] Furthermore, a group of experts demonstrated that different police corps (municipal police from Iguala and Cocula, ministerial and federal police) were present at different moments of the operation, as were soldiers and military intelligence agents, involving the Mexican Army in the events. The GIEI urged the Mexican authorities to rethink the investigation and redirect the search for the missing students based on the new findings. At the end of the year, the whereabouts of the 43 missing students remained unknown. The director of Amnesty International for the Americas viewed the Ayotzinapa case as one of the most serious human rights tragedies in Mexico's recent history and denounced the magnitude of the **forced disappearance crisis in the country** following the discovery of various mass graves during the search for the 43 students. The PGR said that 60 mass graves had been found since October 2014, with the remains of at least 129 people in southern Guerrero state. **The well-known Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre indicated that over 26,000 cases of forced disappearance have been reported in country in the past eight years**, nearly half during the administration of current President Peña Nieto, which began in December 2012. The human rights advocacy organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) corroborated these figures, putting the number of missing people at between 22,000 and 25,500, according to data provided by the National Registry of Disappeared Persons.[40] In this regard, on 6 August the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INAI) reported the order given to the Secretariat of National Defence (Sedena) to search for and deliver statistical information on the forced disappearances reported in the country from 1960 to February 2015. The Mexican government acknowledged before the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances that it has no exclusive registry for cases of forced disappearance, but it did report that it expects to pass the General Law on Forced Disappearances during the current legislature in order to comply with the constitutional reform of Article 73, approved by Congress in September 2013.

Over 26,000 cases of forced disappearance have been reported in Mexico in the last eight years, according to data collected by the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre

39. Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), *Ayotzinapa Report*, September 2015.
40. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016. Mexico: Events 2015,* pp. 400-407

The human rights violations and the atmosphere of impunity in the country were made clear in Mexico City on 31 July with the murder of photojournalist Rubén Espinosa, a contributor to the news agency Cuartoscuro and the magazine *Proceso*, and four women with him at the time, including Nadia Vera, a student activist and human rights advocate. Espinosa had received death threats due to his reporting work in the state of Veracruz, which caused him to flee Mexico City in early June. According to the statistics of the Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes against the Freedom of Expression, Veracruz is the state where the highest number of journalists have been killed (11) and disappeared, along with Chihuahua, based on data from the international journalist protection group Article 19. The multiple killing caused great indignation in the country and raised new questions about Mexico as a guarantor of human rights. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Mexican ombudsman condemned the murder and called on the Mexican government to strengthen mechanisms of protection and communication.

South America

Bolivia	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Self-government, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition (political parties, authorities and civil society organisations from the eastern regions)

Summary:
At the end of 2003, the then president, Gonzalo Sánchez Lozada, went into exile in the USA after more than 100 lives were claimed in February and October when a series of anti-government protests were violently put down. Following a period of uncertainty during which two presidents took office on an interim basis, Evo Morales won the 2005 elections, becoming the country's first indigenous leader. However, his presidency, in particular the agrarian reform or the nationalisation of hydrocarbon resources and the approval of a new constitution, was hindered by fierce opposition to his political project by several political parties and by the eastern regions of the country, which, led by the department of Santa Cruz, demand greater autonomy. In parallel to the political struggle between the government and the opposition, in recent years Bolivia has faced one of the highest rates of social conflict in the entire continent, with protests of different kinds related to the labour demands of various sectors, the activity of mining companies or the rights of indigenous peoples.

The ruling party's decision to amend the Constitution to permit the re-election of Evo Morales, conflicts over mining and bilateral disputes between Bolivia and Chile over the situation of their borders and access to the ocean all fuelled the political tension in the Andean country during the year. The ruling party, the Movement for Socialism (MAS), announced its **intention to modify the Constitution to make it possible for Evo Morales to run for re-election in the next election planned for 2019**, which would mean a fourth term after his election in 2005, 2009 and 2014. The announcement triggered harsh criticism from the opposition, increasing tensions in the country. On 26 September, the MAS-controlled national Parliament gave final approval to the law to amend Article 168 of the Constitution in order to allow the possibility of two consecutive re-elections instead of the one it currently sets out. The text would be reviewed by the Constitutional Court before it is submitted to a referendum planned for 21 February 2016.

Alongside the political debate over the constitutional amendment and in connection with the different mining conflicts shaking the country, **the presentation of a new law on mining, debated in March and subsequently reviewed and passed in June, triggered various violent conflicts in the country**. The most intense demonstrations occurred on 31 March, when the country's main highways were blocked. Thirty people were arrested, 43 police officers were taken hostage, 85 miners and 20 police officers were injured and two miners were killed in the clashes that ensued. The protests also led to the fall of the mining minister. Morales' government later faced a **27-day mining strike, from 6 July to 2 August, in the mining city of Potosí.** The strikers demanded government support for the region in the face of falling mineral prices and demanded that it fulfil its promises to build infrastructure and public facilities. As the strike completed its 21st day, on 27 July, the Bolivian government began talks with regional leaders, although they ran aground three days later when the government rejected some demands. Finally, the strikers indefinitely suspended the protest that had fully paralysed the city of Potosí on 2 August, but warned Morales' government that the conflict remained unresolved. In other developments, territorial tension rose during the year between Bolivia and Chile due to the historic **border dispute between both countries over Bolivian demands for access to the ocean**. The rising tension was partially caused by the effects of an eight-day strike in the Chilean customs service, which had an impact on the Bolivian economy. Bolivia had presented the dispute before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2013 and was awaiting its decision on how to act. The court ultimately declared that it had the jurisdiction to settle the matter between both states in a ruling adopted on 24 September, with 14 votes in favour and two against.

Peru	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed opposition (remnants of Shining Path), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)

Summary:
In 1980, just when democracy had been restored in the country, an armed conflict began between the government and the Maoist armed group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso in Spanish) that lasted for two decades and claimed 60,000 lives. The counter-insurgency policy implemented in the 1990s pushed the state towards authoritarianism under Alberto Fujimori, who in 2000 went into exile in Japan having been deposed by congress and accused of numerous cases of corruption and human rights violations. Since 2008, the remaining Shining Path factions have stepped up their operations significantly in the Alto Huallaga region and especially in the VRAE region (Valley between the Apurímac and Ene Rivers). The government, which claims that the Shining Path organisation is involved in drug trafficking, has intensified its military operations in both regions notably and has refused to enter into talks of any sort. It has also intensified the political and legal struggle against its political arm, Movadef. Meanwhile, several collectives, especially indigenous groups, have organised periodical mobilisations to protest against the economic policy of successive governments and against the activity of mining companies.

No significant violent incidents were reported during the year between the Peruvian Armed Forces and the remaining Shining Path (SP) factions, although there were some military actions against the guerrilla organisation that weakened it even more. Meanwhile, protests continued against mining company activities, leading to different episodes of violence in various regions of the country. As part of the actions taken in the conflict between the Peruvian government and the Maoist guerrilla organisation SP, some suspected SP members were arrested during the first quarter, including one of the alleged ringleaders, nicknamed "Edwin", who is accused of being responsible for the death of Captain Nancy Flores Páucar in April 2013. The Peruvian government announced the dismantlement of the column of the armed group in the southern part of the La Convención area in the Cuzco region, with the capture of its two main operational commanders in the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro River Valley (VRAEM), Alexander Alarcón Soto, "Comrade Renán", and Dionisio Ramos, "Comrade Yuri" on 10 August, in what was the heaviest blow to the armed organisation all year. Local media outlets reported that five guerrilla fighters were killed in another military operation against another SP column in the VRAEM on 4 September, including the suspected fourth-in-command of the Central Committee, "Comrade Antonio".

Official reports indicated that SP still had 60 combatants in an area of the VRAEM between north of Cuzco and the central jungle of the country commanded by the brothers José and Raúl Quispe Palomino. According to the Peruvian authorities, this is the last active column of the group. In June, the US Treasury Department included the suspected leaders of the organisation and Florindo Eleutorio Flores, also known as "Artemio", on the Kingpin List (considered the black list of international drug traffickers and organisations). It also listed SP as a criminal narco-terrorist organisation. In reaction, the armed organisation's attorney Alfredo Crespo and its leader Abimael Guzmán rejected the narco-terrorist label and ensured that these leaders are not part of SP, but of a dissident faction operating in the VRAEM that is opposed to Guzmán. On 28 July, the Peruvian police and military reported the rescue of 39 people (26 children and 13 women) who had allegedly been kidnapped by the group in the VRAEM area**,** according to the Peruvian defence ministry's deputy minister of defence policies (Mindef) Iván Vega, who also reported that the armed organisation still held between 170 and 200 people captive, of which it is estimated that between 70 and 80 are children.

Concerning the protests against mining activities, at the beginning of the year the US-Mexican company Southern Copper Corporation reported the cancellation of a copper mining project in the southern part of the country due to the opposition of much of the local population and the clashes that occurred between the police and dozens of demonstrators in the town of Pichanaki (Junín province) against the Argentine company Pluspetrol's prospecting in the region in which one person was killed and other 40 were wounded by gunfire. The minister of the Interior was later dismissed from office after denying that the police used firearms to put down the protests. In early April, residents of the El Triunfo sector in the district of La Joya blocked the southern Pan-American Highway in solidarity with the farmers of the Tambo Valley, Islay province, who opposed the Southern Copper Corporation's Tía María mining project. The blockage led to clashes with Peruvian security forces that wounded at least one person. Meanwhile, **tension and protests increased in Arequipa, Islay province, in which three people lost their lives and over 200 were wounded. As a result, on 15 May Ollanta Humala's government decreed a state of emergency in the area, suspending the right to demonstrations, transport and assembly for 60 days**. The population of the region responded by insisting that the demonstrations would not end until the Tía María project was cancelled for good. The government lifted the state of emergency on 22 July, but had to extend the deployment of the military to the area until 20 September, maintaining tension there.

In another mining conflict, on 12 August the government authorised the military to intervene in the province of Yauli, in the Andean region of Junín, where hundreds of workers at the paralysed Doe Run metallurgical complex had blocked the main road in the centre of the country, sparking clashes between the police and miners that killed one person and injured 50. Furthermore, new clashes in the southern Apurímac region in late

September, where residents staged a protest strike in the provinces of Cotabambas and Grau against the Las Bambas mining project, claimed four lives and prompted the authorities to declare a state of emergency. The Defence Front of the province of Cotabambas justified the protests by stating that the Sino-Australian company MMG modified the environmental impact study for fear that its lands would be affected. The Las Bambas project could become one of the largest copper mines in the world at full production, with estimated reserves of 6.9 million tonnes of copper and 10.5 million tonnes of mineral resources. As such, the Peruvian government has ensured that it will not halt the project and that it will be operational next year.

Venezuela	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed opposition (remnants of Shining Path), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)

Summary:
In 1980, just when democracy had been restored in the country, an armed conflict began between the government and the Maoist armed group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso in Spanish) that lasted for two decades and claimed 60,000 lives. The counter-insurgency policy implemented in the 1990s pushed the state towards authoritarianism under Alberto Fujimori, who in 2000 went into exile in Japan having been deposed by congress and accused of numerous cases of corruption and human rights violations. Since 2008, the remaining Shining Path factions have stepped up their operations significantly in the Alto Huallaga region and especially in the VRAE region (Valley between the Apurímac and Ene Rivers). The government, which claims that the Shining Path organisation is involved in drug trafficking, has intensified its military operations in both regions notably and has refused to enter into talks of any sort. It has also intensified the political and legal struggle against its political arm, Movadef. Meanwhile, several collectives, especially indigenous groups, have organised periodical mobilisations to protest against the economic policy of successive governments and against the activity of mining companies.

The legislative elections held in December 2015 ended a year marked by tensions between the government and the opposition, opening a new political scenario in the country after the overwhelming victory of the opposition, which took control of Parliament.[41] The year began with new public protests linked to the commemoration of the first anniversary of the massive demonstrations of 2014, in which 43 people were killed (33 of them civilians), 878 were injured (600 of them civilians) and 3,351 were arrested, according to data provided by the attorney general in mid-February. After the attorney general's announcement, in 19 February **the Bolivarian Intelligence Service arrested the mayor of Caracas, opposition leader Antonio Ledezma**, in a move that was blasted by various governments, the OAS and human rights organisations and led to new demonstrations by the opposition. The opposition leader's arrests generated major diplomatic tension between the government of Nicolás Maduro and various countries, and especially in the confrontations with the United States and Spain. Former Spanish President Felipe González, who participated in defending imprisoned opposition leaders Leopoldo López and Antonio Ledezma, travelled to the country on 7 June and met with the members of the opposition group Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) in order to analyse the political situation in Venezuela with a view to future elections in 2015. Former Colombian President Andrés Pastrana and former Bolivian President Jorge Quiroga also travelled to Venezuela on 28 May to lend support to the imprisoned opposition and to demand the establishment of a date for parliamentary elections and the end of censorship, but their request to interview the detainees was rejected by the Venezuelan authorities.

The opposition won a landslide victory in the legislative elections in Venezuela

In light of this situation, in early March US President Barack Obama approved the declaration of a "national emergency" and sanctions against seven senior security and justice officials of the Venezuelan government because in his view the human rights situation, intimidation against the opposition and corruption in Venezuela pose a threat to US national security and foreign policy. The Venezuelan government harshly criticised the measure as a violation of international law, the principles of the UN Charter and the Venezuelan Constitution and claimed that it could be the precedent of a military invasion or the establishment of an economic blockade. Caracas called its highest representative in Washington for consultation, conducted military exercises and raised the case to the OAS. Organisations like UNASUR and ALBA approved statements demanding that the United States withdraw Obama's executive order, arguing that it posed a threat to Venezuela's sovereignty and intervened in its internal affairs. The OAS did not approve any resolution of support for Venezuela. This scenario marked the Summit of the Americas held in Panama from 8 to 11 April. Amidst the external pressures and internal demands for the announcement of legislative elections, in June the National Electoral Council (CNE) announced **that the parliamentary elections would be held on 6 December**. The day following the announcement by the CNE,

41. See "Venezuela, a new political scenario marked by polarised branches of government" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios for 2016)

gaoled opposition leader Leopoldo López ended the hunger strike that he had started the month before, since a date for parliamentary elections had been one of his demands when he began it. The former Venezuelan mayor of San Cristóbal, Daniel Ceballos, had already stopped his hunger strike on 14 June. In connection with these events, the Tribunal of Justice publicly disclosed Leopoldo López's sentence on 11 September, giving him 13 years and 9 months in prison. The leader of the opposition party Popular Will had been accused of various crimes, including political instigation and responsibility for the deaths of three people during an anti-Chavista demonstration on 12 February 2014. The sentence was criticised by the Venezuelan opposition, which called for protests. Various international bodies also criticised the sentence. **The country held legislative elections on 6 December, which gave a landslide victory to the opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), winning 112 of the 167 seats that make up the National Assembly** compared to the 55 seats obtained by the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). According to data provided by the CNE, the MUD won 67.07% of the vote (7,707,422), while the PSUV gained 32.93% (5,599,025) with 74.25% turnout. The election results gave the opposition a qualified majority of two thirds of the chamber, affording it absolute control, a situation not seen in 15 years. Maduro's government acknowledged its defeat, but reacted by taking advantage of its final weeks of parliamentary control in an attempt to bolster its power, announcing the appointment of 12 new magistrates to the Supreme Tribunal of Justice and designating the judge who sentenced opposition figure Leopoldo López, Susana Barreiros, as the general ombudsman or public defender of Venezuela. The government contested the election of nine opposition MP-elects and the Supreme Tribunal suspended three MUD MPs and one PSUV MP, temporarily ending the opposition's qualified majority in the National Assembly, which was supposed to begin operations on 5 January. The government implemented a parallel legislative body called the National Communal Parliament in an attempt to counter its loss of legislative power. The opposition condemned this move and refused to recognise the new body.

In other developments, different scenarios of tension caused by cross-border episodes also marked the year 2015. In August, **a border crisis broke out between Venezuela and Colombia**. Maduro's government decreed the closing of their shared border on 19 August following Venezuelan allegations of paramilitary attacks and to control smuggling coming from Colombia. Also during the year, **tensions were maintained between the governments of Venezuela and Guyana over their border dispute in the area of Esequibo** (Guyana).

2.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

Central Asia

Kyrgyzstan	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government, Identity, Resources, Territory Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

Summary:
Since its emergence as an independent state in August 1991, the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan has experienced several periods of instability and socio-political conflict. The presidency of Askar Akayev (1991-2005) began with reformist momentum but gradually drifted towards authoritarianism and corruption. In March 2005 a series of demonstrations denouncing fraud in that year's elections led to a social uprising that forced the collapse of the regime. The promises of change made by the new president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, soon came to nothing, giving way to a regime of authoritarian presidentialism in which corruption and nepotism were rife, especially from the end of 2007. All of this took place in a scenario involving economic difficulties for the population, latent tension between the north and south of the country, and the exclusion of ethnic minorities from political decision-making processes. Five years later, in April 2010, a new popular uprising led to the overthrow of the regime, with clashes that claimed 85 lives and left hundreds injured. This was followed in June by a wave of violence with an inter-ethnic dimension, claiming more than 400 lives. Other sources of tension in Kyrgyzstan are related to the presence of regional armed groups with Islamist tendencies in the Fergana Valley (an area between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and border disputes with the neighbouring countries.

Tension in the country increased, with a greater challenge from armed groups and various acts of violence during the year, regression in terms of human rights, episodes of border tension and other elements. Warnings increased of the risks of more Islamist radicalism in the Central Asian region and the threat of extremist organisations, including armed ones. At the same time, some analysts cautioned that the authorities were risking stigmatising the Muslim population in the southern part of the country, which is where most of the arrests and anti-terrorist operations took place, linking it to threats of armed violence and thereby widening fractures in the community that have not yet been repaired since the violent events of 2010. **In July, the security forces conducted a special operation in the capital, Bishkek, and near the town of Lebedinovka, against suspected members of the armed group Islamic State (ISIS). According to the authorities, they were preparing attacks in the capital and against the Russian military**

base in Kant. Six people were killed and several others were arrested in the operation. However, some analysts noted the lack of sufficient evidence that the suspects belonged to ISIS. Also in July, the first ISIS propaganda video aimed specifically at the Muslim population of Kyrgyzstan was released, calling for it to join the caliphate. The attorney general said that around 500 Kyrgyz citizens are fighting with ISIS in the Middle East. Several people detained during the anti-terrorist operation in July escaped from prison in October after killing some guards. Five of them were re-arrested immediately (three of whom died in police custody) and two others were killed by the police in a shootout in late October that also claimed the lives of two civilians and a police officer on the outskirts of the capital. In another episode, two suspected members of the organisation Jaishul Mahdi were shot dead by security forces in an operation in the capital. Suspected members of other organisations were arrested throughout the year, like Hizb ut-Tahir, which the government accuses of supporting al-Qaeda and ISIS. Many of the arrests and searches took place in Osh (south) and other southern areas. Moreover, Rashot Kamalov was arrested in February. A well-known imam from the town of Kara-Suu (Osh region, Ferghana Valley), with 20,000 inhabitants, he was accused of encouraging the population to join ISIS, whereas critical groups alleged that his arrest was politically motivated, given his sermons against corruption and institutional violence.

Meanwhile, **the country continued to experience cross-border tensions linked to the lack of border demarcation and intercommunity disputes over access to resources**. Thus, one border guard was killed and several others were wounded in an incident at a border post near the border with Tajikistan early in the year. Furthermore, clashes broke out between people from Tajikistan and Kyrzgyzstan in a neighbouring area for several days in August as tensions escalated around a crossing area. Several people were hurt and property was destroyed in the episode. Kyrgyzstan held parliamentary elections in October without incident, leading to a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (28% of the votes), the Kyrgyzstan Party (13%), Onuguu-Progress (9%) and the Ata Meken Socialist Party (7%). The Respublika–Ata-Zhurt bloc won 20.26% of the votes. Acting Prime Minister Temir Sariev was designated the head of government once again after the elections. Sariev had replaced Joomart Otorbayev after Otorbayev's resignation in April amidst criticism of his role in the problems reaching an agreement with the Canadian company Centerra Gold on the controversial Kumtor gold mine. In international news, Kyrgyzstan joined the pro-Russian Eurasian Economic Union in May and ended its cooperation agreement with the United States in July.

Tajikistan	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System, Resources, Territory Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition (Islamic Renaissance Party), social opposition (regional groups Gharmis and Pamiris), former warlords, Islamist groups (Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU]), Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan

Summary:
The tension in Tajikistan is largely related to the armed conflict that took place from 1992 to 1997 between two main groups marked by strong regional divisions: on the one side, the opposition alliance of Islamist forces and anti-communist liberal sectors (centre and east of the country) and, on the other side, the government forces, which were the heirs of the Soviet regime (north and south). The 1997 peace agreement involved a power-sharing deal, which incorporated the opposition to the government. In its post-war rehabilitation phase, the problems facing the country include regional tensions (including the growing hostility of the Leninabadi population in the north of the country towards its former allies in the south, the Kulyabi, the dominant population group in power since war ended), the presence of some non-demobilised warlords and former opposition combatants in parts of the country, the increasing authoritarianism of the regime, corruption, high levels of poverty and unemployment, tensions with neighbouring Uzbekistan, instability related to the border shared with Afghanistan and the potential threat of armed Islamist groups.

Tension from various sources rose significantly in the Central Asian country. Repression increased against the political opposition and **the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) was banned in August. Previously the only Islamic party authorised in ex-Soviet Central Asia,** it had participated in the peace agreements in 1997. The government alleged that the IRP had violated the party law by lacking sufficient representation throughout the country. This was preceded by an intense campaign to pressure and delegitimise the party, including its exclusion from Parliament following the legislative elections in March, which the opposition considered fraudulent and the OSCE electoral observation mission claimed did not comply with free and fair electoral standards. Moreover, in March government loyalist imams across the country demanded that the IRP be banned, claiming that it encouraged conflicts. In a context of harassment, IRP leader Muhiddin Kabiri fled the country after the elections. Shortly after the government banned the party in August and in the wake of some acts of violence that the government blamed on the IRP, in September the Supreme Court ruled that the IRP should be included on the country's list of terrorists. Around a dozen notable IRP members were arrested

Tajikistan's banning of the Islamic Renaissance Party, the only legal Islamic party in Central Asia, raised alarms in a general context of repression of political dissent and persecution of Islam in the public space

in mid-September. Despite these measures, the IRP announced that it would continue with its activities without going underground and without adopting any armed strategies. However, some experts cautioned that the new scenario was uncertain. The party was banned in a general context of state repression of Islam in the public space. In addition to the pressure on the IRP, harassment continued against followers of the opposition political group G24, which was banned in 2014. Its leader, the entrepreneur Umarali Quvatov, was murdered in Istanbul in March. The elimination of the political opposition inside and outside Parliament (no opposition party managed to win a parliamentary seat in the elections in March) was accompanied by new measures to roll back democracy during the year. Notable among them was Parliament's decision in December to award the title of Leader of the Nation to Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, which gives him lifelong immunity and executive powers when he retires, including veto power over decisions of state and other privileges.

The episodes of violence in September that were blamed on the IRP were another source of conflict during the year. **In September, a group of armed men linked to former Deputy Defence Minister Abduhalim Nazarzoda attacked a police station, an arms depot and a security post near the capital, Dushanbe, and another nearby location, leaving around 20 people dead**. In response, the authorities launched a special operation that extended as far as Romit Valley and in which Nazarzoda was killed. The operation ended with 20 other fatalities and 130 people arrested. According to the government, Nazarzoda had acted on the orders of the IRP, though the party denied the accusations. Twenty-three senior IRP officials were arrested in October on charges of terrorism, incitement to religious and racial hatred and attempting to seize power by force, linking them to the attack in September. Some analysts pointed to economic factors and power struggles in the violence in September. Another source of tension was linked to the activity of local and regional Islamist organisations, including armed groups. The authorities arrested dozens of suspected members of illegal groups, including Jamaat Ansarallah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Jabhat al-Nusra and Hizb ut-Tahrir. **In April, alarms were sounded when the commander of the OMON special forces, Gulmurod Khalimov, defected and reappeared in two videos that announced that he had joined ISIS, urging battle against the governments of Tajikistan**, the United States and Russia and accusing the Tajik government of repressing the practice of Islam. At the end of the year, the Tajik minister of the interior stated that 500 Tajik citizens are fighting with ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Meanwhile, **Tajik government warnings increased over the deterioration in the situation in northern Afghanistan, which borders with Tajikistan.** Russia announced that it would deploy military combat and transport helicopters to the Russian base in Tajikistan.

East Asia

China (Tibet)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, System, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Chinese government, Dalai Lama and Tibetan government-in-exile, political and social opposition in Tibet and in neighbouring provinces and countries

Summary:
In 1950, one year after emerging victorious in the Chinese civil war, the communist government of Mao Tse-tung invaded Tibet and over the course of the following decade increased its military, cultural and demographic pressure on the region, putting down several attempted rebellions, in which thousands of people were killed. Faced with the brutality of the occupation, in 1959 the Dalai Lama and tens of thousands of people fled from Tibet and went into exile in several countries, especially in Nepal or the north of India, where the government in exile is based. In the last few decades, both the Dalai Lama and numerous human rights organisations have denounced the repression, demographic colonisation and attempted acculturation of the Tibetan population, part of whose territory enjoys autonomous region status. Dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Beijing has been derailed on several occasions by the Chinese government's accusations concerning the alleged secessionist objectives of the Dalai Lama. The outbreak of violence that occurred in 2008, the most virulent in recent decades, interrupted dialogue once again and eroded trust between the parties significantly. The wave of self-immolations that began in 2009 in several Chinese provinces with Tibetan areas provoked a harsh response from Beijing, along with a distancing between the Chinese government and the Tibetan authorities in exile, which are accused by the former of inciting the protests.

Human rights violations continued to be reported in Chinese regions inhabited by the Tibetan community during the year, along with mutual criticism between Beijing and the Tibetan government in exile, which was especially intense following the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and various kinds of protests against the Chinese government, including self-immolations with fire. Although the possibility of resuming negotiations between the Chinese government and the Tibetan government in exile[42] seemed to have revived at certain points during the year, on several occasions Beijing criticised the so-called Middle Way proposed by the Dalai Lama, which consists of explicitly renouncing Tibetan independence while guaranteeing greater powers in important matters for the survival and promotion of Tibetan identity. Beijing thinks that this proposal contradicts the Constitution and the Law on Regional National Autonomy and is using the concept to conceal an intention to establish a semi-independent regime with weak central government control over approximately one fourth of Chinese territory (the Tibet Autonomous

42. See the summary on China (Tibet) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

Region and Qinghai province, two prefectures in Sichuan and one prefecture in the provinces of Yunnan and Gansu, respectively). In addition to explicitly requesting that he abandon the Middle Way, **Beijing blasted the Dalai Lama's comments indicating that he did not wish to have a successor and that the Buddhist tradition of reincarnation should come to an end**. The government considered these statements by the Dalai Lama a double betrayal of his homeland and his faith and declared that the government should be the one to approve and ratify the reincarnation of the current Dalai Lama, who turned 80 years old in 2015. Some analysts have indicated that the Chinese government wants to control the reincarnation process for political purposes. After the death of the 10th Panchen Lama, the second-highest Tibetan religious authority, in 1989, a dispute arose between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government regarding the procedure and legitimacy of the election of the new Panchen Lama. Finally, the person elected by the Dalai Lama according to Tibetan tradition (Gedhun Choekyi Nyima) and his family were detained, with no further news about their whereabouts, and Beijing chose Gyaltsen Norbu in his place, who has on various occasions received indifferent and even hostile treatment from the Tibetan community, which thinks he is a tool of the government. In fact, in June Gyaltsen Norbu called for national unity and social stability and urged the Tibetan community to boost its appreciation for China.

Many complaints about the human rights situation were reported during the year. In March, a coalition of 175 Tibetan organisations urged the International Olympic Committee not to designate Beijing as the host of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games on the grounds that repression and human rights violations have worsened since the 2008 Summer Games. Later, as part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States, an alliance of various NGOs sent a letter to US President Barack Obama to denounce the deterioration of the human rights situation and publicly disclose that between mid-July and mid-August alone, over 250 lawyers and human rights activists had been arrested, although most of them were later released. In September, during the 30th session of the Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva, the United States and other European countries condemned the human rights situation in China, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. In this regard, relations between China and the United States experienced some strained moments during the year due to Obama's praise of the Dalai Lama during his visit to the United States early in the year and because of a US congressional delegation's trip to Tibet in November, during which its members repeated the importance of human rights and the freedom of expression and of religion. Self-immolations with fire and other forms of anti-government protest continued to occur in 2015, which intensified on key dates (like the anniversary of the Tibetan uprising, the Dalai Lama's birthday and the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region). Finally, **the first round of the elections to choose the Tibetan prime minister and Parliament in exile (45 seats) was held in October**, with only the approximately 150,000 Tibetans living outside China enjoying the right to vote. This is the second time that elections have been held since Dalai Lama abandoned his position as head of government to focus on his spiritual responsibilities in 2011. According to the results made public in early December, over 45,000 people participated in the elections, which were won by current Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay with over 66% of the vote. The second round will be held on 20 March 2016.

China – Japan	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Territory, Resources International
Main parties:	China, Japan

Summary:
The dispute between China and Japan (and to a lesser extent, Taiwan) over the sovereignty and administration of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (as they are known in Japanese and Chinese, respectively) in the East China Sea dates back to the early 1970s, when the USA, which had administered the islands since 1945, ceded control of them to Japan. The dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, which have high geostrategic value and are estimated to possibly hold huge hydrocarbon reserves, is part of the troubled historical relationship between China and Japan since the early 20th century due to the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s and the Second World War. In 2013, China's unilateral declaration of a new Air Defence Identification Zone that included the disputed islands, as well as both sides' unilateral actions before and afterwards, significantly raised bilateral and regional tension around a historical dispute that had been managed relatively peacefully since the early 1970s but which, according to some analysts, could potentially provoke a military incident between the two countries and destabilise the region.

Though the military and diplomatic tension between China and Japan in their dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (in Japanese and Chinese, respectively) eased substantially, and many confidence-building measures were taken to improve bilateral relations, various sources of tension remained between both countries. In December, **Japanese government sources confirmed its intention to deploy anti-aircraft and anti-ship batteries in the chain of around 200 islands in the East China Sea that stretch from Japan to Taiwan and to boost its military presence in the area by 20% over the next five years until reaching nearly 10,000 troops**. According to some analysts, these Japanese government plans are due in part to US pressure on some countries to counter the growing influence of China in the region and to exercise greater control over its access to the eastern Pacific Ocean. In addition to control over access to the eastern Pacific and the definition of areas of interest between the United States, Japan and China in the region, the installation of military batteries and

the deployment of additional troops in the archipelago also stem from the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and especially from China's growing activities to explore and exploit gas and oil reserves in the East China Sea. As such, in July Tokyo declared that the installation of oil platforms in the region posed a threat to Japanese interests, partially due to the possibility of China setting up military radar on the platforms or using them as bases for helicopters or drones, and a breach of a 2008 agreement by which both countries pledged to jointly exploit the hydrocarbon reserves in the region. Meanwhile, China said that it was fully within its rights to prospect for oil under its territorial waters, whereas Tokyo argued that Japan and China have not delimited their maritime border in the region and that the current line is equidistant between both countries and merely serves as a de facto border. Regarding the regional situation as a whole, Beijing harshly criticised the new defence cooperation guidelines announced by the United States and Japan in April, which provide for greater Japanese involvement in global issues and more explicit US assistance before certain threats; the joint statement by Japan, the United States and Australia denouncing China's aggressive policies in the South China Sea regarding new building and territorial claims; and Japan's growing closeness with countries that maintain territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, like the Philippines and Vietnam.

Japan declared its intention to deploy anti-aircraft and anti-ship batteries in around 200 islands in the East China Sea and to boost its military presence in the area over the next five years until reaching nearly 10,000 troops

The relations between both countries were also affected by historical and symbolic issues, by the criticism of the new military strategy being developed by Shinzo Abe's government and by the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Regarding the first point, some Japanese ministers (and Abe's wife) visited the Yasukuni temple, where Abe also made an offering. The Yasukuni temple holds the remains of some of the main figures responsible for war crimes committed by Japan during the Second World War, described as martyrs by some senior officials in the Japanese government. Also controversial was Abe's speech during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, in which he expressed profound regret for the damage caused, but did apologise or ask for forgiveness for the crimes committed during the period as China had demanded. Regarding Japan's new defence strategy, Chinese criticism and domestic protests prompted the enactment in September of two laws that would allow the military to participate in collective self-defence tasks abroad for the first time since the Second World War. The government declared that these laws and the reinterpretation of the Constitution that it promoted would not worsen its disputes with China. Tension over the Senkakyu/Diaoyu Islands fell noticeably compared to recent years, although the Japanese government reported that Chinese coast guard vessels had made incursions in Japanese waters around 40 times in 2015 and that both countries conducted exercises and manoeuvres near the disputed area. Nevertheless, significant progress in bridging the gap and in the peaceful and negotiated management of their conflicts was reported during the year. Notable in this regard were the **direct meetings between the top leaders of both countries, Shinzo Abe and Xi Jinping, to improve bilateral relations in Indonesia in late April and early May**, as well as the meeting in January between their defence ministers to agree on the creation of aerial and maritime crisis management mechanisms. Other events included the official meeting (the first since 2013) between the Japanese foreign minister and the Chinese ambassador in Japan, the 13th meeting of the Security Dialogue between China and Japan in Tokyo in March (the first in the last four years) to improve and strengthen bilateral relations and the meeting between the foreign ministers of China, Japan and South Korea in Seoul for the first time since 2012, in which they pledged to hold a trilateral summit.

Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	System International
Main parties:	Korea DPR, Rep. of Korea

Summary:
After the end of the Second World War and the occupation of the Korean peninsula by Soviet troops (north) and US troops (south), it was split into two countries. The Korean War (1950-53) ended with the signing of an armistice (under the terms of which the two countries remain technically at war) and the establishment of a de facto border at the 38th parallel. Despite the fact that in the 1970s talks began on reunification, the two countries have threatened on several occasions to take military action. As such, in recent decades numerous armed incidents have been recorded, both on the common border between the two countries (one of the most militarised zones in the world) and along the sea border in the Yellow Sea (or West Sea). Although in 2000 the leaders of the two countries held a historic meeting in which they agreed to establish trust-building measures, once Lee Myung-bak took office in 2007 the tension escalated significantly again and some military skirmishes occurred along the border. Subsequently, the death of Kim Jong-il at the end of 2011 (succeeded as supreme leader by his son Kim Jong-un) and the election of Park Geun-hye as the new South Korean president at the end of 2012 marked the start of a new phase in bilateral relations.

Even though both parties implemented some confidence-building measures and showed a willingness to improve bilateral relations throughout the year, **one of the tensest moments in recent times occurred in August, after both countries' militaries exchanged artillery fire and raised their alert levels to quasi pre-war scenarios**. In mid-July, two North Korean soldiers crossed the border

with South Korea and returned to North Korea after two South Korean soldiers fired warning shots, but the event that caused a crisis to break out between both countries was the explosion of three anti-personnel mines in the southern part of the military border (called the Demilitarised Zone) in early August that wounded two South Korean soldiers. A joint investigation undertaken by the South Korean government and the United Nations found that the mines had been planted by the North Korean Armed Forces in order to cause casualties among the South Korean military. Although North Korea denied these allegations, Seoul decided to blast anti-government propaganda from loudspeakers on the border for the first time in 11 years. The tension rose in the days that followed until fire was exchanged on the border on 20 August, though no fatalities were reported. North Korea set a deadline for South Korea's propaganda to end and put its troops on a state of pre-war alert, doubled the number of military troops on the border and deployed around 50 submarines. Meanwhile, South Korea also declared that it is ready for any kind of armed confrontation and evacuated about 10,000 people living near the border. Finally, on 25 August, following long talks in the Panmunjon border region (in the Demilitarised Zone), both countries reached an agreement to improve their bilateral relations, South Korea put an end to its propaganda efforts and North Korea lamented the incident involving the anti-personnel mines. The United Nations and various governments, including the government of the United States, welcomed the agreement and recognised that the stability of the Korean Peninsula had been at risk in the days before. Despite this agreement, both countries once again traded accusations in the days that followed and in early September, the South Korean and US governments conducted joint military exercises and naval manoeuvres to cope with potential North Korean attacks with biological weapons. The dialogue between both countries did not resume until the end of the year, when they signed a framework agreement to hold high-level talks in November and convened the first deputy minister-level meeting since the belligerent escalation in August.

Relations between North and South Korea experienced one of their tensest moments in recent times and moved towards a quasi pre-war scenario

In addition to the rising tensions in August, other sources of strain during the year included Pyongyang's harsh criticism of the joint military exercises conducted by South Korea and the United States at different times of the year; South Korea's condemnation of North Korea's different short-range missile tests and the alleged test launch of ballistic missiles from a submarine in November; Pyongyang's complaints about South Korea's anticipated increase in military spending made public in April; the alarm raised by alleged statements by Kim Jong-un regarding completion of the manufacture of a hydrogen bomb and rumours about tests of the same that Pyongyang may be preparing; and the **rise of military tension on the maritime border between both countries, which is also disputed**. Concerning the last factor, in early May North Korea threatened to shoot live ammunition at South Korean vessels without warning after 17 South Korean patrol boats crossed the maritime border claimed by Pyongyang, which is located somewhat further south than the Northern Limit Line (NLL), which serves as the de facto maritime border between both countries. In mid-May, North Korea conducted military exercises with live ammunition near the NLL, and at the end of the month Seoul accused Pyongyang of building military artillery facilities near the same border area. Also in this area, Seoul fired several warning shots at North Korean ships on the grounds that they had entered its territorial waters in late June and again in October. In May, South Korea also conducted military exercises with live ammunition in the Sea of Japan. Meanwhile, South Korea criticised its neighbour's human rights situation on many occasions. In this regard, in the middle of the year, some South Korean media outlets echoed intelligence reports about the public execution of the North Korean defence minister for having ignored direct guidance from Kim Jong-un on various occasions and stated that around 15 senior officials had been executed on Kim Jong-un's orders in 2015, although Pyongyang adamantly denied these reports. In December, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution condemning the human rights situation in North Korea and urging the UN Security Council, which had addressed the same subject days earlier, to refer the matter to the International Criminal Court.

Despite all these sources of tension, throughout the year both parties repeated their willingness to close the gap in their positions and implemented various confidence-building measures, such as North Korea's release of two South Koreans who had crossed into North Korea from China in April; Seoul's delivery of fertiliser to Pyongyang for the first time in five years; an international march to the Demilitarised Zone to demand a formal end to the war between North and South Korea, reunification of the families separated by the war and more participation from women in the talks held by both countries; the beginning of talks on the possible exchange for cash of the approximately 500 Korean War prisoners remaining in North Korea, some of whom perform forced labour, according to human rights organisations; and the more than 500 people that Seoul thinks Pyongyang has abducted (for example, members of South Korea vessels held in the neighbouring country). Moreover, **hundreds of people (400 alone in South Korea) participated in a series of reunions of families separated by the Korean War (1950-53) at North Korea's Mount Kumgang** for several days in late October. It is estimated that one million families are affected and in South Korea there are only 70,000 people on the waiting list to participate in one of these family reunions, the last of which took place in early 2014. Since these kinds of meetings began shortly after 2000, which was probably when bilateral relations were at their closest and when the most progress was made in

the interest of reconciliation and reunification between both countries, nearly 19,000 people have participated in 19 meetings in person and another 4,000 have made contact through videoconference. Meanwhile, during various moments of the year both parties declared their willingness to find common ground. Notable in this regard was North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's speech in early 2015 that not only criticised the joint military exercises conducted each year by South Korea and the United States, but also did not rule out holding a high-level summit and suggested his readiness to declare a temporary moratorium on nuclear testing if the United States declines to participate in the aforementioned military exercises. However, the United States rejected the proposal, arguing that routine military exercises are not comparable to a nuclear programme that violates various UN resolutions. Coinciding with the 15th anniversary of the aforementioned inter-Korean summit in June, Pyongyang expressed its willingness to talk if three conditions are met: the end of South Korea and the United States' joint military exercises, the lifting of sanctions by South Korea and the end of any form of propaganda from South Korea, such as leaflets dropped from balloons.

Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia

Summary:
International concern about North Korea's nuclear programme dates back to the early 1990s, when the North Korean government restricted the presence in the country of observers from the International Atomic Energy Agency and carried out a series of missile tests. Nevertheless, international tension escalated notably after the US Administration of George W. Bush included the North Korean regime within the so-called "axis of evil". A few months after Pyongyang reactivated an important nuclear reactor and withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2003, multilateral talks began on the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula in which the governments of North Korea, South Korea, the USA, Japan, China and Russia participated. In April 2009, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the said talks after the United Nations imposed new sanctions after the country launched a long-range missile.

As in previous years, intense diplomatic activity continued to be reported to achieve a resumption of multilateral talks on the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, but concern rose substantially among the international community over the progress made in the North Korean nuclear programme. At various times during the year, the North Korean government issued public statements about the qualitative and quantitative progress of its nuclear programme, as well as its readiness to use it in certain circumstances. In May, for example, **Pyongyang claimed significant improvements in the accuracy of its short-range, medium-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles**. It also stated that it had improved its ability to miniaturise nuclear warheads to attach them to ICBMs. One of the primary fears of the international community, the latter effort had already been mentioned in a report by two North Korea experts in January. The report also warned of the possibility that in around 2020, Pyongyang would have between 20 and 100 nuclear bombs (it is estimated to have possibly produced between 13 and 16 since 2003). The top part of the range presented in the report indicates a substantial increase over previous estimates, but coincides with calculations made by the Chinese government, according to some journalistic sources. The report also mentions that notable investments in both the nuclear programme and the missile programme are planned over the next five years and asserts that the North Korean government currently has around 1,000 ballistic missiles (including long-distance ones). Regarding this last issue, intelligence reports have indicated a notable improvement in facilities and platforms to launch missiles, rockets and satellites. In early May, international concern grew after a ballistic missile was fired from a submarine. Several analysts questioned the veracity of the images that the North Korean government used to demonstrate the test and said that Pyongyang was still very far from carrying out such a test. Nevertheless, various governments condemned the action on the grounds that it was a clear violation of several UN resolutions. A few days after the test, the governments of the United States, South Korea and Japan met and agreed to boost political and military pressure and implement existing sanctions against North Korea in order to slow down the expansion of its nuclear programme.

In September, the North Korean government said that it was finalising the ballistics technology necessary to put weather satellites in orbit. Even though North Korea officially defended its right to develop a peaceful satellite programme, various governments claimed that Pyongyang's intention was to conduct a test with long-range ballistic missiles, which the United States and South Korea say would violate various UN resolutions. Such a test would have coincided with the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party on 10 October. Although the test did not take place in the end, tension rose appreciably in the region due to Washington's warnings that it could impose new sanctions on North Korea, US statements supporting the installation of an anti-missile system in South Korea and Seoul's deployment of a destroyer ship equipped with Aegis combat technology in the Sea of Japan. Meanwhile, Pyongyang announced the reopening of the main nuclear reactor in the country (in Yongbyon) at full capacity after several years of inactivity. With the US-Korean Institute at John Hopkins University having warned of its activity through satellite images in January, this reactor is considered one of the main sources of plutonium production and uranium enrichment, both

necessary for developing nuclear weapons. In the closing months of the year, regional tension increased again due to intelligence reports that suggested that North Korea is preparing new nuclear tests; due to a failed test to launch a ballistic missile from a submarine in November; due to the publication of satellite images suggesting significant improvements in the largest satellite-launching facility in North Korea (in Sohae) and new activity at the underground nuclear testing facilities in Punggye-ri, where three tests have been reported thus far; and due to Kim Jong-un's statements in December that the government had developed a hydrogen bomb that would be tested in the near future. On a positive note, many diplomatic efforts were exerted to resume multilateral talks. Therefore, in March the South Korean government declared that China, Russia, South Korea, Japan and the United States had reached (and informed North Korea of) a minimum consensus on the conditions for resuming the negotiations. In other developments, **during her speech before the UN General Assembly, South Korean President Park Geun-hye urged the international community to follow the example of the deal with Iran and to resolve the conflict over North Korea's nuclear programme, which she considers the last important challenge in terms of nuclear non-proliferation facing the international community**. Park Geun-hye said that if North Korea chose the path of dialogue and not confrontation, her government and the international community would actively participate in the economic reconstruction of the country.

South Asia

Bangladesh	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government (Awami League), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami), International Crimes Tribunal

Summary:
Since the creation of Bangladesh as an independent State in 1971, after breaking away from Pakistan in an armed conflict that caused three million deaths, the country has experienced a complex political situation. The 1991 elections led to democracy after a series of authoritarian military governments dominating the country since its independence. The two main parties, BNP and AL have since then succeeded one another in power after several elections, always contested by the loosing party, leading to governments that have never met the country's main challenges such as poverty, corruption or the low quality of democracy, and have always given it to one-sided interests. In 2008, the AL came to power after a two-year period dominated by a military interim Government was unsuccessful in its attempt to end the political crisis that had led the country into a spiral of violence during the previous months and that even led to the imprisonment of the leaders of both parties. The call for elections in 2014 in a very fragile political context and with a strong opposition from the BNP to the reforms undertaken by the AL such as eliminating the interim Government to supervise electoral processes led to a serious and violent political crisis in 2013. Alongside this, the establishment of a tribunal to judge crimes committed during the 1971 war, used by the Government to end with the Islamist opposition, especially with the party Jamaat-e-Islami, worsened the situation in the country.

The politically tense situation in Bangladesh remained active throughout the year, with some serious episodes of violence and intense persecution of the political opposition and journalists. The violence was especially serious during the first quarter of the year, in which the protests called by the opposition party, the BNP, led to riots and clashes between demonstrators and police. These occurred one year after the parliamentary elections in 2014, which were the epicentre of a very serious political crisis. **One hundred and fifty people died as a result of this violence during the first three quarters of the year, which also witnessed a general strike, the blockage of land, rail and river transport across the country and repeated attacks and burnings of trucks, buses and private vehicles.** Begum Khaleda Zia, the leader of the BNP, refused to call off the protests, prompting the Bangladeshi government to subject her to house arrest for 17 days. In addition, she was formally charged with murder as the instigator of an attack on a passenger bus that killed 27 people. This was a qualitative leap regarding the accusations formulated against the leader of the BNP, since formal criminal charges had never been levelled against her before. The charges filed against her previously were for corruption. Her indictment was followed by an order in June requiring the opposition leader to turn herself in within two months. In July, the formation of a special tribunal under the anti-terrorism law was announced to judge the cases against Beghum Khaleda Zia and other members of the BNP. After a few months of intense violence, the political crisis dragged on with the announcement of local elections in Dhaka and Chittagong that were also boycotted by the BNP. An attack on a motorcade in which Khaleda Zia was travelling prompted the opposition party to withdraw its support for holding the elections, in which it initially seemed to have an advantage. Neither the ruling AL party nor the BNP competed in them directly, but they had given explicit support to specific candidates. The elections handed victory to the ruling party once again and the BNP repeated its accusations of electoral fraud. Arrests and trials of opposition politicians were repeated throughout the year. Media outlets indicated that around 17,000 BNP employees and activists were detained and 22,000 cases were brought to court.

Throughout the year, the **International Crimes Tribunal** executed several people accused of war crimes committed during the war of independence in 1971. Jamaat-e-Islami leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman was executed in April, which led to protests in which two people were shot dead. Clashes between the police and demonstrators were also reported. The Tribunal handed out new prison and death sentences to people accused

of crimes during the 1971 war in May and June. Two people were executed in November: the secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, and a member of the BNP, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury. At least five blogger activists opposed to religious extremism were also killed during the year. Responsibility for these murders was claimed by Ansar al-Islam, a group affiliated with al-Qaeda. The armed group ISIS also claimed responsibility for killing several foreigners, although the government denied that it was behind the murders and accused an alliance between the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

India (Manipur)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups PLA, UNLF, PREPAK, PREPAK (Pro), KNF, KNA, KYKL, RPF, UPPK, PCP

Summary:
The tension that confronts the government against the various armed groups that operate in the state, and several of them against each other, has its origin in the demands for the independence of various of these groups, as well as the existing tensions between the various ethnic groups that live in the state. In the 1960s and 70s several armed groups were created, some with a Communist inspiration and others with ethnic origins, groups which were to remain active throughout the forthcoming decades. On the other hand, the regional context, in a state that borders with Nagaland, Assam and Myanmar, also marked the development of the conflict in Manipur and the tension between the ethnic Manipur groups and the Nagaland population which would be constant. The economic impoverishment of the state and its isolation with regard to the rest of the country contributed decisively to consolidate a grievance feeling in the Manipur population. Recent years saw a reduction of armed violence.

Tension remained active in Manipur throughout the year with different episodes of violence and clashes between security forces and armed opposition groups. Ninety-six people lost their lives in fighting between security forces and insurgents, compared to the 54 who died in 2014 and the 55 fatalities of 2013, according to data collected by the South Asia Terrorism Portal. Sporadic attacks were reported and operations conducted by the security forces killed members of different armed groups. Civilians also suffered from the consequences of the violence. In January, two civilians were murdered by the armed opposition group KNA(I) in the district of Churachandpur. The most serious events of the year took place in June, when three armed groups operating in northeast India under the name "Naga Army" (the NSCN-K, which normally operates in the state of Nagaland, along with the KYKL and the KCP, both active in Manipur) claimed responsibility for a joint attack that killed 18 members of the security forces. The material perpetrators of the attack were members of the KYKL. The attacks led to a security force operation that may have killed from 50 to 70 insurgents and dismantled various rebel camps inside Myanmar. This caused a row between the governments of both countries, as the Burmese authorities denied that Indian security forces had penetrated its territory, while New Delhi claimed that Indian forces had indeed operated in Myanmar, but had remained in constant communication with Burmese forces.

At the end of the year, the Indian government approved a one-year extension to the anti-terrorism law in force in Manipur, the AFSPA, which grants broad special powers to the Indian security forces and was rejected by many human rights civil society organisations. Activist Irom Sharmila also announced that she was prolonging the hunger strike that she has upheld for 16 years to protest this legislation. Meanwhile, many social protests were reported in the state, with major demonstrations that led to riots in which at least nine people died. Kuki organisations mobilised against the enactment of several laws that would facilitate the dispossession of land and would erode protection of the lands of certain tribal groups. Demonstrations also broke out demanding implementation of the Inner Line Permit system, which restricts Indian citizens' access to protected areas to preserve certain peoples' ancestral rights. Organisations representing these peoples said that migration from the rest of India to Manipur was altering the demographic structure of the state and weakening the Meitei population's capacity for influence. The Meitei are the predominant ethnic group in the state. Around 300 people were wounded during these protests.

India (Nagaland)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internal
Main parties:	Government, NSCN-K, NSCN-IM, NSCN (Khole-Kitovi), NNC, ZUF

Summary:
The conflict affecting the state of Nagaland began following the British decolonisation process in India (1947), when a Naga movement emerged that demanded recognition for the collective rights of the Naga population, which is mostly Christian, as opposed to the Indian majority, which is Hindu. The founding of the NCC organisation marked the beginning of political demands for the independence of the Naga people, which over the following decades evolved in terms of both content (independence of Nagaland or the creation of Greater Nagaland, encompassing territories from neighbouring states inhabited by Naga people) and opposition methods, the armed struggle beginning in 1955. In 1980 the NSCN armed opposition group was set up following disagreements with the more moderate political sectors, itself splitting into two separate factions eight years later: Isaac Muivah and Khaplang. Since 1997 the NSCN-IM has maintained a ceasefire agreement and has held talks with the Indian Government, while the NSCN-K reached a ceasefire agreement in 2000. Since then, clashes between the two factions have taken place in parallel with attempts to foster rapprochement and reconciliation among the Naga insurgency. A significant reduction in violence has been observed in recent years.

The situation remained tense in Nagaland throughout the year, accompanied by various major events, some of which ran in the opposite direction, since the government achieved an agreement with the armed opposition group NSCN-IM, but the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-K was broken. Violence spiked with regard to the previous year, as according to data collected by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 46 people were killed as a result of the clashes between some insurgent groups and Indian security forces, compared to 15 fatalities in 2014. The breaking of the ceasefire agreement by the armed opposition group NSCN-K was the reason for this uptick in violence. In March, the armed group announced that it would not extend the ceasefire that it agreed with the government in 2001. In April, when the agreement was officially supposed to be renewed, the Indian government also said that it would stop honouring it. The reasons given by the armed opposition for breaking the agreement included the government's refusal to negotiate over the issue of its sovereignty. The situation became complicated further because the breaking of the ceasefire agreement was accompanied by the expulsion from the group of two leaders opposed to ending it. The expelled leaders, who created a new faction, the NSCN-R, had reportedly tried to prevent the breaking of the agreement by convening a meeting of the joint mechanism for monitoring the ceasefire, which had been dismantled by Khaplang, the leader of the NSCN-K who promoted cancelling the agreement. Various episodes of violence were reported as a result of the breach, including an attack for which the recently created platform of the armed groups NSCN-K, ULFA-I, NDFB-S and KLO claimed responsibility, although the material perpetrators were members of the NSCN-K. The attack was especially significant because hardly any direct clashes between the insurgents and Indian security forces had been reported in recent years. As a result, the military launched an operation that killed at least eight insurgents. In addition, a night curfew was imposed in the Mon district, where another attack had taken place. Other clashes and attacks involving the NSCN-K were later reported, including in other states like Manipur. Moreover, several insurgents were killed during operations conducted by the security forces that also claimed the lives of members of other armed groups like the NSCN-KK. The breaking of the ceasefire agreement also prompted the Indian government to ban the NSCN-K again for five years, though many Naga organisations criticised the decision because of the impact that it could have on the search for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Furthermore, the Indian government asked Myanmar to extradite SS Khaplang and other leading members of the group.

In August, the government and the armed group NSCN-IM reached a framework peace agreement that should serve as a prelude to achieving a final agreement. After the agreement was signed, a delegation of Naga representatives invited the leader of the NSCN-K, Khaplang, to join them in Myanmar, but he declined. Khaplang excused himself from meeting with the Naga representatives, delegating Vice Chairman Khango Konyak and top military commander Nikki Sumi to attend it. His refusal also led to the government's decision to ban the armed group. In addition to the clashes between the rebels and the security forces, other episodes of violence broke out during the year, including riots in the city of Dimapur in March when a young man accused of rape was lynched. Scores of people removed the young man of Bangladeshi origin from prison, beating him to death and later attacking various establishments belonging to people of Bangladeshi origin. A curfew was imposed and over 50 people were arrested as a result of the violence, once again demonstrating the fragile coexistence between the different communities in the state.

India – Pakistan	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Identity, Territory International
Main parties:	India, Pakistan

Summary:
The tension between India and Pakistan dates back to the independence and partition of the two states and the dispute over the region of Kashmir. On three occasions (1947-1948, 1965, 1971) armed conflict has broken out between the two countries, both claiming sovereignty over the region, which is split between India, Pakistan and China. The armed conflict in 1947 led to the present-day division and the *de facto* border between the two countries. In 1989, the armed conflict shifted to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1999, one year after the two countries carried out nuclear tests, tension almost escalated into a new armed conflict until the USA mediated to calm the situation. In 2004 a peace process got under way. Although no real progress was made in resolving the dispute over Kashmir, there was a significant rapprochement above all in the economic sphere. However, India has continued to level accusations at Pakistan concerning the latter's support of the insurgency that operates in Jammu and Kashmir and sporadic outbreaks of violence have occurred on the de facto border that divides the two states. In 2008 serious attacks took place in the Indian city of Mumbai that led to the formal rupture of the peace process after India claimed that the attack had been orchestrated from Pakistan. Since then, relations between the two countries have remained deadlocked although some diplomatic contacts have taken place.

The year was notable because of the constant violations of the 2009 ceasefire between both countries that killed 174 people, 20 of them civilians. Even though it was a year in which important bilateral meetings were agreed on, the climate of confrontation led to several of them being cancelled. The disagreements began in March, when the high commissioner of Pakistan in New Delhi, Abdul Basit, met with the separatist leader of Tehreek-e Hurriyat (Movement for Freedom), Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Shortly afterwards, Indian Foreign Minister Suleman Khurshid declared that Kasmhir was an indivisible and integral part of India. The acting chief of the Pakistani Army, General Raheel Sharif, responded in June by stating that Kashmir and Pakistan are inseparable and repeated that Kashmir was an outstanding issue left

over from Partition at a defence congress in London in October. In June, both countries faced off over the elections to the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. Pakistan announced the elections for the second time since the Assembly was formed in 2009, which India considered a manoeuvre to integrate the disputed region. Gilgit-Baltistan is another region that India considers occupied by Pakistan, since it formed part of Kashmir before Partition. As evidence that India had not renounced the territory, during a meeting with the border security forces dealing with terrorist threats, security advisor Ajit Doval mentioned that his country had a 106-kilometre border with Afghanistan. Moreover, the spokesman of the Indian ministry of external affairs complained that the road that will link China to the port of Gwadar (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) will run through Gilgit-Baltistan. India has already fought a war with China partially over the territory of Kashmir (1962, Aksai Chin), so it thinks that its macroeconomic projects in Pakistan help it to consolidate its power in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Mutual declarations and gestures of hostility helped to maintain a high level of tension between India and Pakistan, although rapprochement came at the end of the year

The verbal confrontation worsened in May, going from hostile to belligerent. In a speech, former General Pervez Musharraf boasted of the damage that Pakistan inflicted on India in the Kargil conflict that he masterminded in 1999, the same year that he overthrew Nawaz Sharif in a coup d'état. One month later, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh, where he participated in a ceremony to honour the martyrs who died fighting against the Pakistani Army during the war in 1971, when East Pakistan separated from West Pakistan, which today are respectively known as Bangladesh and Pakistan. At the ceremony, Modi publicly acknowledged India's role in the breakup of Pakistan. India also conducted military operations inside Myanmar aimed at apprehending a group of insurgents who had carried out an attack in Manipur. The public revelation of this event led Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan to threaten India with retaliation if such an operation took place in its territory.

Faced with this escalation, John Kerry intervened by calling both leaders, who managed to defuse the tension and resorted to a gesture of goodwill by releasing fishermen captured by both countries. At the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Ufa (Russia) in July, Modi and Sharif agreed that their defence ministers would meet in New Delhi in August, but Pakistani advisor Sartaj Aziz's insistence in meeting with leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference caused the meeting to be cancelled. Mutual accusations of supporting terrorism did nothing to create an atmosphere of dialogue. Modi had asked Sharif to take a hard line against terrorism and in sentencing those accused of the attack in Mumbai in November 2008, like Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, whose release in April prompted India to accuse Pakistan of not taking the fight against terrorism seriously. The division became apparent once again at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, when both countries traded accusations of supporting terrorism in their respective territories. In fact, Nawaz Sharif provided a dossier containing what he considered powerful evidence incriminating India in the insurgency in Balochistan and the TTP, as well as another report detailing human rights violations by India in Kashmir. **The United States intervened on various occasions, concerned about the deterioration of the situation during an escalation of violence in Afghanistan, when it needed Pakistan to play a decisive role in negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.** While their positions seemed irreconcilable in New York, since neither Sharif nor Modi would talk to each other, the leaders surprised everyone by sitting beside each other and exchanging some words at the climate change summit in Paris. The defence advisors finally met in Bangkok in December. Indian Defence Minister Sushma Swaraj attended the Heart of Asia conference as part of the Istanbul Process, held in Islamabad, where both countries agreed to relaunch a new negotiating process. The final step in the rapprochement was initiated by Modi, when he called Sharif on his birthday (25 December) and made a layover in Lahore. No Indian prime minister had visited Pakistan since 2004.

Nepal[43]	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, Nepali Congress, UCPN (M) and CPN (UML) political parties, United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF), Tharuhat-Tharuwan Joint Struggle Committee

Summary:
1996 marked the start of a decade-long armed conflict between the Nepalese government and the armed wing of the Maoist CPN-M, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which aimed to overthrow the monarchy and establish a Maoist republic, in a country affected by poverty, feudalism, inequality and the absence of democracy. Following a decade of armed conflict and a coup in 2005, through which the king assumed all state powers, at the end of April 2006 King Gyanendra ordered the reopening of parliament after several weeks of intense social protests that claimed some 20 lives. The protests that brought about the overthrow of the king were orchestrated by a coalition of the seven main democratic opposition parties and the Maoists. Following the overthrow of the monarchy they unilaterally declared a ceasefire, which was backed by the interim government. In November 2006 a peace agreement was signed that brought the armed conflict to an end, after which the republic was proclaimed. In 2008 a constituent assembly was established to draw up Nepal's new constitution, although successive political crises and the lack of agreement on key aspects of the peace process, such as territorial decentralisation or the situation of Maoist combatants have led to a stalemate in the peace process.

43. The crises in Nepal and Nepal (Terai) have been united under the name of Nepal due to the interrelating dynamics between them in 2015.

Tension worsened in Nepal following the ratification of a new Constitution for the country in August and its promulgation in September. The Constitution was backed by two thirds of the Constituent Assembly and its ratification was the result of a long process after the signing of the peace agreement that ended the armed conflict in 2006, the election of the Constituent Assembly in 2008 and its re-election in 2013, faced with the failure of the first post-war constituent period. The ratified Constitution established a republican, federal and secular system with seven states. **The territorial reorganisation of the country was the primary reason that the political crisis worsened, since Tharu and Madhesi groups expressed their displeasure with the demarcation of the new states with protests and blockades that on several occasions led to riots and clashes with security forces. As a result, at least 50 people were killed** in the country starting in August as a result of shots fired by the police and clashes between security forces and protestors. Ten police officers died after being attacked by demonstrators. The new states established by the Constitution will consist of districts of the three geographic regions in the country (plains or Terai, hills and high mountains), dividing the districts inhabited by the Tharu and Madhesi populations into various states. Unhappiness was also voiced about the agreed electoral system and women's organisations complained that the Constitution institutionalises gender discrimination, establishing inequalities in access to Nepalese citizenship by men and women. Following the promulgation of the new Constitution, roads were also blocked and land communication with India was virtually suspended. This led to a major shortage of essential goods in the country like medicine and fuel, increased illegal logging and paralysed reconstruction of the homes affected by the earthquake in April. Organisations like UNICEF warned of the consequences for children. The humanitarian situation in the country was already very serious prior to the blockade as a result of several earthquakes that hit the Kathmandu Valley in April, killing 8,500 people, injuring 18,000 and leaving 1.4 million dependent on food aid.

In late September, the government decided to withdraw the soldiers deployed in the conflict areas in an attempt to increase the confidence of the population. The prime minister cancelled his attendance of the UN General Assembly to deal with the crisis and the Indian foreign secretary travelled to Nepal to consult with the Nepalese government about the situation arising from the promulgation of the Constitution and urged a strengthening of the dialogue. In December, the government carried out a new attempt to solve the political crisis and presented a new proposal to include some amendments to the text of the Constitution approved in September, including issues like proportional representation of the Madhesi population in different state bodies and the delimitation of electoral constituencies based on the population. However, the amendments were rejected by Madhesi leaders, who said that they were abstract proposals bringing no specific solutions to Madhesi demands.

The approval of a new Constitution in Nepal led to intense protests that claimed 50 lives

Pakistan	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, armed opposition (Taliban militias, political party militias), Armed Forces, secret services

Summary:
In 1999 the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was brought down by a military coup orchestrated by General Pervez Musharraf, who justified his actions by accusing this and previous governments of mismanagement and corruption. The new military regime initially met with the isolation of the international community. There was a thawing of relations after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, when Musharraf became the main ally of the USA in the region in the persecution of al-Qaeda. The fragile political situation that has characterised the country for several years can be explaine d by the length of time for which Musharraf held on to power, simultaneously holding the positions of head of state and commander-in-chief, by the attempts to compromise the independence of judicial power and by the increasing power of Taliban militias in the tribal areas of the country on the border with Afghanistan. In 2008 Musharraf resigned as president following defeat in the legislative elections and was replaced by Asif Ali Zardari. However, the country has continued to experience alarming levels of violence.

Following the attack on the school in Peshawar (December 2014) that claimed the lives of 132 children, the government and society of Pakistan were more determined than ever to act against the insurgency. While the military Operation Zarb-e Azb was launched in June 2013 to crack down on insurgent sanctuaries in some tribal agencies (mainly Waziristan and Khyber), the civil government designed an instrument to fight against terrorism called the National Action Plan (NAP). **According to official figures, there was a significant drop in violence, but the secrecy with which the Pakistani Army conducted its military operations made it impossible to compare the data.** The Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) cited a 48% reduction in terrorist attacks and a 34% drop in violence overall. According to the PIPS, violence caused the deaths of 3,503 people and left 2,167 wounded (1,069 killed and 1,443 wounded in insurgent attacks). The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) calculated 3,682 total deaths. Meanwhile, the intelligence services' public relations office (ISPR) published other figures: 3,400 militiamen and 488 soldiers were killed as a result of

Operation Zarb-e Azb alone.[44] While the military operation was decisive in undermining the operational capacity of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), it remained active and managed to perpetrate attacks like the one that killed 40 people at the Badaber air base (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) in September. The NAP was created based on 20 key points for ending the insurgency. The first consisted of lifting the moratorium on the death penalty. By late November, Pakistan had carried out over 300 executions. However, according to the PIPS, in late July, only 22 of the 195 people executed belonged to insurgent groups. Pakistan also put two prisoners to death who had been sentenced when they were legal minors, thereby contravening the law, which prohibits capital punishment for children. Another step taken by the government that alarmed human rights organisations was the enactment of a law allowing military tribunals to judge civilian prisoners for crimes related to insurgent activity. Another point in the programme was the extension of the military operation to other areas in the tribal agencies, to Balochistan and to Karachi. The great power of the military (the Pakistani Army in the tribal areas, the border guards in Balochistan and the Rangers in Karachi), which was also given police powers, was considered a step backwards in the consolidation of democracy.

Despite a slight improvement in security, violence continued to rock Pakistan

The NAP is clear in its pursuit of insurgent groups, their funding, their ideologies and their discourse of hatred.[45] However, **Pakistan continued to give contradictory signs, especially regarding selectivity in the persecution of armed groups**. Zaki ur-Rehman Lakhvi (LeT) was released in April, despite the fact that the evidence indicated his involvement as the mastermind of the Mumbai attack in November 2008. In Islamabad, students of the famous red mosque (with one adjacent madrasa for boys and another for girls) posed in a video calling on the leader of Islamic State (ISIS) to avenge its martyrs, including Osama bin Laden. Abdul Aziz, the leader of the mosque, has not stopped supporting the TTP and ISIS. The leader of LeT, Hafiz Saeed, and the leader of JuM, Masood Azhar, remained free and active, even though their groups were banned. Prior to the local elections, the sectarian group Ahl-e Sunna wa-l-Jama'at (ASWJ, previously known as Sipah-e Sahaba) ran against different parties. In Malir (Sind), the ASWJ ran against the PPP; in Mirpur, the PTI beat the PPP; and in Jhang, the ASWJ ran against the PML-N. The ASWJ, the parent organisation of Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) and ally of the TTP and al-Qaeda (and according to intelligence sources, potentially allied with ISIS) was responsible for most of the sectarian attacks against Shia minorities. According to the SATP, these attacks killed 276 people and wounded 327 in 2015. Nevertheless, Malik Ishaq, the leader of LeJ, was killed along with two of his sons and 13 of his followers in a shootout with the police.[46] In November, Haroon Bhatti, another LeJ leader, died in similar circumstances along with three other members of the group. The government of Punjab was the only authority to prohibit media coverage of the activities of the charitable branches of the armed groups after the earthquake that struck Afghanistan and Pakistan in October, leaving hundreds dead and thousands injured. Pakistan also accused Afghanistan of promoting the insurgency on its soil. After the arrest of five men in Afghanistan involved in the Peshawar attack (December 2014), the government announced that it would not renew residency permits for Afghan refugees (around 1.5 million registered, although there are around 1 million unregistered) that were set to expire on 31 December, leaving them in an illegal and more vulnerable situation. The government also stated that it would deport them in a staggered manner over the next two years. Since the attack, thousands of refugees were illegally expelled in retaliation, even though they held residency permits. Furthermore, Balochistan suffered an uptick in violence, largely caused by the military operation. The same held true for Karachi, where the PPP and the MQM denounced political bias in the Rangers' activity.

Sri Lanka	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, Tamil political and social opposition

Summary:
In 1983 the LTTE, the Tamil pro-independence armed opposition group, began the armed conflict that ravaged Sri Lanka for almost three decades. The increasing marginalisation of the Tamil population by the government, mostly composed of members of the Sinhalese elite, following the decolonisation of the island in 1948, led the LTTE to initiate an armed struggle to achieve the creation of an independent Tamil state. From 1983, each of the phases in which the conflict took place ended with a failed peace process. Following the signing of a ceasefire agreement, fresh peace talks began in 2002, mediated by the Norwegian government, the failure of which sparked a fierce resumption of the armed conflict in 2006. In May 2009 the armed forces defeated the LTTE and regained control over the entire country after killing the leader of the armed group, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Since then thousands of Tamils have remained displaced and no measures have been adopted to make progress in reconciliation. Furthermore, the government has refused to investigate the war crimes of the armed conflict, denying that they ever took place.

44. See the summary on Pakistan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
45. There were various convictions and arrests (over 3,900 people) to prevent the spread of speech inciting violence in mosques through loudspeakers. However, various television programmes promoted hatred (generally towards India, but also towards politicians, journalists and academics) and all kinds of conspiracy theories.
46. In Pakistan, an "encounter" (a shooting) is a euphemism referring to extrajudicial or summary executions of prisoners orchestrated by the police or the intelligence services.

Sri Lanka underwent a major political transformation during the year, resulting from the political change stemming from the presidential election in January and the legislative elections in August, which saw the executive branch of government change hands in the country. In January, Maithripala Sirisena beat sitting President Mahinda Rajapakse in an election that was preceded by an atmosphere of violence and intimidation, though it was held with a certain calm. Though Sirisena had been part of Rajapakse's government until November, he managed to muster the support of the political opposition, including the Tamil party TNA. **The new government declared a shift in the country's politics and announced parliamentary elections two years ahead of time. The elections also handed victory to the opposition, composed of the United National Front for Good Governance (UNFGG) coalition, led by the main opposition party, the UNP**, which won 106 of 225 seats. As a result of this outcome, President Maithripala Sirisena appointed the leader of the opposition coalition, Ranil Wickremesinghe, to be prime minister. Wickremesinghe had previously served as prime minister from 1993 to 1994 and from 2001 to 2004. During his 2001-2004 term, Wickremesinghe conducted peace negotiations with what was then the Tamil armed opposition group LTTE. The candidacy led by Mahinda Rajapakse, the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), headed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), won 96 seats, and the main Tamil party in the country, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), won 16 seats. This new political scenario gave rise to different processes of political and legislative transformation, including amending the Constitution to reduce presidential powers, imposing a limit of two terms and restricting the president's immunity and ability to dissolve Parliament.

With regard to the investigation into the war crimes committed during the final stage of the armed conflict that ended in 2009, in the wake of Sirisena's election, he ended the ban on foreigners from travelling to the northern part of the country. The previous government had imposed the ban in order to prevent investigation into war crimes. A new national investigation into war crimes was also announced in which the United Nations would only play an advisory role. After the parliamentary elections, the government announced to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that it was establishing various mechanisms of transitional justice, including the creation of an independent and credible truth and reconciliation commission to investigate the atrocities committed during the civil war (1983-2009); the creation of a missing persons and reparations office; and the establishment of a special tribunal, with international participation, to deal with war crimes and other human rights violations. These measures were announced at the same time that the UN Human Rights Council submitted its report covering the serious human rights violations that took place between February 2002, when the ceasefire agreement was first broken, and May 2009, when the armed conflict was declared over following the Sri Lankan Armed Forces' victory over the Tamil armed opposition group LTTE. The report documents war crimes such as extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, gender violence, forced disappearance and other unlawful acts and recommends the establishment of a special hybrid tribunal to try war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by all parties. The presentation of this report had been delayed between March and September to give the new government the opportunity to cooperate. In October, the Human Rights Council approved a resolution committing the government to the aforementioned transitional justice mechanisms and political reforms. However, in November, Tamil activists held a strike in the northern and eastern parts of the country to protest the ongoing detention of people as a result of anti-terrorist legislation in the country.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Indonesia (West Papua)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed group OPM, political and social opposition (autonomist or secessionist organisations, indigenous and human rights organisations), indigenous Papuan groups, Freeport mining company

Summary:
Although Indonesia became independent from Holland in 1949, West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya) was administered for several years by the United Nations and did not formally become part of Indonesia until 1969, following a referendum considered fraudulent by many. Since then, a deep-rooted secessionist movement has existed in the region and an armed opposition group (OPM) has been involved in a low-intensity armed struggle. In addition to constant demands for self-determination, there are other sources of conflict in the region, such as community clashes between several indigenous groups, tension between the local population (Papuan and mostly animist or Christian) and so-called transmigrants (mostly Muslim Javanese), protests against the Freeport transnational extractive corporation, the largest in the world, or accusations of human rights violations and unjust enrichment levelled at the armed forces.

No major clashes were reported between the Indonesian Armed Forces and the OPM, although demonstrations calling for self-determination and other acts of protest continued to be staged against the precarious human rights situation in the region and the actions of the state security forces and bodies deployed in Papua. In addition to one-off attacks by the OPM, some sporadic acts of violence were reported: around 100 people were arrested and dozens of houses were burned down by the Indonesian Army in the town of Utikini (near Timika) in January, according to the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP); two civil servants and a

private security guard of the Freeport mining company, one of the largest in the world, were killed in January; in February, incidents were reported during protests against the events of December 2014, when according to Human Rights Watch five people were killed and 17 were wounded after the police opened fire on 800 demonstrators; three police officers were murdered in the region of Puncak in December; demonstrations to celebrate Independence Day for Papua (1 December) led to reports of killings and other forms of abuse perpetrated by the state security forces; and a small mosque and several houses in the Tolkiara region were burned down in late July, coinciding with the celebration of the Muslim festival Eid al-Fitr. Regarding the last incident, provincial and local government officials urged calm, opened an investigation into the events (with some media outlets indicating that those responsible for the attack were members of a Christian church called Gereja Injili di Indonesia) and warned of the danger involved in these incidents between different religions, citing the situation in the Moluccas and Sulawesi in the late 1990s as examples.

Despite these dynamics of violence, President Joko Widodo travelled to Papua several times during the year and announced various conciliatory measures for the region. In May, **Joko Widodo declared his intention to embark upon a new phase in the relations between the Indonesian government and West Papua, to pay special attention to the region and to improve the human rights situation and the welfare of the population**. Shortly before the beginning of this visit, the fourth in one year, the government announced the release of five political prisoners (in his 10-year rule, the previous president only released one) and the lifting of restrictions on access for journalists. Days before, simultaneous demonstrations broke out in 10 countries and 22 cities and around 47,000 signatures were collected to demand free access for journalists in Papua. Later, in June, the government announced its intention to release scores of political prisoners, launch infrastructure projects and tackle the problem of unemployment in Papua. In addition, some media outlets reported the president's intention to put an end to transmigration policies to Papua, arguing that they cause serious problems in the region (since the annexation of Papua by Indonesia in 1969, hundreds of thousands of people have arrived to the area under these programmes). However, a few days later, the transmigration minister said that these programmes had been successful and would therefore be expanded in the future. In international developments, **during a summit held in the Solomon Islands in mid-June, the regional Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) decided to grant observer status to the ULMWP and associate member status to Indonesia**, where around 11 million Melanesians live. Although the ULMWP had applied for full membership, its secretary general declared that this decision would enable it to draw the attention of the international community to the human rights situation in the region. Moreover, the Indonesian government expressed its discomfort and recalled the importance of the principle of non-interference during the summit of the Pacific Islands Forum held in Papua New Guinea in mid-September, in which the government of the Solomon Islands raised the granting of observer status to the ULMWP in representation of the Papuan people, the formation of a high-level mission to investigate the situation in Papua firsthand and the inclusion of the region in the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation, also known as the Committee of 24.

Myanmar	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition (opposition party NLD), 969 group

Summary:
The military junta seized power in a coup d'état in 1962 and has remained in government ever since. The military government abolished the federal system and imposed a fierce dictatorship, known as the "Burmese Way to Socialism". In 1988, the economic crisis led thousands of people to voice their discontent in the street. These protests were put down brutally by the military regime, claiming 3,000 lives. Although the government did call elections, it never acknowledged their result, i.e. the victory of the democratic opposition, led by Aung San Suu Kyi. She was subsequently arrested and has been intermittently placed under house arrest ever since. In 2004, the government began a constitutional reform process in an attempt to offer the image of a liberalising regime. This process was discredited by the political opposition to the dictatorship. In 2007, the political opposition and several Buddhist monks led intense social protests against the military regime that were brutally put down. The general elections held in 2010 were considered fraudulent by the international community and the internal opposition but the government initiated a process of reforms aimed at democratizing the country.

The political situation in Myanmar experienced a significant improvement as a result of the first general elections considered credible, fair and transparent by the political opposition and by international observers alike. However, the elections could not be held in some areas affected by the armed conflict. Held in November, the elections **were won overwhelmingly by Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD, the main opposition party, which carried 79% of the seats up for election and also managed to guarantee a majority even when taking the 25% of seats reserved for the Burmese Army into account.** This victory not only lets the NLD legislate, it also allows it to designate two of the three presidential candidates and ensures the election of the future president of the country after the end of the transition period lasting between 130 days and until a new government is formed.[47] However,

47. See "The transition to democracy and peace in Myanmar" in chapter 5 (Opportunities for peace in 2016).

the winning party must deal with different obstacles, because the Burmese regime will continue to hold on to significant levels of power. Despite the election results, the Constitution of the country blocks Aung San Suu Kyi from being the next president of Myanmar due to the clause that rules out the office for people with foreign children. The Constitution also reserves the ministries of defence, the interior and foreign affairs for the Burmese Army, which are of enormous importance in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi invited the chief of the Armed Forces, President Thein Sein, and the speaker of Parliament to conduct a dialogue to form a government of national reconciliation. In December, the government and the NLD each formed their own committees to manage the transfer of powers between the governments and President Thein Sein said that the outgoing government would facilitate the transition. Despite the widespread recognition that the elections were the cleanest ever held in the country, one million Rohingya people were unable to exercise their right to vote given their stateless status after being excluded from the census and being prevented from self-identifying as Rohingya.

In fact**, one of the major sources of tension in the country was the situation of the Rohingya population and the serious humanitarian crisis it faced throughout the year.** During the first quarter of the year alone, 10,000 Rohingya people fled Myanmar as a result of the violence and persecution they suffered, in addition to the precarious living conditions as a consequence of their exclusion. Since 2012, when intercommunity violence began in Rakhine State, 140,000 Rohingya people have been forcibly displaced. The situation was especially grave for the thousands of people left adrift in the Andaman Sea when the government of Thailand conducted an operation against human trafficking in May that prevented the displaced population from reaching the country. Amnesty International reported that hundreds or thousands of displaced people may have died in their flight from Myanmar as a result of Thai persecution and the conditions they have suffered in human trafficking networks. The United Nations stressed that 400,000 Rohingya people in Myanmar were in urgent need of humanitarian aid.

The party of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi won the general elections in Myanmar, obtaining 79% of the seats up for election

Philippines (Mindanao)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, factions of the armed groups MILF and MNLF

Summary:
The armed conflict in Mindanao stretches back to the seventies, when Nur Misuari established the MNLF to ask Manila for self-determination for the Moro pople, an array of Ismalised ethnic and linguistic groups that have been organised politically in independent sultanates since the 15th century. The MILF, for strategic, ideological and leadership reasons, broke away from the MNLF at the end of the seventies. While the MNLF signed a peace agreement in 1996 that planned for certain autonomy for the areas in Mindanao with a Muslim majority (the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), the MILF continued with its armed struggle, even if both parties started peace conversations in 1997 facilitated by Malaysia and reached a preliminary peace agreement in October 2012 and a substantial and sustained reduction in fighting between the MILF and the Armed Forces to practically irrelevant levels that meant the armed conflict was no longer considered as such in 2012. Nevertheless, the levels in Mindanao continued to be high due to the clashes between the Government and the BIFF (an excision of the MILF that is against the peace process), and also due to the sporadic armed incidents between the MILF and other armed groups operating in the country.

Although the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF remained under way, tension between both parties increased notably for two reasons. The first was linked to the difficulties in implementing the peace agreement, mainly due to the approval of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).[48] In this regard, **the MILF warned of the possibility of ending the disarmament and demobilisation process if a version of the BBL is approved that is distant from the letter and spirit of the 2014 peace agreement and the MILF's expectations**. This process began in June with a symbolic weapon-surrendering ceremony and should continue to turn in 30% of the arsenal after the BBL is ratified; another 35% once the new entity known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region takes possession of the government; and the final 35% once both parties have signed the peace agreement and implemented all its contents. The second factor that eroded trust between both parties and had an enormous political and social impact was the clash in late January between a special police corps and fighters belonging to the MILF, the BIFF and other armed groups in Mamasapano that killed around 70 people, 44 of them police officers. This was the greatest (and virtually the only) episode of serious violence in the last three years between the government and the MILF, which alongside the peace negotiations maintained a ceasefire agreement. The main objective of the special police operation was to capture two explosives experts: Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, of Malaysian origin, and Abdul Basit Usman. The first was killed during the operation and the second managed to flee, but died in Maguindanao in May during an operation in which the MILF actively participated. Faced with accusations of conniving with terrorist organisations or of the brutality with which it acted during its clash with the police, in March the MILF released a report on the events that accused the government of failing to previously disclose or coordinate a police operation that took place

48. See the summary on the Philippines (MILF) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

in its areas of influence. The MILF also accused the police command of shooting first and thereby of breaking the ceasefire agreement. Meanwhile, many called for the resignation of President Benigno Aquino for authorising the police operation while also pressuring him to end the peace process with the MILF. After several months of investigation, in late September the Department of Justice recommended filing criminal charges against 90 people (26 from the MILF, 12 from the BIFF and 52 from other armed groups and unaffiliated individuals) for their alleged participation in the aforementioned episode of violence, in which some sources sustain that around 1,000 people may have participated.

Meanwhile, the MNLF was not involved in any significant episodes of violence, but it did participate in some sporadic clashes with other groups like the MILF and the BIFF. In mid-February, for example, the police declared that the BIFF had set fire to several homes belonging to MNLF members during the temporary occupation of various parts of the municipality of Pikit (Cotabato province). Around the same time, some journalistic sources indicated that the founder of the group, Nur Misuari (whose whereabouts have been unknown since the siege of the city of Zamboanga in late 2013), had ordered his supporters to reorganise and rearm in the regions of Sulu and Mindanao before the government's offensive against groups that do not support the current peace process between the government and the MILF. Although some MNLF factions continued to criticise the same peace process, afraid that it could end up eclipsing or invalidating the 1996 peace agreement between Manila and the MNLF, Nur Misuari met with MILF representatives in Sulu in mid-November. Although no details of the meeting emerged, both parties recognised that some peace initiatives in the region were discussed and that there was agreement on holding a second meeting. The government welcomed this meeting, thinking that it contributes to rapprochement between the MILF and the MNLF and gives continuity and meaning to the Bangsamoro Coordination Forum, created in 2010 under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to discuss the differences between both groups and achieve better coordination and convergence between the negotiations that Manila is holding simultaneously with the MILF and with the MNLF. Finally, the MNLF faction led by Misuari declared that it had formally sent the United Nations Committee on Decolonisation its requests to recognise self-determination for the Moro people and its option for independence in the region.

Thailand	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:
Since Thaksin Shinawatra's began his term in office in 2001, he had been criticised by several sectors for his authoritarian style, his campaign against drug trafficking (which claimed over 2,000 lives) and his militaristic approach to the conflict in the south. However, the socio-political crisis affecting Thailand over the last few years escalated in 2006. That year, after a case of corruption was made public, mass demonstrations took place demanding Shinawatra's resignation and in September a military junta staged a coup that forced him into exile. Despite the approval of a new constitution in a referendum held in August 2007, the new government failed to reduce the social and political polarisation taking place in the country. It was in this context that a party loyal to Thaksin Shinawatra won the elections in December 2007. However, a series of violent incidents and the mass demonstrations against the government organised by the People's Alliance for Democracy (known as the "yellow shirt movement"), prompted the resignation of two prime ministers and the arrival in power in December 2008 of Abhisit Vejjajiva, a member of the opposition to Thaksin Shinawatra. Since then, there have been periodical mass demonstrations by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (known as the "red shirt movement", which supports the return of the former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra), demanding the resignation of the government and the holding of early elections.

Protests and criticism against the military junta continued because of its gradual institutionalisation and, according to some, its desire to remain in power, but the event that drew the most political and media attention was the detonation on 17 August of an explosive device in the Erawan Shrine, in Bangkok, a Hindu sanctuary usually visited by tourists, killing 20 people (two thirds of them foreigners) and injuring over 120. **The Thai government and various media outlets considered it the worst attack in the history of the country**. The following day, another explosive device blew up at a pubic ferry pier in Bangkok, though nobody was killed. No individual or organisation claimed responsibility for the attack, which generated contradictory and confusing information about the circumstances. In the days after the attack, the state security forces and bodies launched a large-scale operation in which they arrested 139 people and searched over 4,600 homes. In late September, the police closed the investigation, announcing that two detainees had confessed to committing the crime as a response to the government's offensive against human trafficking organisations. Previously, the fact that one of the two main people behind the attack was an Uyghur and that more than one third of the fatalities were Chinese had supported the theory of a possible link between the attack and the deportation to China of over 100 ethnic Uyghurs in July, but the police discarded this possibility and any chance that the attack was linked to international terrorism. However, the authorities did not rule out a link between the attack and the political crisis gripping the country for the last two years, which caused the coup d'état in 2014.

The year witnessed much criticism (from NGOs, governments and even international bodies) of the precarious human rights situation, the military junta's

alleged attempts to remain in power and the government's policies to repress and control the opposition. With regard to the last point, in April Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha announced the withdrawal of martial law and the entry into force of Article 44 of the interim Constitution, which among other things empowers the prime minister to take action without authorisation from the legislative branch when he deems it necessary for the national security of the country. In this regard, some critical organisations, including the United Nations, declared that Article 44 could be even more authoritarian than martial law, while others, like Human Rights Watch, urged the countries near Thailand to apply concerted pressure on the current military junta to stop what it sees as a drift towards a dictatorial regime. Another factor that set off major protests was the **National Legislative Assembly's approval of an impeachment process in January against former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, which carries a five-year disqualification from practicing politics, and the subsequent beginning of her trial for negligence in connection with government subsidies for the rice farming sector**, in which she pleaded not guilty. If convicted, she could face up to 10 years in prison. Meanwhile, a few days after the attorney general filed charges against the former prime minister, the National Anti-Corruption Commission prosecuted 250 former MPs for their role in passing an amendment to the Constitution of 2007, which could bar them from political activity for five years. In the last decade, around 150 members of political parties close to the Shinawatra family have been forbidden to practice politics, including four people who have served as heads of government. In March, three brothers of former Princess Srirasmi Suwadee, who is divorced from Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn and was stripped of her royal title in December 2014, were imprisoned after they were sentenced to five and a half years for insulting the monarchy. Moreover, the police arrested three opposition leaders of the organisation known as the "red shirts", traditional sympathisers of the governments of Yingluck and Thaksin Shinawatra.

Many criticised the Thai military junta for trying to ensure that it remains in power and for hindering the democratic normalisation of the country

The military government also faced a great deal of criticism for taking several measures that some thought were aimed at ensuring that it remained in power and hindering the democratic normalisation of the country. In early September, the National Reform Council (NRC) rejected the proposed new Constitution created over the course of several months by the Constitution Drafting Committee, forcing the junta to appoint a new body in charge of creating a new draft of the Constitution and postponing new general elections by several months. If the proposed Constitution had been approved, a referendum would have been held in January to ratify it. Some analysts believe that while there were several provisions in the draft of the Constitution that aroused controversy, its rejection was orchestrated by the junta itself. Evidence of this was the fact that many military members of the NRC opposed the text. In October, the government appointed the 200 members of a new body to replace the defunct National Reform Council and formed a committee in charge of creating a new draft of the Constitution that should be ready by 1 April 2016. Faced with criticism regarding this issue, Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha had to publicly repeat his promise to restore democracy to Thailand, but refused to dismantle the National Council for Peace and Order until he has completed the process of reforms that he deems necessary.

2.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Moldova (Transdniestria)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Moldova, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria, Russia

Summary:
Transdniestria, a territory covering 4,000 km2 with a half million mostly Slavic inhabitants, legally under the sovereignty of Moldova but virtually independent, has been the scene of an unresolved dispute about its status since the 1990s. The conflict emerged in the final days of the USSR, when fears increased in Transdniestria about the possible unification of independent Moldova and Romania. The region declared independence from Moldova, which proclaimed its own independence in 1991. Escalating incidents led to armed conflict in 1992. A ceasefire agreement was reached that same year, putting an end to a war that lasted several months. Russian troops stationed in Transdniestria since Soviet times became peacekeeping troops, while Moldova called for their departure in subsequent years. After the war ended, both parties have intermittently negotiated to resolve the dispute. The armed conflict that began in Ukraine in 2014, a country bordering Transdniestria, raised alarms about potential impacts on Moldova and its own unresolved conflict.

The unresolved conflict between Moldova and the region of Transdniestria worsened, partially due to contagion from the war in Ukraine against a general backdrop of heightening political and social tension in Moldova and the fall of its government at the end of the year. The authorities of Transdniestria and **Russia denounced the blockade of the Russian forces present in Transdniestria since the end of the war in the 1990s, slamming measures taken by Ukraine and Moldova** in this regard (such as Ukraine's revocation of five military cooperation agreements in the second quarter, including one that allowed the passage of Russian troops through Ukraine to reach Transdniestria and practical steps taken by Moldova to restrict the entry

of Russian soldiers). The Transdniestrian authorities denounced the militarisation of the Ukrainian border, whereas Kiev denied the allegations. In turn, Russia conducted military exercises in Transdniestria in April with several hundred soldiers. Moreover, organisations from Transdniestria jointly expressed alarm at the situation in the region, urging Russia to act as a guarantor. The international crisis in Ukraine and the risks indicated by some media outlets and experts around the border between Transdniestria and the Odessa region of Ukraine were also projected onto the background. In contrast, the peace negotiating process remained active and the first high-level bilateral meeting between Moldova and Transdniestria took place in March, involving Moldovan Prime Minister Chiril Gaburici and the leader of the separatist entity, Yevgeny Shevchuk. Both sides agreed to give impetus to the dialogue. However, no significant progress was made during the rest of the year and the process was affected by political uncertainty in Moldova. Thus, in November **the Transdniestrian authorities stated that relations with Moldova had deteriorated** and complained that Moldova had dodged contact with Transdniestria, alleging that the Moldovan government was provisional. The secessionist government said that there were many problems between the parties to the conflict, including Moldova and Ukraine's decision to set up joint checkpoints on the Transdniestrian border and criminal proceeding against Transdniestrian officials.

Relations between the Moldovan government and the Transdniestrian authorities deteriorated, while Moldova faced an internal political and social crisis

As part of the domestic crisis in Moldova, Moldovan Prime Minister Chiril Gaburici resigned after a scandal in June and his government did the same shortly thereafter amidst heated controversy over corruption with the denouncement of mass fraud in three Moldovan banks prior to the parliamentary elections in November 2014. **The situation in Moldova worsened in September, with anti-government protests against corruption and bad political practices led by the civic Dignity and Truth Platform, which demanded the resignation of the president and several state agency officials, in addition to early elections**. The 60,000-person march on 6 September was described as the largest since the country won its independence, although participation dropped off in the months that followed. The president rejected any possibility of resigning, while former Prime Minister Vlad Filat, who held the office from 2009 to 2013 and supports the pro-EU coalition, was arrested in connection with the investigated corruption case in October. Demonstrations led by pro-Russian parties began in late September, alongside others organised by the civic platform. The various anti-government protests continued in the months that followed, with some sporadic violent clashes in the capital and other cities. Finally, in late October the Moldovan Parliament approved a motion of no confidence against the government of Prime Minister Valieriu Strelet (65 votes in favour out of 101 seats) with the backing of the Democratic Party (a member of the government coalition), the pro-Russian Socialist Party and the Communist Party. However, the Democratic Party ruled out any efforts to form a new government with the Socialist Party or the Communist Party. After the vote of no confidence, Parliament had three months to approve a new government or it would have to announce early elections. By late December, it had not yet been possible to reach an agreement. According to several analysts, new elections could lead to the rise of the Socialist Party and Our Party, both of them pro-Russian. Some experts warned of the pattern of territorial political fragmentation following the local elections in June during the year. This all added uncertainty to the conflict with Transdniestria. Furthermore, tensions also increased with the announcement of the **arrest on 13 November of suspected members of a paramilitary group that was allegedly planning an attack in the capital and in the northern city of Balti** in order to create an independent republic. Balti is the second-largest city in the country and most of the population speaks Russian. The police said that one of the suspects came from eastern Ukraine and that the group intended to release prisoners in order to recruit them to attack private companies and the homes of senior officials in Balti.

Russia and Caucasus

Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International
Main parties:	Government of Azerbaijan, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia

Summary:
The tension between the two countries regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh region, an enclave with an Armenian majority which is formally part of Azerbaijan but which enjoys de facto independence, lies in the failure to resolve the underlying issues of the armed conflict that took place between December 1991 and 1994. This began as an internal conflict between the region's self-defence militias and the Azerbaijan security forces over the sovereignty and control of Nagorno-Karabakh and gradually escalated into an inter-state war between Azerbaijan and neighbouring Armenia. The armed conflict, which claimed 20,000 lives and forced the displacement of 200,000 people, as well as enforcing the ethnic homogenisation of the population on either side of the ceasefire line, gave way to a situation of unresolved conflict in which the central issues are the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and the return of the population, and which involves sporadic violations of the ceasefire.

Tension linked to the unresolved conflict between Azerbaijan and the military forces of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh over the status and control of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts

rose considerably, with scores of people killed. **The escalation originated in the increasing ceasefire violations and the use of mortars and other heavy weaponry, which had a greater impact on civilians, including fatalities. According to various analysts, this was the first time since the 1994 ceasefire that the parties to the conflict have used heavy artillery**. International stakeholders like the co-mediators of the Minsk Group described the situation as unacceptable and unsustainable and seriously dangerous for the civilian population, while at the end of the year the secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation described it as very worrisome. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the EU issued alerts about the situation and called on the parties to lower the tension and move towards an agreement. In line with previous years, both countries continued with their arms race, largely supplied by Russia, and traded blame for thousands of ceasefire violations. All of this came amidst little progress in the dialogue process, as observed in the meeting between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Switzerland in December.[49]

January was the first month of the year with the most victims since the ceasefire in the 1990s, with more than 10 people killed and around 20 wounded. By the end of the first quarter, between 20 and 30 people had lost their lives. The government of Azerbaijan claimed to have killed around 20 Armenian soldiers in clashes along the Line of Contact in March. Meanwhile, Nagorno-Karabakh denounced Azerbaijani incursions into the territory under its control. Some analysts interpreted a statement by the OSCE Minsk Group in January as unusually direct criticism of Azerbaijan, urging it to honour the ceasefire. At various times during the year, like in January, July and September, Azerbaijan confirmed that it had downed Armenian drones, although Yerevan denied the allegations. The rotating chairperson-in-office of the OSCE, Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, voiced concern in early July about the unprecedented number of soldiers and civilians killed in the first four months of 2015. The situation escalated again in the second half of the year due to the use of heavy artillery. Incidents around the Line of Control killed dozens of people, including civilians. Armenia blamed Azerbaijan for the deaths of three civilians in locations in the region of Tavush in September, while Azerbaijan accused Armenia of deliberately setting up its firing positions near civilian areas. The authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh denounced shelling by Azerbaijani tanks for the first time since 1994. At various times throughout the year, **the OSCE urged both sides to agree on mechanisms for investigating ceasefire violations**. Furthermore, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) updated its list of missing persons, with 4,496 names (3,719 registered by the ICRC in Azerbaijan, 405 in Armenia and 372 in Nagorno-Karabakh). Moreover, Nagorno-Karabakh held parliamentary elections in May without international recognition. According to the local electoral body, turnout was 70% and the party of Prime Minister Ara Harutyunya (Free Fatherland Party) won 47.5% of the vote.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh was exacerbated by the rise in ceasefire violations and the use of heavy weaponry for the first time since the agreement of 1994

Georgia (Abkhazia)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Georgia, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia, Russia

Summary:
The precarious security situation in the region is due to the failure to resolve the underlying issues that led to armed conflict (1992-1994) between Abkhaz local leaders, backed by Russia, and the Georgian government, respectively defending the independence of the region and the country's territorial integrity, in the context of the break-up of the USSR. Following the war, which forced the displacement of some 200,000 Georgians, the territory of Abkhazia has functioned as a de facto state. Despite the existence of a ceasefire agreement, a negotiation process and international presence throughout these years (UN observers and Russian peacekeeping forces), the situation remained tense, fuelled by geo-strategical issues and aspects related to the balance of power in the Caucasus between Georgia and Russia. The situation escalated into an international war that began in August 2008 in South Ossetia, after which the Abkhaz forces consolidated their hold of Abkhazia and Russia formally recognised its independence. Frequent security incidents, the uncertain status of the territory, Russia's role and the cumulative impact of the two wars remain constant sources of tension.

Tension fell compared to 2014, when an internal social and political crisis in Abkhazia led to protests and a change in government that the outgoing president described as a coup d'état. Meanwhile, the security situation linked to the unresolved conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia remained stable. In the Abkhaz domestic political scene, the widespread demonstrations and level of confrontation of 2014 were not repeated, though there was a new political struggle that maintained a certain level of tension and uncertainty regarding its future evolution. Thus, **in the final four months of the year, President Raul Khajimba had to deal with demands for his immediate resignation from Amtsakhara, the party that praised him during the demonstrations in 2014 that ousted Alexander Ankvab** and gave rise to early elections. Amtsakhara and social organisations accused Khajimba of reneging

49. See the summary on Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

on his promises and misusing the economic support that Abkhazia receives from Russia. In late October, the party agreed to demand his resignation during its congress. However, Khajimba warned that he would not leave office early. Thousands of people demonstrated in support of Khajimba in the same month. Some analysts pointed to the risks of escalating tension, although Amtsakhara ensured that there would be no coup d'état.

Moreover, in connection with the unresolved conflict over the status of Abkhazia, Russia and the separatist entity continued to deepen their relations. Thus, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law the treaty of alliance and strategic partnership between Russia and Abkhazia that was achieved the previous year and harshly criticised by Georgia. In subsequent measures, both sides signed a border agreement in February and initialled a memorandum of mechanisms for a coordinated foreign policy in March. Moreover, Russian General Anatoly Khrulev, the former commander of part of the Russian Army that participated in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, was appointed the new chief of staff of Abkhazia. During the year some analysts pointed to the risks of future Russian attacks on Georgia, benefitting from the conditions of the partnership treaties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which pave the way for integrating the military units of those territories.

In August, the Georgian government condemned the deployment of around 500 troops of the railway section of the Russian Army in Abkhazia, especially given the precedent of the deployment of railway units in 2008 prior to the war. Georgia described this Russian action as provocative and aggressive and Moscow stated that they were there to work on repairs. As part of the increased international tension between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic institutions and countries, at mid-year experts warned of the pronounced militarisation under way in Russia's southern district, which controls the troops present in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (in addition to the Caucasus and Crimea). In any case, **the security situation remained stable and calm during the year, according to the co-mediators of the Geneva peace process**. Furthermore, the negotiating process for normalising Russia and Georgia's relations as part of the Prague dialogue remained active, with some progress made during the year despite the chronic tension. However, there was no significant progress in the peace process regarding the status of Abkhazia and neighbouring South Ossetia.[50]

South Ossetia announced its intention to hold a referendum on joining Russia, while Moscow lowered expectations about it

Georgia (South Ossetia)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Georgia, Government of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia, Russia

Summary:
The socio-political crisis in the region is related to the failure to resolve the underlying issues that led to armed conflict between the Ossetian and Georgian forces in 1991-1992. Since then, the two states have maintained their respective stances in favour of independence from or unification with Russia and regarding the territorial integrity of Georgia, while failing to overcome the impasse in the *de facto* independent region via negotiation. In turn, the internal conflict has been fuelled by tension between Georgia and Russia –related to geo-strategic and balance of power issues in the southern region of the Caucasus–, which in 2008 escalated into a brief war that began in South Ossetia and later spilled over into Abkhazia and areas under Georgian control. Following the last war and the forced displacement of most of the Georgian population that resided in South Ossetia, the Ossetian position was strengthened. Russia recognised its independence and maintained its military presence in the region. The issue of displaced persons from the 1990s and the second war, the status of the territory and sporadic violations of the ceasefire continue to be sources of tension.

The situation remained tense between Georgia and South Ossetia. Russia also became involved, with some incidents along the border, and no progress was made in the negotiations. Throughout the year, the co-mediators of the peace process[51] and the facilitators of the Incident Prevention Response Mechanism (IPRM) emphasised the stable situation predominating in the conflict zone, **despite episodes of tension around the installation of fences and other barriers on the South Ossetian side of the border,** like in previous periods. One cause of conflict was the installation of border signs by Russian troops in South Ossetia in July, framing a stretch of the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline in South Ossetian territory, which was denounced by Georgia and triggered some protests by Georgians near the border area and the capital, demanding more forceful responses to Russia. The situation was addressed in an emergency meeting of the IPRM. **Other incidents during the year included arrests and other obstacles to the freedom of movement, like in relation to farmland; various shootouts around the administrative border; and airspace violations**. Meanwhile, the United States and Georgia conducted military exercises in May, which were criticised by Russia, while Georgia criticised Russian exercises with South Ossetia in June that involved 1,500 troops and the use of drones.

50. See the summary on Georgia (Abkhazia) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).
51. See the summary on Georgia (South Ossetia) in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

In the political arena, South Ossetia and Russia signed a treaty of alliance and integration in March, which was blasted by the Georgian government and was in line with the agreement signed between Russia and Abkhazia,[52] though it went even further in some aspects of relations between Russia and South Ossetia. It covered economic, commercial, security, defence and other issues, and contemplated the integration of the customs services of South Ossetia and the Russian Federation. Moreover, South Ossetian security force units will form part of Russia's security and defence forces. International stakeholders like NATO also criticised the treaty, describing it as destabilising behaviour by Russia. Another **source of tension was the announcement made in October by the office of the presidency of South Ossetia regarding its intention to hold a referendum on annexation by Russia**. This announcement was made after a meeting that month between South Ossetian President Leonid Tibilov and the Russian president's representative for relations between Russia and the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Vladislav Surkov. However, Russia denied that it had addressed the issue of the referendum during the meeting and said that Russia recognised South Ossetia as an independent state, implicitly ruling out the desire for such a vote. In his presidential election campaign in 2014, Leonid Tibilov had promised to hold a referendum. Meanwhile, South Ossetia set up more obstacles for NGOs, including international entities like International Alert.

Russia (Chechnya)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	System, Identity, Government Internal
Main parties:	Federal Russian Government, Government of Chechnya, armed opposition groups

Summary:
After the so-called first Chechen War (1994-1996), which confronted the Russian Federation with the Chechen Republic mainly with regard to the independence of Chechnya (self proclaimed in 1991 within the framework of the decomposition of the USSR) and which ended in a peace treaty that did not resolve the status of Chechnya, the conflict re-appeared in 1999, in the so-called second Chechen War, triggered off by some incursions into Dagestan by Chechen rebels and attacks in Russian cities. In a pre-election context and with an anti-terrorist discourse, the Russian army entered Chechnya again to fight against the moderate pro-independent regime which arose after the first war and which was, at the same time, devastated by internal disputes and growing criminality. In 2001 Russia considered the war as being finished, without an agreement or a definitive victory, and in 2003 favoured a state of autonomy and a Chechen pro-Russian administration. However the confrontations continued in following years, although in the form of low-level violence. In parallel, there was a Islamisation of the Chechen rebel ranks while the insurgency was increasingly of a regional nature, especially affecting neighbouring Dagestan. Furthermore, the civilian population faces serious human rights violations, largely committed by local security forces.

Part of the insurgency of the northern Caucasus joined ISIS, including the top rebel leader in Chechnya

The levels of lethality associated with the conflict in Chechnya fell when compared to the increase the year before, while the recent pattern continued whereby the Caucasus Emirate insurgency shifted its allegiance to Islamic State (ISIS), the armed group prevalent in Syria and Iraq. With the change in loyalty of some northern Caucasian commanders, including Chechens, in late 2014 and early 2015 as a precedent, **the top leader of the insurgency in Chechnya, Aslan Byutukayev (also known as Khamzat), announced that he had joined ISIS in June. This change was in line with much of the rebel ranks, while the top leaders of the Caucasus Emirate remained opposed to ISIS.** That same month, an Islamic State spokesman announced the creation of the northern Caucasian branch of the armed group and of Caucasus Province (Wilayat al-Qawqaz), divided into several areas (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and another province uniting Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia). Dagestani rebel leader Abu Mohammed al-Kadari (Rustam Asilderov) was appointed the top leader of the entire Caucasian insurgency loyal to ISIS. In July, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov warned that no ISIS bases or militancy will be permitted on Chechen soil. People were arrested who were allegedly going to join Islamic State during the year. In December, a video made by this group, allegedly filmed in the Syrian city of Raqqa, showed the beheading of a Russian-Chechen man accused of being a spy for Russia. In the video, ISIS threatened Moscow with carrying out attacks on Russian soil. Kadyrov threatened the perpetrators of the beheading with death.

In addition to the insurgents' changes in loyalty, **low-intensity violent incidents continued to took place in Chechnya. There were reports of bomb attacks, special anti-terrorist operations and arrests of suspected combatants, as well as some forced disappearances**. Even so, the number of people killed (at least 15) and wounded (15) in the conflict still dropped compared to previous years (at least 52 killed and 65 wounded in 2014, 39 killed and 69 wounded in 2013, 82 killed and 92 wounded in 2012, 95 killed and 106 wounded in 2011 and 127 killed and 123 wounded in 2011, according to figures from the independent portal Caucasian Knot). Prominent events in 2015 included an explosion that killed three people near a dam close to Grozny in February, after which around 100 people were arrested and interrogated. In early October, three combatants were killed and three agents were wounded in a special operation in a district in Grozny. The Chechen president claimed that those killed had been trained in Syria and were preparing serious attacks. Meanwhile, the authorities continued applying pressure on the Salafist Muslim population, including arrests and searches of mosques. In turn, two

52. See the summary on Georgia (Abkhazia) in this chapter.

Sufi mausoleums were set on fire in November, and some local activists interpreted the attacks as a reaction by Salafist groups to repression against their community. Moreover, tension increased between the Chechen and federal authorities. The Chechen president authorised the security forces to shoot and kill non-Chechen security agents operating in Chechnya without local authorisation. This announcement came shortly after the killing of a Chechen man by federal police officers in the capital, Grozny, in April. Furthermore, a former senior Chechen security force official, Zaur Dadayev, the second-highest ranking member of the Chechen ministry of the interior's Server Battalion, was arrested in Ingushetia in March along with other Chechen citizens in conjunction with the killing of Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov in Moscow in February. Kadyrov defended Dadayev, calling him a "patriot". **Meanwhile, the atmosphere of serious human rights violations committed by President Kadyrov's regime continued, as persistently reported for years by local and international human rights organisations**. Among other events, the headquarters of the Local Committee against Torture suffered attacks in the capital. A women's rights activist was kidnapped near Grozny in October and later released. In a shadow report released for the CEDAW Committee in October, the NGOs Russian Justice Initiative and the Chechnya Advocacy Network denounced the violations of women's rights in the northern Caucasus, including in Chechnya.[53]

Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	System, Identity, Self-government Internal
Main parties:	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, armed opposition groups

Summary:
The violence and instability that characterise the Federal Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria are related to the armed groups that since the turn of the 21st century have been fighting against Russian presence and defending the creation of an Islamic emirate, along with other armed movements in the North Caucasus, and reflecting the regionalisation of the violence that affected Chechnya in the 1990s. The network of groups that operates in Kabardino-Balkaria, Yarmuk, began operations in 2004 although it was in 2005 when it began to show its offensive capability, with several simultaneous attacks on the capital that claimed dozens of lives and led in turn to the intensification of the counter-insurgent operations of the Russian and local authorities. Periodical insurgent and counterinsurgent attacks are launched, the extortion of the civilian population is carried out by rebel forces and human rights violations are committed by the armed forces. Since 2012 insurgent violence has been declining. There are also underlying tensions linked to the influence of religious currents not related to the republic, problems of corruption and human rights violations, and the disaffection of the local population towards the authorities

The low-intensity violence affecting Kabardino-Balkaria due to the conflict between the Islamist insurgency and the security forces decreased, although attacks and special operations continued to take place, leaving dozens of people dead, while schisms opened within the rebels. Part of the rebel ranks of the Caucasus Emirate active in Kabardino-Balkaria and other neighbouring republics pledged allegiance to the armed group Islamic State (ISIS), which is fighting in Syria and Iraq. However, in line with the top leader of the insurgency in the northern Caucasus, Aliaskhab Kebekov, who is very critical of ISIS, **the leader of the branch of the Caucasus Emirate in Kabardino-Balkaria, Zalim Shebzukhov, remained loyal to Kebekov and the Emirate and opposed to ISIS**. Meanwhile, in June ISIS announced the creation of Caucasus Province (Wilayat al-Qawqaz), divided into several areas (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and another province uniting Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia). **Episodes of violence included a special security force operation in the capital, Nalchik, in November, which claimed the life of a suspected ISIS leader in the republic, Robert Zankishiev**, and wounded his wife and a police officer. **Fourteen insurgents were killed in two special operations in the outskirts of the capital** in late November. The National Counter-Terrorist Committee said that the rebels were members of ISIS, while pro-Caucasus Emirate media outlets denied that they belonged to the organisation. Violent clashes and attacks occurred throughout the year. According to the toll kept by the independent portal Caucasian Knot, at least 47 people lost their lives in 2015, figures similar to those from the previous year, when at least 49 people were killed, although with considerably less impact in terms of the number of people wounded. The body counts marked a pattern of decrease in the armed conflict when compared to previous years (92 killed and 31 wounded in 2013, 107 killed and 49 wounded in 2012 and 129 killed and 44 wounded in 2011) in a republic with just over 800,000 inhabitants. However, the conflict heated up in the closing months of the year, with various violent incidents, leading to a certain call of alarm due to the risks of potential escalation in the short or medium term.

South-east Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Central government, government of the Republika Srpska, government of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation, high representative of the international community

53. Russian Justice Initiative and Chechnya Advocacy Network, *Submission from Russian Justice Initiative and Chechnya Advocacy Network Concerning the Russian Federation's Compliance with the CEDAW Convention in the North Caucasus*. CEDAW 62th Session, 13 October 2015.

Summary:
The former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inhabited by Bosnians, Serbs and Croats, was caught up in a war between 1992 and 1995 (during the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation) in which the country's Serbian political elite, with support from Serbia, as well as Bosniak and Croatian political figures, mobilised their respective populations and forces on the basis of ethnic issues and political plans for self determination which were mutually incompatible. The Dayton peace agreement led to the creation of a fragile state divided into two entities: the Republika Srpska (with a Serb majority and 49% of the territory); and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (with a Bosniak and Croatian population and 51% of the territory), both of which enjoyed wide-ranging powers, including military power. Political tension among the nationalist elites of the three communities, and between these elites and the international bodies with the mandate of overseeing the implementation of the agreements, along with the legacy of the impact of the conflict on the population and country, remain active sources of conflict.

Tension increased between the government and the authorities of the Bosnian Serb entity, the Republika Srpska, and between the latter and Euro-Atlantic institutions. At the start of the year, the Bosnian Serb ruling party SNSD began a boycott of Parliament in protest against the new state government, from which it was excluded following the agreement after the October elections between Bosnian and Croat parties and Bosnian Serb opposition parties. One source of tension revolved around threats of secession from the SNSD. Thus, in April the party adopted a resolution urging the holding of a referendum on the independence of the Republika Srpska in 2018 if the region does not receive greater autonomy. In July, the Bosnian Serb legislature approved holding a referendum on the jurisdiction of the Office of the High Representative and the state tribunals in the territory of the Republika Srpska. The announcement prompted criticism from the state and other countries and the Serbian government urged the Republika Srpska to reconsider its decision. In July, Bosnian representatives in the Parliament of the Bosnian Serb entity invoked a clause on protecting vital national interests in an attempt to block the referendum, but the Constitutional Court rejected their allegations. Even so, in September the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council affirmed that the plans for a referendum could jeopardise the rule of law in the country and the international community's High Representative Valentin Inzko stated that the referendum would violate the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995. In a context of rising political tension, in September state political representatives and representatives of the Bosnian Serb entity began EU-facilitated talks and reached an agreement for a package of judicial reforms, even though the Bosnian Serb authorities said that they would continue with their plans for a referendum. Moreover, **in December, Bosnian Serb President Milorad Dodik threatened that if state legislation to reform the Constitutional Court were not approved, all political representatives of the Republika Sprska would withdraw from all state institutions**. This warning came shortly after a court ruling on the unconstitutionality of the holiday commemorating the day that the Republik Srpska was created. Also during the year, there were disagreements and tension within the Bosnian Croat entity, including the departure of the social democratic party Democratic Front from the coalition government with the Bosnian party SDA and the Croat party HDZ in early June.

Meanwhile, **some violent incidents were reported during the year. For example, one police officer was killed and another was wounded in an attack on a police station in the city of Zvornik (Republika Srpska) in April**, allegedly carried out by an Islamist militant. The arrest of around 30 Bosnians in the Bosnian Serb entity in May raised alarm among the Bosnian political class, which warned of the risks that alleged terrorist attacks could be used as a way to hold the Bosnian population hostage. The Bosnian Serb authorities threatened to develop their own intelligence service. Regarding security, in July the ministers of the interior of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro stated that ISIS posed a real threat to the Balkan region, which would require regional cooperation from the security services. In October, the police of the Republika Srpska announced that they had broken up a terrorist plot to attack a hotel in a city in northeastern Bosnia. In November, two soldiers were shot dead in a suburb of Sarajevo in an incident whose reasons were unknown. At the end of the year, around 10 people were arrested who were suspected of having links to ISIS and other armed groups accused of planning attacks in the country. Regarding other sources of tension, some intercommunity incidents took place during the year. For instance, Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic was attacked with stones and other objects for participating in the ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Sbrenica, an incident that was criticised by Bosnian President Bakir Izetbegovic. Several hundred people also paid tribute to the Bosnian victims of Sbrenica in the Serbian capital, Belgrade. Vucic visited Sbrenica again in November. Moreover, the city of Prijedor, in the Republika Srpska, witnessed a rise in violent intercommunity incidents at various times of the year, which led to a meeting between representatives from different communities and the local authorities to find solutions and defuse the tension.

Macedonia	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:
Macedonia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 peacefully, in contrast to the wars that affected the former Yugoslavia in the 90s. However, the process of independence and the new constitution generated

grievances between the Albanian minority (23% of the population), considered as secondary citizens. In 2001, an armed conflict broke out, involving the Albanian guerrillas of the ELN of Macedonia –integrated in part by Albanians from Macedonia who fought alongside the KLA in the Kosovo war in 1998-99–, in demand of greater rights and a constitutional reform. The conflict lasted a few months and caused a hundred deaths. The Ohrid Peace Agreement of 2001, with international facilitation, led to a constitutional reform and decentralization laws. Despite the end of the conflict, in later years there have been outbreaks of intercommunal tension and latent tension elements related to relations between the state and the Albanian minority in Macedonia. The country also faces other challenges, including corruption and governance problems. From 2014 to 2015 the tension between the government and opposition increased with allegations of electoral fraud, excessive control of the media and the judiciary and police abuses, triggering large social mobilization.

Political and social tension rose in the country, with many anti-government protests alongside acts of violence committed by groups of former combatants. In the political and social arena, a crisis broke out in February when the political opposition headed by **the social democratic party SDSM began to show evidence of massive illegal spying by the authorities.** The opposition also denounced government interference in the judicial sector, the media and elections in the country, in addition to police brutality and corruption. It also **upheld its boycott of Parliament that it began in 2014 in protest of electoral fraud. Anti-government protests increased in the second quarter. At least 15 police officers and four other people were wounded in one of these protests in mid-May**. Pro-government groups also staged demonstrations in support of the prime minister. The rise in tension led to the resignation of the ministers of the interior and of transport, as well as the chief of the intelligence services. Negotiations began that were facilitated by the EU commissioner for expansion, Johannes Hahn, involving the leaders of the four main parties: the prime minister and leader of VMRO DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski; the leader of SDSM, Zoran Zaev; the leader of the Albanian party and government partner Democratic Union for Integration, Ali Ahmeti; and the leader of the Albanian opposition party DPA, Mendul Thaci. **In June, agreements were reached for a political transition period, the creation of an interim government, the departure of the prime minister in January 2016 and early elections in April 2016.** However, this was followed by months of disagreement over the materialisation and implementation of the agreement and the opposition set an ultimatum for 15 September or it would release recordings incriminating the government. The tension partially subsided in September, with progress made in the negotiations like the designation of the special prosecutor who was supposed to investigate the alleged case of massive spying in September and the opposition's decision to end its boycott and return to Parliament. However, the scenario remained fragile in the final months. The opposition temporarily cancelled its participation in the dialogue in mid-October due to the lack of agreements and obstacles in implementation, although some progress was later made in deals on electoral reform and the electoral commission, the opposition's participation in the interim government and other aspects. In any event, given the backdrop of fragmentation, the scenario is expected to remain fragile in the first few months of 2016.

The situation in Macedonia deteriorated in the midst of a serious political crisis that forced an agreement for an interim government, the departure of the prime minister and early elections in 2016

In addition to the political crisis, various acts of violence raised alarms and recalled the conflict in 2001 between state forces and the Albanian insurgency. **In April, around 40 gunmen attacked a police checkpoint near the village of Goshince (Albanian-majority Lipkovo municipality), near the border with Kosovo, and captured four Macedonian police officers, who managed to escape. The assailants claimed they were members of the National Liberation Army (NLA)**, which fought in the brief Macedonian War at the beginning of the 21st century and was disarmed and dissolved after the Ohrid Agreement. **The Macedonian Albanian political party and government partner DUI described the attack as provocative**, while a former NLA commander said that it was a false flag attack orchestrated by the government that may have used Albanian criminals in order to instigate conflict between the Macedonian and Albanian populations, coinciding with the internal political crisis in Macedonia. After the incident, **in May the police launched a special operation in the city of Kumanovo, described by the authorities as an operation to prevent an alleged terrorist attack and in response to the violent incident in April. The operation led to violent clashes for two days in a row that killed eight police officers and 10 suspected militants**, wounded around 30 people and destroyed many homes. Several of the fatalities were originally from Kosovo and were former combatants in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the National Liberation Army (NLA). Around 30 people were charged with terrorism, including people originally from Kosovo and Macedonia. The political opposition warned against possible manipulation of the operation in the midst the political crisis.

Serbia – Kosovo	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Government International[54]
Main parties:	Government of Serbia, government of Kosovo, political and social representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo, UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX

Summary:
The socio-political crisis between Serbia and Kosovo is related to the process of determining the political status of the region after the armed conflict of 1998-1999, which pitted both the KLA (Albanian armed group) and NATO against the Serbian government following years of repression inflicted by Slobodan Milosevic's regime on the Albanian population in what was then a province of Serbia within the Yugoslav federation. The NATO offensive, unauthorised by the UN, paved the way for the establishment of an international protectorate. In practice, Kosovo was divided along ethnic lines, with an increase in hostilities against the Serb community, whose isolationism was in turn fostered by Serbia. The territory's final status and the rights of minorities have remained a constant source of tension, in addition to Kosovo's internal problems, such as unemployment, corruption and criminality. The process of determining this final status, which began in 2006, failed to achieve an agreement between the parties or backing from the UN Security Council for the proposal put forward by the UN special envoy. In 2008, Kosovo's parliament proclaimed the independence of the territory, which was rejected by the Serbian population of Kosovo and by Serbia.

Social and political tension rose between Albanian and Serbian politicians in Kosovo and between the Kosovo Albanian government and opposition, with acts of political violence and intercommunity incidents, while the talks between Serbia and Kosovo made headway.[55] With regard to the political and intercommunity tensions, over 100 people were injured in clashes between Kosovo Albanian protestors and police in January as part of demonstrations against the controversial statements of Kosovar Minister of Communities and Returns Aleksandar Jablanovic (from the Serb List, a minor partner in the Kosovar government) following picketing and attacks against Serb pilgrims in Gjakova/Djakovica. **Jablanovic was removed from office in February, prompting stiff criticism from the Serb List, which began a boycott of Parliament**. Serbia joined in criticising the minister's dismissal. The Serb List ended its boycott in April after receiving guarantees that no unilateral steps would be taken against Serbian interests in Kosovo. However, tension remained around various issues on the political agenda. In July, the Serb List blocked the draft constitutional amendments to transform the Kosovar security forces (emergency response force) into an army, repeating the demand of four conditions raised during the formation of the coalition government: the creation of an association of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo, powers for the Kosovo Serb community to appoint a deputy director to the Kosovar intelligence service, assurance that the second-in-command of the Kosovar security forces is a member of the Serbian community and the cessation of privatisation in Serbian municipalities such as Brezovica and Trepca.

The Kosovo Albanian opposition demanded the withdrawal of the agreement on decentralisation and the association of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo, with protests and acts of violence in Parliament

The creation of the association of Serbian municipalities was one of the main issues of the year, which saw some progress in the dialogue process and caused tension and backsliding inside Kosovo. The agreement reached in August between Serbia and Kosovo to establish this association, which would guarantee certain levels of decentralisation, set off months of protests by the Kosovo Albanian political opposition, which demanded the withdrawal of the agreement and another deal delimiting the border with Montenegro. Following incidents in September, **the tension escalated in October with the shutdown of parliamentary activity by the opposition parties Self-Determination (Vetevendosje), Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and Initiative for Kosovo (Nisma). Their protest campaign included violent incidents and the repeated launching of tear gas by MPs inside the legislative chamber**. There were also clashes between demonstrators and the police. In mid-December, over one third of the MPs had been arrested for violent incidents. After one of the opposition leaders was arrested, a police station was attacked in October. To defuse the tension, in November the Kosovar president presented the agreement to the Constitutional Court, which decreed a temporary suspension until late December, when it ruled that the agreement was constitutional except for some principles that required changes. The Constitutional Court also rejected the opposition's appeals against a future tribunal on crimes committed by the Albanian armed group KLA, a body required by the international community, reluctantly accepted by the government and rejected by the opposition. Some intercommunity incidents also took place during the year, like attacks leaving several people wounded in North Mitrovica and Zubin Potok after a young Serb was stabbed in Mitrovica in April. In a joint statement, the mayors of the northern and southern parts of the divided city warned of the high instability.

54. The socio-political crisis between Kosovo and Serbia is considered "international" since although its international legal status remains unclear, Kosovo has been recognised as a State by more than a hundred of countries.
55. See the summary on Serbia-Kosovo in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

2.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

Egypt	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

Within the framework of the so-called "Arab revolts", popular mobilisations in Egypt led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak at the beginning of 2011. During three decades, Mubarak had headed an authoritarian government characterised by the accumulation of powers around the Government National Democratic Party, the Armed Forces and the corporate elites; as well as by an artificial political plurality, with constant allegations of fraud in the elections, harassment policies towards the opposition and the illegalisation of the main dissident movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The fall of Mubarak's regime gave way to an unstable political landscape, where the struggle between the sectors demanding for pushing towards the goals of the revolt, Islamist groups aspiring to a new position of power and the military class seeking guarantees to keep their influence and privileges in the new institutional scheme became evident. In this context, and after an interim government led by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the electoral triumph of the MB in the parliamentarian and presidential elections seemed to open a new stage in the country in 2012. However, the ousting of the Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, when he had just been in power for one year, opened new questions on the future of the country in a context of persistent violence, polarisation, and political repression and increasing control by military sectors.

During 2015, Egypt continued to be the scene of internal tensions, persecution against Islamist dissident groups and the secular opposition, human rights abuses and acts of violence that caused the deaths of dozens of people. **As in previous years, some of the most serious incidents of the year took place in January during the commemoration of a new anniversary (the fourth) of the overthrow of the regime of Hosni Mubarak.** Around 20 people were killed in clashes between protestors and security forces or after being shot by the police while participating in demonstrations. The deaths of a 17-year-old girl at a pro-Islamist demonstration in Alexandria and of the poet and activist Shaimaa al-Sabbagh during a peaceful march in Cairo, both due to police gunfire, caused particular indignation. In the middle of the year, between nine and 13 leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), an organisation that has been banned and billed as terrorist by the regime, were killed during a search operation in Cairo that the authorities claimed was aimed at thwarting a terrorist plot. Six other people died in the middle of the year during clashes between the security forces and supporters of the MB and of deposed President Mohamed Mursi. The campaign against the MB also continued in the judicial sphere, with new sentences handed down to members of the organisation, including its top leader, Mohamed Badie, and former President Mursi, who was issued the death penalty in May. The sentencing of the former leader on charges of espionage and of collaborating with foreign militias to assault prisons during the revolt against Mubarak in 2011 prompted expressions of concern and criticism from the UN, the high representative of foreign affairs of the EU and countries like Turkey. In this context, the MB repeated its call for the population to rebel against al-Sisi's government. According to some experts, the MB is facing an internal debate about the use of violence, which it officially rejects, in light of the government's campaign of repression, with groups calling for its limited use. Other analysts have stressed that in this context, MB sympathisers may be becoming attracted to armed groups operating in the country.[56]

Throughout the year, various human rights organisations also denounced many serious abuses. Local and international NGOs warned of the high number of people who had died in police custody or gone missing after being arrested. According to the Egyptian NGO Nadeem Center, 272 people died in police custody during the first year of the government of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and another 119 remained missing. At the end of the year, several police officers were sentenced for torturing and beating to death people allegedly linked to the MB in different episodes. At the same time, Amnesty International warned of the increase in capital punishment in the country (507 cases alone in 2014) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) cautioned of the rising use of sexual violence against detainees. Journalist associations also reported a significant increase in the number of journalists arrested in 2015. **Human rights associations and local NGOs also drew attention to the new counter-terrorist laws, approved in the country during the second half of the year following an escalation of violence in Sinai in July and considered a new tool of the regime to repress critical voices**. The legislation expands the police's powers to arrest and monitor, increases sentences of life imprisonment and death for crimes linked to terrorist activities and establishes a concept of "terrorism" that is considered ambiguous and may be used for political purposes. The legislation also includes a controversial provision that penalises the dissemination of information on counter-terrorism operations that contradicts the official version, as related to the death toll for example. In this context, the parliamentary elections that had been initially scheduled for March,

Local and international human rights organisations denounced abuses by the Egyptian security forces, deaths in police custody and the use of sexual violence against detainees

56. See the summary on Egypt (Sinai) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

but were postponed due to problems with the electoral law, were held at the end of the year. The rounds of voting in October and November had low turnout (28%, according to official sources) and were held amidst a boycott by the opposition. The pro-Sisi coalition "For the Love of Egypt" won all the seats allocated to party lists. The rest were divided against independent candidates. Therefore, it was expected that the new 596-seat Parliament would be largely favourable to al-Sisi. At least 80 former members of Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP) won representation in the new parliament. Finally, the United States decided to resume military aid to Egypt and give priority to cooperating with regional threats, despite the fact that a US State Department report found that the country has implemented laws and judicial actions that restrict the freedom of association and expression and that abuses committed by the security forces remain unpunished.

Iraq (Kurdistan)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Territory, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran

Summary:
Concentrated in the northern part of Iraq, the Kurds represent between 15 and 20% of the country's entire population. Since the creation of the state of Iraq and after the unfulfilled promises of an independent Kurdish state in the region, the Kurdish population has experienced a difficult fit within Iraq and suffered severe repression. In 1992, after the end of the Gulf War, the establishment of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq laid the foundations for creating the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The Kurds' experience with self-government was strengthened when Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled in 2003 and won recognition in the federal scheme embodied in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. Since then, different interpretations of the rights and responsibilities of each party have stoked tension between Erbil and Baghdad. The strain has mainly been over the status of the so-called "disputed territories" and control of energy resources. More recently, the Syrian Civil War and the development of the armed conflict in Iraq have affected the dynamics of this tension, rekindling discussion about the prospects of a possible independent Kurdish state.

The tension in Iraqi Kurdistan had multiple dimensions in 2015 and was linked to clashes between Kurdish forces and ISIS militiamen as part of the armed conflict in Iraq,[57] the struggle between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the central Iraqi government over issues of power and energy resource management and infighting among different political forces in Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdish forces played a prominent role in the fight against the armed group ISIS throughout the year in the northern part of Iraq. However, some analysts pointed out that the response to the threat of ISIS was fragmented, demonstrating intra-Kurdish divisions between different forces in Iraqi Kurdistan, since in practice combatants linked to the PDK and the PUK divided areas of influence and faced problems of coordination.[58] In this context, various stakeholders warned of the consequences of the international supply of weapons to Iraqi Kurdish forces and its potential for instability, since the lack of control and the monitoring of the delivery of these arsenals posed serious threats in terms of encouraging factionalism and divisions among Kurdish militias.[59] **As part of the fight against ISIS, tensions became clear between Iraqi Kurdish groups, especially the PDK of Masoud Barzani, the president of the KRG, and other Kurdish groups operating in Turkey and Syria like the PKK and the YPG**. This friction was visible in areas like Sinjar, where Kurdish forces expelled ISIS during the year and where the PDK and the PKK vied for influence over the local Yazidi population. According to reports, the PDK security forces also arrested several local leaders linked to the YPG, the PKK branch in Syria. Meanwhile, management of the security crisis raised tensions between the KRG and the Iraqi government, linked in part to information about a possible shipment of weapons directly to Erbil without authorisation from Baghdad. The United States processed a law aimed at authorising these transfers, but it was finally dismissed and Washington agreed that weapon shipments would be coordinated with the Iraqi central government. As in previous years, the dispute between Erbil and Baghdad was also centred on the management of oil resources. Starting in June, the KRG decided to unilaterally export oil from areas under its control, including Kirkuk, without the authorisation of the Iraqi central government, citing a lack of liquidity. In December 2014, Erbil and Baghdad had reached an agreement on managing oil revenue and allocating budgets to the KRG, but over the course of 2015, both parties accused each other of failing to comply with the terms of implementation of the deal.[60] During the second quarter, Turkey also introduced new elements of tension with regard to the KRG's relations with other Kurdish groups in the region and to the dynamics with Baghdad. Starting around mid-year, Turkish forces launched various attacks against PKK positions in Kurdish territory, demonstrating the KRG's dilemmas in its relations with Ankara.[61] Meanwhile, the entry of Turkish forces into northern Iraq in late 2015 (between 150 and 200 soldiers and around 25 tanks in the governorate of Nineveh), which may have enjoyed the tacit approval of the PDK, led to a new controversy with the authorities in Baghdad, who denounced it as

57. See the summary on Iraq in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
58. Joost Hiltermann, *Clearing the Landmines from Iraqi Kurdistan's Future*, International Crisis Group, 24 March 2015.
59. Maria Fantappie, "The Peshmerga Regression", *Foreign Affairs*, 14 June 2015.
60. Mohamed A. Salih, "Erbil-Baghdad oil relations swing between deal, no deal", *Al-Monitor*, 27 July 2015.
61. See the summary on Turkey (south-east) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

a violation of sovereignty and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from Iraqi soil.

Joining these sources of tension was the **infighting among various Iraqi Kurdish political forces, especially around the figure of Barzani and his perpetuation of power**. Barzani's term of office, which had already been extended by two years in 2013, expired in August 2015 with no agreement reached on how to resolve the future of the presidency, creating a situation of institutional ambiguity. The parties Gorran (Change) and PUK expressed misgivings that the leader would serve a third term. The political dispute prompted Prime Minister Nerchivan Barzani, the president's nephew, to announce a government shakeup, which led to the exclusion of ministerial positions that had thus far been held by the Gorran party. Meanwhile, demonstrations were staged against the Kurdish government. Though initially due to problems linked to payment for civil servants, the protestors' demands later expanded to include Barzani's resignation. In this context, the security forces arrested dozens of people and at least two people lost their lives in incidents that occurred during the demonstrations. In the midst of these dynamics of tension in Iraqi Kurdistan, Barzani, who in practice has continued to serve as president of the KRG, insisted on his political project to sponsor a referendum on independence, as he announced in 2014. In statements made to the press during 2015, Barzani said that this goal had been postponed due to the need to focus on security issues and the fight against ISIS, but it was still on the agenda. Along these lines, in December Barzani instructed the PDK to work with other parties from Iraqi Kurdistan to find the mechanisms to hold the referendum.

Israel – Syria, Lebanon	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	System, Resources, Territory International
Main parties:	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah (party and militia)

Summary:
The backdrop to this situation of tension is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its consequences in the region. On the one hand, the presence of thousands of Palestinian refugees who settled in Lebanon from 1948, together with the leadership of the PLO in 1979, led Israel to carry out constant attacks in southern Lebanon until it occupied the country in 1982. The founding of Hezbollah, the armed Shiite group, in the early 1980s in Lebanon, with an agenda consisting of challenging Israel and achieving the liberation of Palestine, led to a series of clashes that culminated in a major Israeli offensive in July 2006. Meanwhile, the 1967 war led to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, which together with Syria's support of Hezbollah explains the tension between Israel and Syria. Since 2011, the outbreak of the armed conflict in Syria has had a direct impact on the dynamics of this tension and on the positions adopted by the actors involved in this conflict.

During 2015, the international tension between Israel, Syria and Lebanon broke out in various acts of violence, mainly in the border areas, causing the deaths of over 10 people. **The most serious incidents came at the beginning of the year and were described as the greatest escalation of violence between Israel and the Shia militia Hezbollah since the war between them in 2006**. The hostilities began when an Israeli air strike killed six Hezbollah militiamen and an Iranian general in the Syrian-controlled area of the Golan Heights, in the governorate of Quneitra. The Iranian general was a member of the Republican Guard and according to the official Iranian version, he was in Syria to provide assistance to the forces of the Damascus regime. Hezbollah's casualties included a senior official of the Shia organisation and the son of a leader killed in 2008, allegedly in an Israeli action. According to Israeli sources, the group was planning attacks against Israel. In previous months, the leader of Hezbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, had warned that his forces were prepared to respond to continuous Israeli attacks on Syrian territory that the Israeli authorities claimed were aimed at curbing weapon transfers to the Lebanese group. Hezbollah responded to the Israeli attack in the days that followed, leading to exchanges of fire in the border area that killed two Israeli soldiers in late January. Seven other soldiers were wounded in an attack for which Hezbollah claimed responsibility. The Israeli reprisals after this last attack later led to the death of a Spanish soldier with the UN mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in the Shebaa farms area. Despite this rise in violence, in the weeks that followed it became clear that neither Israel nor Hezbollah was interested in fanning the flames of confrontation.

Early in the year, incidents in the border area between Israel, Lebanon and Syria killed around 10 people in the greatest escalation of violence between Israel and Hezbollah since 2006

Other incidents were reported throughout the year, including an Israeli attack on an alleged Hezbollah weapons convoy in the border area between Syria and Lebanon, an attack by a group of Israeli Druze on an Israeli ambulance transporting wounded Syrians that killed one of them (the tension in the area had intensified after al-Nusra Front besieged a Druze community in neighbouring Syria) and an Israeli attack in the Golan Heights area of Syria in August in response to the launch of missiles against an Israeli community nearby. **Near the end of the year, the tension between the parties escalated again after an air strike in Damascus killed Samir Qantar, a senior Hezbollah official, in an incident blamed on Israel**. The Israeli government did not confirm or deny its responsibility for the attack. However, senior Israeli officials hailed the death of the Hezbollah leader. Qantar had spent 30 years in

an Israeli prison after being given three life sentences for killing two Israeli men and one girl in 1979, when he was 16 years old and a member of the Palestine Liberation Front, and was released as part of a prisoner exchange agreement between Israel and Hezbollah in 2008. Hezbollah leaders promised to avenge Qantar's death. Shortly after his death, three missiles launched from Lebanon hit northern Israel, with no reports of damage or casualties.

Lebanon	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Hezbollah (party and militia), political and social opposition, armed groups ISIS and al-Nusra Front

Summary:
The assassination of the Lebanese prime minister, Rafiq Hariri, in February 2005 sparked the so-called "Cedar Revolution" which, following mass demonstrations, forced the withdrawal of the Syrian Armed Forces (present in the country for three decades), meeting the demands of Security Council resolution 1559, promoted by the USA and France in September 2004. The stand-off between opponents of Syria's influence (led by Hariri's son, who blamed the Syrian regime for the assassination) and sectors more closely linked to Syria, such as Hezbollah, triggered a political, social and institutional crisis influenced by religious divisions. In a climate of persistent internal political division, the armed conflict that broke out in Syria in 2011 has led to an escalation of the tension between Lebanese political and social sectors and to an increase in violence in the country.

In keeping with the trend in recent years, during 2015 Lebanon was affected by the interconnection of the dynamics of armed conflict in neighbouring Syria, which involved various acts of violence in the country, as well as a political standstill that led to growing demonstrations among the population. **The violence occurred in multiple incidents throughout the year, notably the double suicide attack in November in the Burj al-Barajneh district of Beirut, a Shia-majority suburb considered a Hezbollah stronghold. At least 43 people were killed and over 200 were wounded in the attack, for which the armed group ISIS claimed responsibility**. The attack came one day before the attacks in Paris and was interpreted as Hezbollah's punishment for its involvement in the war in Syria and its support for Bashar Assad's regime. In January, another double suicide attack in a predominantly Alawi pro-Damascus part of Tripoli had killed nine people in an action carried out by al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda's branch in Syria. In December, another suicide attack during a tracking operation in the same city claimed three people's lives. In addition to attacks of this kind, multiple acts of violence took place in border areas throughout the year, including in Arsal and Raas Baalbek, which caused many fatalities. Lebanese military forces played a growing role in clashes with armed Syrian factions and reinforced their deployment in the border zone to block penetration by ISIS and perform other tasks. Meanwhile, Hezbollah continued to play a prominent role in battles along the northwestern frontier and in areas like the Bekaa Valley, one if its main areas of influence, where it fought with ISIS and al-Nusra Front, and continued fighting alongside Bashar Assad in Syria in areas like the Qalamoun mountains, considered a key supply route for Syrian armed opposition groups. The fighting in Zabadani in this area was one of the main sources of armed conflict in Syria in 2015.[62] Amidst the hostilities, at the end of the year Lebanon exchanged prisoners with al-Nusra Front, mediated by Qatar, which allowed the release of 16 Lebanese soldiers who remained in custody since August 2014 when they were captured in Arsal. Lebanon released 13 people in exchange, including the ex-wife of the head of ISIS.

In November, a double suicide attack in a Shia neighbourhood in Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold, caused the deaths of over 40 people in an action for which ISIS claimed responsibility

The political situation continued to be characterised by the institutional vacuum in the office of the presidency, which has been vacant since Michel Suleiman resigned in May 2014. The different attempts to achieve a consensus throughout the year failed, with voting for the office declared invalid due to a lack of quorum. While the channel of dialogue remained open among the various political forces (the national dialogue initiative held many meetings over the course of the year) and rival factions like Hezbollah and the Future Movement resumed talks after three years of gridlock, no progress was made in key areas and the Lebanese population demonstrated to express its growing concern and fatigue with the impasse of the political class. **One of the catalysts of the popular demonstrations was the waste management crisis in Beirut, which sparked mass protests about the problems in providing service that went on to denounce the inaction, nepotism and corruption of the political class**. In August, the peaceful protests resulted in violence that wounded demonstrators and police and led to several arrests. The Lebanese authorities took some measures but were unable to stop the protests, which brought together thousands of people from across the political spectrum, including the You Stink movement, created in August, which played a key role. This movement questioned the legitimacy of some of the participants in the political dialogue and demanded new elections, thereby challenging Parliament's decision to extend its mandate until 2017.

62. See the summary on Syria in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Palestine	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	PA, Fatah, al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades armed group, Hamas and its armed wing Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Salafist groups

Summary:
The disagreements between the various Palestinian sectors in recent decades have mainly featured secular nationalist groups (Fatah and its armed wing al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, PFLP, DFLP) and religious groups (Hamas and its armed wing Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigade, Islamic Jihad). This confrontation is the result of a power struggle to control the Palestinian territories, which, in turn has produced different approaches in terms of relations with Israel. Having controlled Palestinian politics for many years, the Fatah movement led by Yasser Arafat and later by Mahmoud Abbas faced accusations of corruption and of failing to defend Palestinian interests in the peace process, which led to Hamas' victory in the January 2006 elections. This situation triggered a dialectical and armed struggle between the two groups for the control of political institutions and, above all, the security forces. In 2011 Hamas and Fatah announced a reconciliation agreement. However, the discrepancies between the two groups have continued, complicating the task of forming a government of national unity. Changes in the region within the framework of the Arab revolts have also had a relevant influence on the progress and setbacks in the reconciliation process, which Israel is openly against.

Tensions continued between the Palestinian groups Fatah and Hamas throughout the year, with no indications of effective reconciliation between both factions. In practice, despite the formation of a unity government in 2014, divisions persisted and no progress was made in organising presidential and legislative elections as envisaged in the reconciliation agreement known as the Beach Refugee Camp Agreement. Furthermore, in May 2015, **Amnesty International also released a report on the war in the Gaza Strip in 2014 that denounced Hamas for taking advantage of the situation of conflict to abuse opposition politicians. The NGO reported that the Islamist Palestinian group had summarily executed at least 23 people (at least six of them in a public action) and had arrested and tortured dozens more, including members of Fatah.** Amnesty International claimed that Hamas had used the conflict as an excuse to carry out these executions, even though some of the prisoners had appealed their death sentences and were waiting for the result. Later, in early July, Hamas reported that over the course of several days, over 200 of its militants had been arrested by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and denounced cases of torture. PA sources cited by the media claimed that the arrest campaign had affected around 100 people allegedly involved in plans to attack the PA. In September, Fatah accused Hamas of arresting over 40 sympathisers of the organisation in Gaza. Throughout the year, this deadlock persisted in key issues, like the payment of civil servants close to Fatah and Hamas, which led to some incidents in Gaza, including attacks on banking facilities, and threats against PA ministers. Despite Hamas' condemnation of these events, Fatah considered the group responsible for these incidents since the organisation continued to maintain a security structure in Gaza. In addition, various attacks by Salafist militias were reported during the year against Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which led the Hamas security services to carry out various arrests. Some of these Salafist militias support ISIS. In this context, the government based in Ramallah also criticised some of the Islamist group's actions, such as the execution of a member of a Salafist militia in Gaza charged with overstepping Hamas' jurisdiction. Overall, the questioning of Hamas stressed its insistence on maintaining structures similar to a parallel government in Gaza despite the reconciliation agreement that led to the formation of a unity government. Fatah and the PA were accused of marginalising Gaza in its policies and budgetary allocations, and even of deliberately delaying the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip in order to force the Islamist group to make political concessions.

In this context**, at mid-year confusing reports circulated about the alleged resignation of the unity government headed by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah**. These reports were later denied, however, after prompting criticism from Hamas regarding what it considered a unilateral decision and therefore one opposed to the spirit of the 2014 agreement. The rumours about the resignation of the Palestinian government coincided with some media reports about indirect meetings between Israel and Hamas (mediated by Qatar and European diplomats) for the purpose of expanding on the truce reached in August 2014 after the escalation of violence in Gaza and achieving a longer-lasting ceasefire. However, during the last quarter of 2015 violence rose in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, affecting both Gaza and the West Bank.[63] This wave of violence was also interpreted by some analysts as a symptom of the Palestinian people's frustration with its leaders, as there was a sense that the era of President Mahmoud Abbas was coming to an end. During the second half of the year, friction between Hamas and Fatah became clear once again as part of the preparations to commemorate another anniversary of the death of Yasser Arafat in November. At the end of the year, Hamas' decision to appoint people to positions in the ministry of the interior in Gaza triggered new criticism from Fatah, which challenged its legitimacy to make these decisions. Hamas officials asserted that the new consensus government was not fulfilling its role in Gaza and also questioned the decision of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to make other ministerial changes, which it also described as a unilateral action. The differences between both groups persisted despite international mediation initiatives that were activated during the year, including one involving former US President Jimmy Carter as a member of the group called The Elders.

63. See the summary on Israel-Palestine in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

The Gulf

Bahrain	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:
The popular uprisings that spread across countries in the Maghreb and Middle East in 2011 also had an impact on Bahrain. Ruled since the 18th century by the al-Khalifa and part of the British protectorate territories from 1861 to 1971, the country formally became a constitutional monarchy in 2002. The family in power is of Sunni faith, unlike most of the country's population, which is of Shiite faith and which denounces systematic policies of discrimination. Internal tensions, which had increased in recent years, turned into open protest from February 2011. Demands for political and social reforms were met by the government with economic incentives and offers of political dialogue, but also with the repression and persecution of government opponents. The threat to the stability of the region led to the intervention of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which sent troops to the country. The situation in Bahrain has fuelled the confrontation between Iran and the Gulf countries (especially Saudi Arabia) and is of special concern to the USA, whose Fifth Fleet is stationed in the archipelago.

Throughout 2015, the situation in Bahrain continued to be characterised by **opposition protests, attacks against the security forces, arrests and convictions of dissidents and critics on an array of charges, the dismantling of alleged insurgent cells plotting an attack in the country and growing tension with Iran.** As in previous years, demonstrations by critical groups coincided with major events like the fourth anniversary of the revolt against the regime in Manama in February and the new edition of Formula 1 in April. In some cases, these protests led to violence. Actions were also taken against the security forces, like the bomb attack that killed two police officers and left various people wounded in late July in Sitra and the bomb attack in the city of Karaba in August, which killed one police officer and injured seven other people. A similar attack hit a police station in Khamis in September, though no victims were reported, while another in Manama wounded two police officers in March. Throughout the year, the Bahraini authorities announced the arrest of many people accused of putting the security of the country at risk or of alleged involvement in preparing attacks, many of which were stripped of their nationality as punishment. The authorities also reported that explosives were seized. In this context, especially during the second quarter, Manama ensured that many of the people arrested for conspiring and attempting to destabilise the country had ties to Iran. The Bahraini authorities denounced that Iran was trying to interfere in its internal affairs and some senior officials, like the foreign minister, accused Tehran of sponsoring terrorist activities. The escalating bilateral tension prompted complaints and recriminations that were carried into the diplomatic sphere. This drift was due to the intensification of regional tensions, which became evident in various issues, such as the alignment with opposing sides in the armed conflict in Yemen. Bahrain joined the international coalition led by Saudi Arabia to combat the Houthis, considered allies of Iran[64]. The Bahraini authorities also announced the dismantling of an alleged cell that intended to form a branch of ISIS in the country.

The internal tension in Bahrain was also reflected in the many arrests and convictions of representatives of the political opposition, especially of the Shia al-Wefaq party, as well as human rights activists, detainees and people prosecuted for offences such as insulting the country's institutions, inciting the overthrow of the regime, discrediting the authorities, insulting the king or spreading false reports. **The detainees include human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, some former MPs, senior officials of al-Wefaq and its top leader, Sheikh Ali Salman. His arrest in late 2014 sparked demonstrations in the months that followed and led to some clashes with the police in which scores of people were injured and over 100 arrested.** The leader of al-Wefaq was charged with promoting disobedience, inciting hatred and insulting the authorities and was sentenced to four years in prison in June. Ali Salman was listed as a prisoner of conscience by international NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) and several UN experts voiced qualms about the trial against him. At the end of the year, HRW also published a report denouncing the abuse and torture of detainees in Bahrain. The situation in this Gulf country provoked expressions of concern from the European Parliament, which in July approved a declaration urging a ban on the exportation of tear gas and other equipment for the security forces of Bahrain. However, in June the United States decided to resume exporting weapons to the country amidst criticism from various NGOs. The export of arms to Bahrain had been suspended since 2011.

Iran (north-west)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PJAK, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Iraq

Summary:
Despite the heterogeneous and multi ethnic nature of Iran, the minorities that live in the country, including the Kurds, have been subjected to centralist, homogenisation policies for decades and have condemned discrimination by the authorities of the Islamic Republic. In this context, since 1946, different political and armed groups of Kurd origin have confronted Tehran government in an attempt to

obtain greater autonomy for the Kurd population, which is concentrated in the north-western provinces of the country. Groups such as the KDPI –Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran– and Komala headed this fight for decades. Since 2004, the Free Life of Kurdistan Party (PJAK) has gained a protagonist role in the conflict with Tehran. Its armed wing, the East Kurdistan Defence Forces, periodically confronts the Iranian forces, in particular members of the Revolutionary Guard.

The tension between the Iranian government and the Kurdish armed group PJAK intensified in 2015 compared to the previous year, especially during the second quarter, with **sporadic incidents that may have caused the deaths of over 20 people, although information on the body count was contradictory.** The violence cast doubt on the truce in effect between Iran and the PJAK since 2011. The most serious incident of the year took place in the town of Marivan in August, when an attack by PJAK militiamen on a military post may have killed 20 Iranian soldiers, according to the armed group. The Iranian authorities acknowledged the existence of the attack, but denied the number of fatalities. According to some media reports, between five and 12 people may have been killed. In early September, the Iranian security forces claimed to have attacked PJAK positions in the town of Javanrud, in Kermanshah province, killing various militia fighters. The authorities gave no precise death toll for the insurgents. Media reports indicated that at least one Iranian soldier had lost his life in the hostilities. Days later, clashes between PJAK combatants and members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in the province of West Azerbaijan killed two militiamen and wounded five other people. Some incidents had taken place in this province during the first quarter of the year, specifically in the city of Mahabad after the death of a young Kurdish woman that an Iranian soldier had alleged tried to rape. This incident triggered anti-government protests in May. After the events in Marivan, in August, the PJAK came under criticism from other Kurdish groups like the KDPI and Komala, which thought that the action could fan the flames of an armed conflict and affect security in the region. Executions of Kurdish prisoners accused of belonging to dissident groups and/or having ties to the PJAK were reported throughout the year. Amnesty International described the process as unfair, stressing that Alkhani was executed while awaiting the outcome of his appeal to the sentence. After signing the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme,[65] President Hassan Rouhani paid his first visit to the Kurdish part of the country. However, some analysts underscored that with regard to the Kurdish issue in Iran, the regime's hardliners continued to prevail in the judiciary and the Revolutionary Guard. In this context, it is notable that at the end of the year, Iranian authorities of the parliamentary National Security Committee stated that the PJAK's sporadic attacks were not considered a serious threat to the security of the country.

Iran (Sistan Balochistan)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran), Jundallah (Soldiers of God / People's Resistance Movement), Harakat Ansar Iran, Jaish al-Adl, Pakistan

Summary:
Sistan-Balochistan is an Iranian province bordering with Afghanistan and Pakistan –the Baloch population lives on both sides of the border– and is of Sunni majority, contrasting with the rest of the country, where the Shiite arm of Islam is predominant. The zone is characterised by high poverty levels and is the scene of smuggling routes and drug trafficking. Since 2005 the group Jundallah (Soldiers of God) has led an insurgence campaign in the region. The organisation, which also calls itself the People's Resistance Movement, was established in 2002 and denounces Tehran's sectarian persecution. Jundallah states that its aim is to defend the rights, culture and religion of the Baloch people and denies having any ties with abroad, as the Iranian Government accuses it of having with the US, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and with the al-Qaeda network. In view of the possibility of destabilization in the region, Tehran has strengthened its control mechanisms and has sentenced dozens of Jundallah militants to death. The actions of the armed group have dropped since 2010 after its leader was captured and executed, but new armed groups with a similar agenda to Jundallah's have continued to operate in the area, with sporadic clashes with the security forces.

In 2015, the tension in the Iranian province of Sistan-Balochistan continued to be characterised by some armed actions for which the group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) claimed responsibility. **The most prominent incident of violence of the year took place in April, when the insurgent group's militiamen launched an attack that killed eight border guards in the city of Negur.** The incident was considered the bloodiest attack committed by the group since October 2013, when a similar event claimed the lives of 14 security force members. The local authorities claimed that the insurgents used grenade launchers and other weapons in their assault, after which they withdrew towards the Baloch area of Pakistan. The Iranian media reported statements from Pakistani officials allegedly acknowledging that they were unable to control the possible flow of militiamen over the porous Iranian border. In this context, Iran expressed its readiness to launch joint anti-terrorist operations with Islamabad. Iran and Pakistan signed a security agreement in 2013 that commits them to cooperate in combating terrorism, organised crime and activities that endanger the national security of both countries. In the months that followed, the Iranian security forces fired mortars from Balochistan, hitting the neighbouring Pakistani district of Pangjur, though no damage or victims were reported. Local

65. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in this chapter.

officials denounced these events as border violations, but the Iranian authorities responded by insisting that they would continue these attacks against militants threatening the country whether they were in Iran or Pakistan. The death of a senior official of Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan was also reported during the year. According to the official Iranian news agency, Mohammad Saeed Torkaman Zehi died after he was attacked by gunmen in the Pakistani city of Karachi in April. In March, Pakistani security forces arrested Abdul Salam Rigi, the leader of the Sunni armed group Jundollah and a relative of Abdolmalek Rigi, the former leader of the organisation, who was executed by the Iranian authorities in 2010. Abdul Salam Rigi was arrested when he tried to travel from the Iranian city of Taftan, on the border, to the Pakistani city of Quetta. During the year, Iran also denied information indicating that Balochi insurgents had captured 18 members of the Republican Guard. In 2015, some analysts noted that to the extent that Iran has been more actively involved in regional armed conflicts, some armed groups operating in Iran, like Jaish al-Adl in Sistan-Balochistan and Ahwazi Arab militants in Khuzestan, have tried to frame their separatist narratives as part of the regional struggle between Tehran and Riyadh and the dynamics of Sunni-Shia tension, intimating their willingness to receive foreign support. According to some experts, the group's social network accounts were increasingly aimed at an Arab audience with messages and videos, presumably with the intention of obtaining financial assistance from Gulf countries.

Iran – USA, Israel[66]	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	System, Government International
Main parties:	Iran, USA, Israel

Summary:
Since the Islamic revolution in 1979 that overthrew the regime of Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi (an ally of Washington) and proclaimed Ayatollah Khomeini as the country's Supreme leader, relations between the US, Israel and Iran have been tense. The international pressure on Iran became stronger in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when the George W. Bush Administration declared Iran, together with Iraq and North Korea as the "axis of evil" and as an enemy State due to its alleged ties with terrorism. In this context, Iran's nuclear programme has been one of the issues that have generated most concern in the West, which is suspicious of its military purposes. Thus, Iran's nuclear programme has developed alongside the approval of international sanctions and threats of using force, especially by Israel. Iran's approach to the conflict during the two consecutive mandates of the ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) did not contribute to ease tensions. The rise to power of the moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani, in turn, has generated high hopes of a turn in Iran's foreign relations, especially after the signing of an agreement on nuclear issues at the end of 2013. However, the rise to power of moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani has raised expectations about a turning point in Iran's foreign relations, especially after negotiations began on the Iranian nuclear programme in late 2013 and after a related agreement was signed in mid-2015.

The tension around Iran's nuclear programme fell significantly during the year, since **the parties involved in the international talks on Iran's atomic dossier managed to overcome the difficulties and reached a historic agreement in mid-July as part of a process begun in November 2013**. The process remained on schedule throughout 2015, with only a few delays. Successive rounds of negotiations were held between representatives of Iran and the G5+1 countries (the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, China and Germany, also known as the EU3+3) in cities such as Geneva, Zurich, Istanbul, Munich and Montreux during the first half of the year. In addition to the multilateral meetings, there were bilateral meetings between US and Iranian delegations throughout the period. The participants in the talks had until 31 March to reach a consensus on the framework agreement for negotiations, which was finally announced on 2 April, after eight days of marathon meetings in Switzerland. At this time and in the following months, it became clear that one of the main stumbling blocks to the negotiations was the pace of the schedule for lifting sanctions, since Iran argued for a total suspension once the agreement was signed, while the US and others advocated for lifting them gradually. The deadline for achieving a definitive agreement was set for 30 June. The negotiations went on for two more weeks before the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was finally announced in Vienna on 14 July. The text stipulates a 98% reduction in Iran's enriched uranium reserves and the dismantling of two thirds of the centrifuges dedicated to enriching uranium, measures designed so that any possible acquisition of a nuclear bomb by Iran would take at least a decade. Tehran denies that it has any such ambition. The deal includes more rigorous verification mechanisms, including the possibility of giving UN inspectors access to Iranian military facilities, although any such access would not be immediate and would be subject to approval by a joint commission. In exchange, the sanctions against Tehran would be lifted. Cancellation of the arms embargo was also approved, which would allow Iran to obtain conventional weapons in five years. The agreement was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council on 20 July.

Over the course of the negotiations and after the agreement was announced, the reticence and scepticism of some groups in both Iran and the United States became apparent, wary of a deal on the nuclear dossier and ready to boycott it. In the first half of the year, critical lawmakers in Washington threatened to impose new sanctions on Iran. US President Barack Obama had to threaten to use a veto on this and other similar occasions in the following months. US members

66. This international socio-political crisis affects other countries that have not been mentioned, but which are involved to varying degrees.

of Congress also signed an open letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warning him that any agreement signed by the Obama administration could be overturned by a new administration after the presidential election. In Tehran, a group of legislators sponsored a draft law requiring Iran to increase its uranium enrichment if the US Congress imposes new sanctions. As the date for signing the agreement drew near, Iran banned demonstrations supporting and opposing the agreement. Israel was also critical of the agreement, which insisted on the complete dismantling of the Iranian nuclear programme. **In March, Benjamin Netanyahu travelled to the United States and held a meeting with US lawmakers, most of them Republicans, explicitly asking them to block an agreement with Iran. The Arab countries neighbouring Iran also expressed reservations.** In an attempt to dispel these misgivings, the Obama administration called the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to a meeting at Camp David in order to provide assurance that the United States will ensure the security of the Gulf monarchies and military cooperation agreements. The tension generated by this issue was evident in the fact that only two monarchs attended the meeting at Camp David, with the Saudi king cancelling his trip at the last minute. Despite all objections, the agreement continued to develop and was formally adopted by the parties on 18 October, called "Adoption Day". The period for Iran to honour its obligations under the deal began from that day on. In the weeks that followed, Tehran announced that it was planning to send its enriched uranium reserves to Russia and Kazakhstan. At the end of the year, the IAEA concluded its investigation into the alleged military dimension of the Iranian nuclear programme, identifying activity pertinent to the development of an explosive nuclear device prior to 2003, with certain activities that continued between 2003 and 2009. Various analysts highlighted the nuclear agreement's potential impact on domestic politics in Iran, given the proximity of the elections to Parliament and the Assembly of Experts scheduled for February 2016. Finally, the signing of the agreement facilitated Iran's inclusion in the international diplomatic initiative pursued at the end of the year to try to promote a negotiated end to the crisis in Syria.[67]

Saudi Arabia	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including AQAP and branches of ISIS (Hijaz Province, Najd Province)

Summary:
Governed since the 18th century by the al-Saud family and established as a state in 1932, Saudi Arabia is characterised by its religious conservatism and wealth, based on its oil reserves, and its regional power. Internaly, the Sunni monarchy holds the political power and is in charge of government institutions, leaving little room for dissidence. Political parties are not allowed, freedom of expression is curtailed and many basic rights are restricted. The Shiite minority, concentrated in the eastern part of the country, has denounced its marginalisation and exclusion from the state's structures. The authorities have been accused of implementing repressive measures on the pretext of ensuring security in the country and in the context of anti-terrorism campaigns, the targets of which include militants of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). As part of the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, protests calling for reform and democracy received a repressive response from the government, especially in the Shia-majority areas of the country, and the authorities have denounced attempts at destabilisation from abroad, pointing to Iran. The country is the scene of sporadic armed actions by AQAP, and most recently by cells presumably linked to ISIS.

During 2015, Saudi Arabia underwent internal political changes (King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud assumed power after the death of his father in January) and became increasingly active in conflicts in the region, leading a military intervention in Yemen starting in March. According to estimates cited by the press, over 80 people had died on Saudi soil in the area bordering Yemen because of the armed conflict, most of them soldiers and border guards.[68] Saudi Arabia was also the scene of multiple acts of violence that claimed the lives of over 40 people, with different explosive attacks for which alleged ISIS cells mostly claimed responsibility. **The largest attack took place in May, at a mosque in the area of Qatif, in the eastern part of the country, where most of the Shia live. The suicide attack killed 21 people and wounded over 100.** A week later, another suicide attack on a Shia mosque in the city of Damman, the capital of the Eastern Province, claimed four lives. An alleged branch of ISIS calling itself "Najd Province" claimed responsibility for both attacks. Another attack of this kind against a mosque frequented by members of the security forces in the southern area of Abha killed 15 people in August. Another ISIS-linked group called "Hijaz Province" claimed responsibility for this attack. Three other people died in the last quarter of the year in a new suicide attack on a mosque in the southwestern city of Najran and two police officers were shot dead in Qatif. In this context, in late 2015 Riyadh announced the formation of an Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism composed of 34 Muslim-majority countries and based in Saudi Arabia for the purpose of coordinating operations. The alliance, which excludes countries like Iran, Iraq and Algeria, was viewed by some analysts as an attempt by the king's son, Defence Minister Mohamed bin Salman,

67. See the summary on Syria in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) and in chapter 3 (Peace processes).
68. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

to enhance his military leadership, especially since it had become clear that the Saudi adventure in Yemen would not end as quickly as predicted.[69] Throughout the year, the Saudi authorities also conducted a campaign to arrest hundreds of people accused of belonging to or presumably linked to ISIS. Over 400 people were reportedly arrested in July alone. Meanwhile, international human rights organisations like Amnesty International drew attention to the significant increase in the use of the death penalty in the country, reaching its highest level in the last two decades. During 2015, Saudi Arabia executed at least 157 people, some for crimes like drug trafficking (63 people were put to death for this crime in 2015, according to data collected by Amnesty International).

Serious incidents that took place in September as part of the pilgrimage to Mecca (an accident with a crane and a stampede) killed over 1,000 people and had a major impact, since the Saudi monarchy derives much of its political legitimacy from its custodianship of the Muslim holy sites. **Amidst questioning about management of the crisis in Mecca and other issues like the fall in oil prices, the security situation and the war in Yemen, some members of the royal family criticised King Salman and called for a change in leadership**. In two letters, a senior Saudi prince demanded the king's removal, stating that he was unable to govern and that his son Mohamed bin Salman was really leading the country behind the scenes. These letters called on 13 children of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, the founder of the Saudi state, to join together to remove the king and establish new leadership. The incidents in Mecca also heightened the tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as Tehran demanded accountability and called for an investigation into the events, in which over 400 Iranian pilgrims lost their lives. Both countries have already been facing off over their aspirations of regional influence and their support for rival groups in the armed conflicts in Syria and Yemen. The strained relationship between Riyadh and Tehran was also affected by the fate of the Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, an influential leader of the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Supreme Court upheld the death sentence against the cleric in October and his execution in early 2016 raised bilateral tension between both countries, as well as between Shia and Sunnis across the region. Finally, Saudi Arabia warily watched the rapprochement between the United States and Iran during the talks that let to the signing of the nuclear agreement in the middle of the year.[70]

Saudi Arabia was the scene of multiple acts of violence that claimed the lives of over 40 people in 2015, with alleged ISIS cells claiming responsibility for various bomb attacks

Yemen (south)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Territory Internal
Main parties:	Government, secessionist and autonomist opposition groups from the south (including the South Yemen Movement/al-Hiraak al-Janoubi)

Summary:
Yemen is the result of a problematic process of unification that in 1990 joined together the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the north and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the south. Since then, the balance of power has tilted northwards and President Ali Abdullah Saleh (leader of the former YAR since 1978) has held office ever since. The fragile political balance established with the creation of the new state led to the outbreak of civil war in 1994, from which the northern forces emerged victorious. The situation remains tense and in recent years demonstrations protesting against discrimination towards the south have intensified, especially concerning control over resources. There have also been clashes with the security forces. The southern protest movement is not structured around a single organisation but rather it is composed of groups with a variety of agendas, whose demands range from greater autonomy to secession, which are exerting pressure to achieve a new north-south relationship within the framework of the transition process that began in Yemen at the end of 2011.

Throughout 2015, the dynamics of tension in southern Yemen were directly influenced by developments in the rest of the country, which led to an institutional crisis and a significant escalation of violence, in addition to the armed intervention of an international coalition headed by Saudi Arabia in late March.[71] During the first few months of the year, faced with the advance of the Houthis from their stronghold in the north towards the centre and south of the country, as well as the political crisis stemming from the ouster of President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, pro-independence groups in the south decided to reject the authority of the central government. Therefore, after the non-formalised resignation of Hadi, who later claimed that he was still president and denounced the Houthis for carrying out a coup d'état, the Aden Security Council announced that it would no longer obey orders from Sana'a. In February, Hadi managed to escape from the house arrest imposed on him by the Houthis and sought refuge in the southern city of Aden. From there, he tried to bring together loyalists to face the northern militia, which has acted in collusion with parts of the circle of Hadi's rival, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. However, some observers

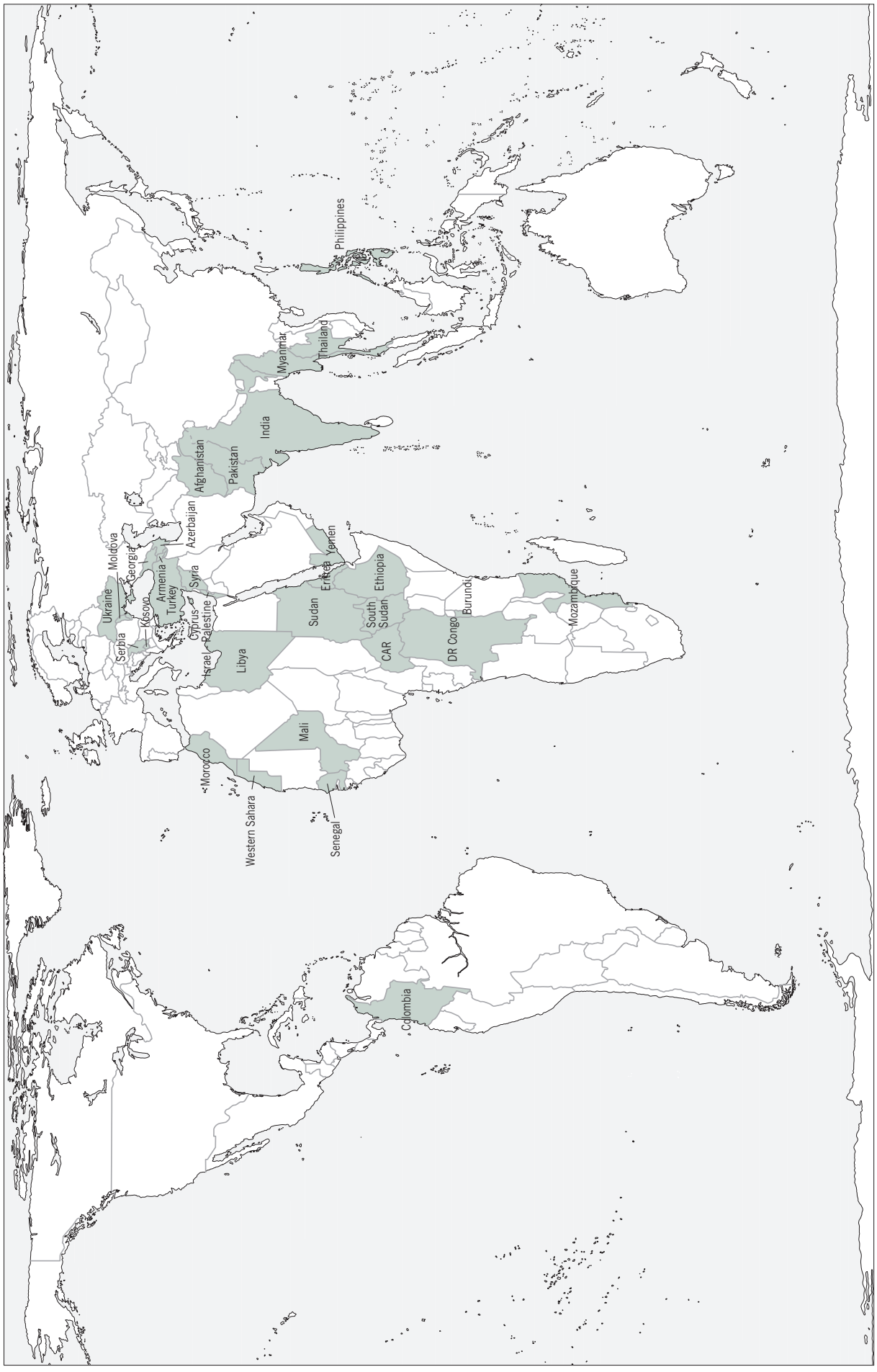
69. Bruce Riedel, "Saudi Arabia's mounting security challenges", *Al-Monitor*, 28 December 2015.
70. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in this chapter.
71. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

and analysts underscored that the level of support that Hadi could obtain in the southern part of the country was unclear, as even though he is from the south, he is considered a politician closely tied to the elites of the north. Faced with the advance of the Houthis and following an attack on the presidential palace in Aden, Hadi ended up seeking refuge in Saudi Arabia and demanded international intervention, which was led by Riyadh. In the following months, different southern groups organised to resist the Houthi militias and Aden became one of the key scenes of hostilities. With the support of coalition air strikes and ground troops, armed forces loyal to Hadi and southern militias managed to expel the Houthis and regain control over the strategic port of Aden at mid-year, although this control was contested during the second quarter by the actions of jihadist gunmen from groups like ISIS and AQAP.[72] In fact, AQAP took advantage of the instability in the country to expand its control in Hadramawt (southeast) and to launch attacks in other southern governorates like Abyan and Al Bayda.

In this context, media reports noted that the fighting with the Houthis was providing military experience to the young people of the south, many of which present themselves as members of the southern resistance and flaunt southern emblems from the time before the unification of Yemen in 1990. Other analysts highlighted the changes in foreign support for certain southern groups and attempts by both Riyadh and Tehran to win backing from some of them as part of the conflict between the Houthis and Hadi. In this regard, some southern groups that had received some degree of support from Iran thus far, like al-Beidh, one of the most organised groups in the Southern Movement, oscillated between Tehran and the Gulf countries in search of support. Saudi Arabia, which has traditionally forged alliances with northern groups, also sought to expand its influence in southern Yemen, especially after the Houthis took control of Sana'a.[73] However, once southern territories were regained, some tensions emerged between members of the Southern Movement recruited by Riyadh and Hadi's circle over the designation of authorities in areas liberated from the Houthis. Like every year, mass demonstrations returned in October to coincide with the anniversary of the south's independence from British rule in 1967. The demonstrations were the first massive demand for southern independence since the Houthis had retreated from Aden and other southern governorates, where it became clear that southern groups do not intend to continue fighting against the northern insurgency, but are focusing their aspirations on southern independence.

72. See the summary on Yemen (AQAP) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
73. Farea al-Muslimi, *The Southern Question: Yemen's War Inside the War*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 8 July 2015.

Map 3.1. **Peace processes**



3. Peace processes

- During the year four peace negotiations were resolved satisfactorily: Central African Republic, Sudan (Darfur) SLM-MM, Mali (CMA-Platform) and South Sudan.
- Three conflicts reported explorations to start a formal negotiations process: Colombia (ELN), Pakistan (Baluchistan) and Syria.
- 17.9% of negotiations progressed well or were resolved (seven cases); 30.7% experienced significant difficultures (12 cases) and 43.6% failed (17).
- The Government of Mali signed a preliminary proposal for a peace agreement drafted within the framework of a mediation process led by Algeria. On 15th May the first Peace and National Reconciliation Agreement was achieved.
- As for the conflict in the Central African Republic, the Forum for National Reconciliation was held successfully, and at the end of the year presidential elections took place, although the country was still immersed in a climate of fragility.
- In South Sudan, the proposed peace agreement from the IGAD-Plus was ratified by all stakeholders involved in the conflict. The parties agreed to a permanent ceasefire and signed a transitory security agreement whereby the Government and the SPLA-IO rebels agreed the terms for a partial demilitarisation of the capital Juba. Towards the end of the year, however, both parties continued to accuse each other of breaching the ceasefire.
- In Colombia negotiations continued with the FARC. On 15th December the full content of the Agreement on the Victims of the Conflict was disclosed, the general highlights of which had been announced in September. The president and "Timochenko" agreed also to complete the negotiations before the 23rd of March 2016. In turn, the ELN guerrilla ended its exploratory phase and agreed a negotiation agenda with the Government for the beginning of 2016.
- In India, the first round of conversations started between the Indian Government and the faction of the Assam opposition armed group that is favourable to the negotiations, ULFA. The leader of ULFA-Pro Negotiations, Anup Kumar Chetia, was released from prison.
- In Thailand (south), conversations took place between the Government and a platform, known as the Majilis Syura Patani (Mara Patani, the Patani Advisory Council), which brings together six insurgent organisations. A series of informal meetings started between the parties in Kuala Lumpur, facilitated by the Government of Malaysia.
- In Cyprus, the peace process was resumed in May after seven months of impasse. Confidence-building measures and technical committees were also implemented.

This chapter analyses the situation of 39 contexts of negotiation or exploration, including a follow-up of the agreements with the MILF and the MNLF (Philippines), since they encountered serious difficulties to be implemented.

17.9% of the negotiations studied (seven cases in total) worked well, including the ones that were successfully resolved; **30.7% of negotiations encountered serious difficulties** (12 cases); and **43.6% were unsuccessful (17 cases),** meaning the overall balance is very negative, even when negotiations were set to resume in some countries in 2016. In the cases of Baluchistan (Pakistan), the armed group ELN in Colombia and in Syria there were conversations and exploratory contacts that may consolidate during 2016. During the period from 2008 to 2013, the average percentage of negotiations that failed at the end of the year was only 17.3%.

Table 3.1. **Status of the negotiations at the end of 2015**

Good (3)	In difficulties (12)	Bad (17)	At an exploratory stage (3)	Resolved[1] (4)
Cyprus India ([Nagaland] [NSCN-IM]) India – Pakistan	Colombia (FARC) India (Assam) (ULFA) Moldova (Transdniestria) Myanmar Philippines (MILF) Senegal (MFDC) Serbia – Kosovo Sudan (Darfur) Sudan (Kordofan & Blue Nile [SPLM-N]) Sudan (National Dialogue) Thailand (south) Ukraine (Donbas)	Afghanistan (Taliban) Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno Karabakh) Burundi DR Congo (FDLR) Ethiopia – Eritrea Ethiopia (ONLF) Georgia (Abkhazia & South Ossetia) India (Nagaland) (NSCN-K) Israel – Palestine Libya Morocco – Western Sahara Mozambique (RENAMO) Philippines (NDF) Philippines (MNLF) Sudan – South Sudan Turkey (PKK) Yemen (Houthis)	Colombia (ELN) Pakistan (Baluchistan) Syria	CAR Mali (CMA-Platform) South Sudan Sudan ([Darfur] SLM-MM dissidents)

3.1. Peace processes: definitions and types

Peace process are understood as all the efforts, especially political and diplomatic, aiming to resolve armed conflicts or conflicts that are not in an armed stage but were so in the past and that still require negotiations to reach a satisfactory agreement among the parties. In some cases, the peace processes try to transform the root causes behind the conflict through negotiations. **Negotiations** in a peace process are considered the stages of dialogue among at least two of the parties in conflict, where the parties deal with their differences in an agreed framework to end violence and find a solution that will satisfy their demands. Negotiations are usually preceded by prior or exploratory phases that allow defining the format and the methodology for the future formal negotiation. Negotiations may or may not be facilitated by third parties. When third parties intervene in negotiations, it is to contribute to the dialogue among the disputing parties and favour a negotiated solution for the conflict, but not to impose solutions. In peace process, negotiations may lead to comprehensive or partial agreements, or agreements that are linked to the causes or the consequences of the conflict. Negotiations may combine different elements in the same agreement. **Ceasefire** is understood as a military decision to end the fighting or use of arms during a specified period of time, and **cessation of hostilities** encompasses not only the ceasefire, but also the commitment not to carry out kidnappings, harass the civilian population or make threats, etc.

Depending on the final goals that are sought or the dynamics pursued during the different stages of negotiations, most peace processes can by placed in one of the five **categories or models** listed below, although occasionally there may be processes that fall under two categories:

a) Demobilisation and reinsertion;
b) Political, military or economic power-sharing;
c) Exchange (peace for democracy, peace for territories, peace for withdrawal, peace for the recognition of rights, etc.);
d) Self-government forms or "intermediate political structures";
e) Territorial disputes.

The process model is usually linked to the type of demands put forward and with the actors' ability to exert pressure or make demands (level of military, political and social symmetry), although other influential factors include accompanying and facilitation, the level of exhaustion of those involved, the support they get and other less rational factors, such as the leaders' pathologies, collective imagery or historical momentum. On some occasions, albeit not many, and especially when the process lasts long in time, a peace process may initially be considered to fall under one category (category a, for the sake of it) and then demands rise to place the process in a different and more complex category. It is also important to remember that not all processes or their initial exploratory, dialogue and negotiation stages are conducted in true honesty, since they are quite often part of the actual war strategy, whether it is to gain time, to internationalise the dispute and raise its profile or to rearm, among other reasons.

Finally, we would like to highlight that what we usually call a "peace process" is really nothing else than a "process to put an end to violence and armed fighting". The signing of a cessation of hostilities and then of a peace agreement is nothing but the start of a true "peace process", linked to a stage known as the "post-war rehabilitation", which is always difficult, but also where the real decisions are taken and policies are implemented and, if they work, they will make it possible to overcome other forms of violence (structural and cultural) that will then make it possible to talk about "achieving peace" properly.

1. In negotiations that have formally been finalised there may be problems in the implementation of agreements, and they may even fall apart at a later stage, although initially this means the peace negotiations have been successfully resolved.

3.2. Evolution of negotiations

3.2.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

As for the crisis in **Burundi**, June was marked by contacts to try and unblock the crisis affecting the country. Since then there have been contacts and mediation efforts by the UN, supported by the AU and the regional organisations EAC and CIRGL. The Government, which didn't want to participate in the new round of negotiations, finally announced on 24th June that it would join the new round of dialogue auspices by the UN together with representatives from the opposition, Agathon Rwasa and Chargles Nditije, the civil society representative and the human rights defender Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa, and the leaders of the different religions. The UN welcomed the Government's announcement and regretted that the party in power, the CNDD-FDD was not participating. However, conversations were later suspended and President Pierre Nkurunziza renewed his mandate. In light of the serious evolution of the whole situation –with several serious insurgence actions in early December– on 17th December the AU gave the go-ahead for the establishment of a peacekeeping taskforce, the AU Prevention and Protection Mission (MAPROBU), and the president threatened to attack the members of the mission if they violated Uganda's territorial integrity. At the same time, on 28th December, peace conversations started in Entebbe (Uganda) with the mediation of the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, after a call launched by the regional organisation EAC, with the participation of representatives from the Government and the party in power, the CNDD-FDD, from the opposition and from the civil society, the CNARED (National Council for the Respect of the Arusha Accord, the main opposition coalition) and representatives from countries from the region and international organisations with an aim to promote a political dialogue.

As for the conflict in the **Central African Republic**, significant improvements were seen in the peace process under way in the country. On 5th April an agreement was reached between the former presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia to promote reconciliation in the country. At a later stage, the **Forum for National Reconciliation held from 4th to 11th May in Bangui** was a success, bringing together around 700 representatives and leaders from different groups and civil society who reached an historical peace agreement known as the **Republican Pact for peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction of the country**. Among those present was the interim Government, the different political parties, the country's main armed groups (members of former Séléka and the several anti-Balaka militias), the employers' association, civil society representatives, community leaders and religious leaders, who tried to define the future for the country. There were several meetings and themed commissions on the main elements on the agenda to rebuild peace in the country, from which especially relevant were the issues of peace and security, justice and reconciliation, economic and social development and governance. The main outcomes and recommendations adopted at the Forum were: 1) the signing of a new agreement on a cessation of hostilities and disarmament among the 10 factions of Séléka and the anti-Balaka militias, planning for the integration of their members into the security forces for those who haven't committed any war crimes or benefited from community development projects; 2) the release of child soldiers, since estimate talk of around 6,000 to 10,000 minors fighting in the rebel groups, and free access for humanitarian staff, programmes to support displaced population and refugees; 3) an electoral calendar, an extension to the current mandate of Catherine Samba-Panza and delaying the elections (which came as no surprise given the pending requirements); reforming the Constitution (and then a referendum) and the nationality code that allows Muslim population to gain citizenship of the country; 4) the establishment of local and national commissions for justice and reconciliation; and 5) an agenda of priorities for the country's economic and social development, the reinvigoration of the country's agricultural sector (distribution of agricultural inputs), livestock sector (to recover the country's livestock population) and mining sector (negotiating the lifting of sanctions for the export and trade in diamonds through the Kimberley Process). The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue had been carrying out technical support and advisory tasks for the national reconciliation process since 2014. It is important to note that since 1980 there have been five national reconciliation debates, which haven't managed to avoid the return to instability; the two most recent ones were in 2003 and in 2008. The main challenges detected were finding funding for the main projects (minors and DDR) and the leaders' capacity to control their fighters. Yet it is also worth mentioning that the anti-Balaka militias and Séléka freed hundreds of minors as part of the agreement reached in the Bangui Forum. The second half of the year was marked by the difficulties to implement the agreements of the Republican pact as well as by difficulties and related delays to hold legislative and presidential elections that could end the transition stage in the country; they were postponed until the end of December.[2]

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, the Congolese Armed Forces launched a military operation against the armed group of Rwandan origin FDLR, with an offensive in the province of South Kivu. This operation was announced at the end of January targeting members of the FDLR who rejected the voluntary disarmament announced by the group in April 2014. Nevertheless, the FDLR stated that opening a political dialogue with Rwanda was a condition to continue with the disarmament, a dialogue that was rejected by

2. See the summary on the CAR in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Rwanda. At the same time, the UN announced it was withdrawing its support to the military operation by the Congolese Army against the FDLR after the Government refused to replace two generals involved in the operation and accused of serious human rights violations.

Horn of Africa

In February, for the first time since October 2012, negotiations resumed between the Government of **Ethiopia** and the armed group ONLF, in Nairobi (Kenya), although after the meeting there is no evidence of any further contacts during the remainder of the year. The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, visited Ethiopia in February and pledged important investments in the country. Recently, Ethiopia and Djibouti signed an agreement relative to the construction of a gas pipeline that will link Ogaden, a region rich in hydrocarbons, with the port of Djibouti, for a total sum of 4 billion dollars, from which 3 billion will be invested in Djibouti. Also, at the beginning of June, the ONLF informed through a statement in the press of the release of two of its representatives, Sulub Ahmed and Ali Hussein, at the border town of Moyale. They had been kidnapped in January 2014 in Nairobi, allegedly by the Ethiopian Government, and transferred to Ethiopia. According to independent sources, the Ethiopian Government freed both delegates after many diplomatic efforts by the Government of Kenya and members of the international community. The ONLF hailed their freedom and the return of the two delegates to Nairobi as a positive step that could contribute to unblock the advance of the peace conversations. There were no further contacts during the year.

The Government of **Ethiopia** confirmed in mid-September that the rebel leader Mola Asgedom, who had taken refuge in Eritrea together with some 800 fighters of his armed group, the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM), had surrendered to the Ethiopian authorities. This desertion came after then news that on 7th September an opposition coalition had been created, called the Salvation of Ethiopia through Democracy, made up of the TPDM, Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement (AGUDM), the Afar Peoples Liberation Movement (APLM) and the Amhara Democratic Force Movement (ADFM), a coalition for which Mola had been elected vice-president.

In neighbouring **Sudan**, president Omar al-Bashir expressed his intention to speed up the establishment of the so-called National Dialogue between the Government and the political forces in opposition, bringing into the conversations all members of the armed groups in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and for this the Government approved, on 22nd September, two presidential decrees that included a two-month ceasefire in the areas of conflict, as well as offering a general amnesty for the leaders of the rebel movements in the peace conversations. The day before presenting these two decrees, the Sudanese president highlighted his intention to reach an end to the conflicts in the three regions before the end of the year, and thus to end the conflict that had started in Darfur in the year 2003 and in 2011 in the regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile with the rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). The coalition of rebel forces bringing together the different armed movements in the three regions, known as the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), at a meeting held with the so-called Troika (USA, UK and Norway) advanced it would participate in the National Dialogue and stated its intention to sign a truce for a cessation of hostilities for six months in the regions of Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Darfur. At the beginning of October, the president of Chad met in Paris with the leaders of the three armed groups from Darfur (Jibril Ibrahim –Justice and Equality Movement [JEM]–, Abdel Wahid El Nur and Minni Minawi –two factions from the Sudan Liberation Movement [SLM]–), and called on them to participate in the National Dialogue. At a later stage, the Sudanese Government announced in October that it accepted the invitation to start the peace conversations in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) with the rebel groups from Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, mediated by the African Union High Level Implementation Planel (AUHIP). Negotiations started on 18th November with the participation of Ibrahim Ghandour, the Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and the head of the negotiation team, together with the leaders of the armed groups JEM, SLM-MM and SPLM-N. The peace conversations, which market the start of the 10th round of negotiations, placed the end of hostilities at the centre and negotiations took place at separate tables, on the one hand for the region of Darfur, and on another for the two other areas (South Kordofan and the Blue Nile). On 23rd November, the conversations between the Government and the SPLM-N came to a standstill, since the Government demanded a ceasefire from the armed group, while the rebels demanded the arrival of humanitarian aid from Sudan and Ethiopia. The Government's refusal to allow external aid into the region, since it considered this would weaken its control and would enable the rebels to use this aid to carry arms to its troops, and at the end it blocked and suspended the negotiations.

In other aspects, in the Sudanese region of **Darfur**, towards the end of March, the Government and a group of 400 dissidents from the SLM-MM, led by Mohamedian Ismail Bashar, signed a peace agreement with the Sudanese Government in N'Djamena (Chad). In addition, the three main rebel groups in Darfur announced an agreement whereby they agreed to double their efforts to protect the rights of minors and abide by international regulations in force. During the second half of the year, a further announcement was made regarding the rapprochement between Musa Hilal, the former Janjaweed leader and the head of the Revolutionary

Awakening Council (RAC) and the Sudanese Government. Hilal, who on 30th may attended the inauguration ceremony for President Omar al-Bashir, announced that he would start conversations with the Government to achieve piece in Darfur, including registration of the RAC as a political party, as well as measures for security, reconciliation and political reforms in Darfur. It is also worth mentioning the announcement made by President al-Bashir in Parliament on 19th October, on the plans to hold a **referendum on the status quo of the Darfur region** in April 2016, as was set out in the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). The announcement drew criticism by the opposition parties in parliament, as well as by civil society organisations like Darfur Civil Society Organisation, who demanded that the referendum be delayed because they considered there weren't the right conditions to hold it, fuelling confrontation and a greater social polarisation. On the other hand, in the Sudanese regions of **South Kordofan and Blue Nile**, the armed group SPLM-N became the first African non-state actor to sign the Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict. On 29th June the rebel group signed in Geneva the text representing an initiative promoted by the organisation Geneva Call, which was developed to enable armed groups that are not recognised as parties in international treaties to ratify agreements on the protection of minors.

In **South Sudan**, during the first quarter of the year there were several open mediation processes that led to non-coordinated agreements and processes. China became involved in the peace process and held a meeting in Khartoum with Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia and China. The Asian country presented an initiative calling on the parties in conflict to take into consideration the interests of the South Sudanese people, safeguarding peace and stability in the region. In fact, China had already taken the decision to deploy peacekeeping troops in South Sudan to support the mediation efforts of the regional organisation IGAD and end the armed conflict ravaging the country. To this end, it is worth mentioning the existing bilateral relations between China and Sudan, which strengthened the Asian country's interest in bringing stability to the region. At the same time, the different factions in the SPLM (Government, SPLM-IO and the faction of the SPLM known as SPLM 7) signed a peace agreement in Tanzania on 21st January, with facilitation from the Tanzanian and Kenyan presidents, to pave the way towards the end of hostilities in South Sudan and with the aim of bringing reconciliation to the three factions of the SPLM, whose internal disputes were rendering the peace conversations at a national level difficult, even if this agreement remained only as a symbolic initiative. In March contacts resumed, facilitated by the IGAD without reaching an agreement, the reason why the IGAD requested that for any further mediation effort, the AU, China, the EU, and the Troika (composed of the US, the UK and Norway) be involved. On 29th May the president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, announced that both the peace process mediated by the IGAD and the process of reconciliation and reunification of the SPLM would be merged under the same mediation process to achieve a better coordination and outcomes.

With the underlying conflict, the confronted parties held several rounds of negotiation with the mediation of the IGAD-Plus,[3] which presented a draft peace agreement on 24th July for the parties to assess, setting a deadline for 17th August for the parties to end violence. The presentation of this draft coincided in time with the visit of the US president Barack Obama to the region. The peace agreement proposed by the IGAD-Plus[3] was ratified by all the parties involved in the conflict during the month of August. The parties agreed to a permanent ceasefire and signed a transitional security agreement, whereby the Government and the SPLMO-IO rebels agreed the terms for a partial demilitarisation of the capital, Juba. With this, both the Government headed by Salva Kiir, the rebel opposition movement PLMO-IO led by Riek Machar, the group of former detainees from the SPLM, led by Pagan Amum, and representatives from other political parties, as well as members of South Sudanese civil society, signed a peace agreement that laid the bases for national reconstruction. The agreement was ratified in two moments: first by Machar and Amum on 17th August, and later by Salva Kiir on 26th August, who only signed the agreement after stating that he did so under pressure and included a list of 16 reservations that were not accepted by the IGAD-Plus. The list of reservations relating to the agreement from the South Sudanese Government included important aspects that questioned the distribution of power with the rebels, and called some points of the proposal a "humiliation", "benefits for the rebellion" and even "neo-colonialist", a fact that raised doubts about the value and extent of the peace reached. On 2nd October, president Kiir announced a unilateral decree to increase the current 10 states conforming the country into a fragmentation of 28 federal states. Riek Machar declared that this measure constituted a serious violation of the peace agreement signed in August and put its continuity at risk. In another unplanned move, the party in Government announced the dissolution of all the SPLM leadership structures, except for the position of president, held by Kiir, who would propose new candidates. Among the most significant advances it is important to mention the agreement adopted by all parties relative to Chapter II on security, where the Government and the SPLM-IO rebels agreed the terms for the partial demilitarisation of the capital, Juba, limiting the military capacity of the National Security Service to only 170 units, from which 50 would be members of the SPLM-IO. In turn, during that month information arrived about the annexation to some of the parties of different rebel forces present in the State of Western Equatoria that had not signed the peace agreement, meaning they joined the pacification process. On a separate note, the Government also announced the signing of a peace agreement with the

3. The members of the IGAD-Plus are the IGAD, the AU, the United Nations, the USA, China, the EU, the UK and Norway.

South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) militia. The agreement was made possible through mediation by the bishop Edward Hiboro, from the local diocese, leading to a ceasefire by the militia. Towards the end of the year, however, both parties continued to accuse one another of violating the ceasefire.

In the peace agreement signed in August in South Sudan, the ongoing tensions between the Governments of **Sudan and South Sudan** were made explicit, where both States continued to accuse the other of supporting and upholding their domestic rebellions, by maintaining war dynamics by proxy. In the peace agreement (where the Sudanese Government signed as a guarantor and member of the IGAD) the text included, under chapter II, a permanent ceasefire and the security mechanisms, points that were directly linked to these dynamics. On the one hand, the call for a cease fire was made extensive to all the parties involved in the conflict, including the allies of each side (forces and militias) which, in the case of Salva Kiir's Government, indirectly referred to the Ugandan Armed Forces and rebel armed movements fighting in neighbouring Sudan, among others; in the case of the Sudanese rebels participating in the war in the south, it literally stated: "The conflicting parties agree that all non-state security actors, including but not limited to the Sudan Revolutionary Forces (SPLM-N, JEM, SLA-MM, SLA-Abdulwahid) shall be disarmed, demobilised and repatriated (...)". This point was challenged by the South Sudanese Government in the document annexed to the peace agreement, stating to this regard that those words incriminated its Government and that the Sudanese rebel armed groups were not present on South Sudanese territory.

Maghreb - North Africa

In **Libya**, representatives from the two governments and parliaments instated in the country participated in the negotiations convened by the UN, although these contacts did not yield any results during the first half of the year. During the first quarter, the UN presented a six-point plan to the authorities in Tobruk and in Tripoli. The plan included forming a transitional government to lead the country until the adoption of a new Constitution through a referendum and the holding of elections. This unity Government would be headed by a president and a presidential council with independent figures. Also, a parliament would be conformed representing the whole of the Libyan population and there would be a State council, a national security council and a council of municipalities. In June, Bernardino León submitted a new draft agreement (the fourth since the diplomatic efforts started at the beginning of the year), defending a transitional scheme up to the adoption of a new Constitution. Tough-wing sectors in Tripoli and Tobruk questioned the initiative, which was more appreciated by the authorities in the Libyan capital. Finally, the Tobruk Parliament also accepted the proposal in principle, albeit stating some amendments would be required. Representatives from both sides sat at the same table, for the first time, at a meeting held in Skhirat (Morocco) at the end of June; this was seen as a positive move in terms of possibly forming a unity Government. According to the plan, which included 29 principles and almost 70 articles, a national unity Government should be conformed to operate during one year. The House of Representatives would act as the legislative power and, in addition, a State council would be established with 120 members, 90 of which would be from the Parliament based in Tripoli. In July, the negotiations fostered by the UN led to the signing of a preliminary political agreement in Skhirat (Morocco), but it was not signed by the Tobruk authorities, who considered it lacked clarity on the competencies and the role to be played by the State council. At the end of the year, pressure from the international community was increased to advance towards a political agreement in Libya. In this context, towards mid-December members of the rival parliaments signed an agreement establishing a national unity government, a Chamber of Representatives, a State Council and a Presidential Council. The agreement was not backed by the leaders of the two governments operating in Libya. Yet the agreement was finally validate by the UN Security Council, through a resolution (2259) adopted at the end of the year. However, by the end of 2015 there continued to be doubts about the possibilities of this Government actually being formed.

In the stalled process in **Western Sahara**, King Mohammed VI and the UN Secretary-General talked on the phone and reached an agreement on the path forward. In August, it transcended that the head of MINURSO, Kim Bolduc, had secretly met with in Tindouf (Algeria) with the leader of the POLISARIO Front, Mohamed Abdelaziz, to discuss a visit by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon to the refugee camps in the area. The purpose of the visit to Tindouf would be to boost negotiations between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, stagnant in the last years. Moroccan sources stated that Ban would also be visiting the Kingdom before his mandate ends in 2016, in his first visit to Morocco. The Secretary-General's special envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, travelled to the region in February, September and November, but there was no information on the possibility of resuming direct negotiations among the disputing parties. In October, the leader of the POLISARIO Front, Mohamed Abdelaziz, did not directly meet with the UN representative on his visit to the refugee camps at the request of Algeria. Towards the end of the year there was information that Morocco was aiming to get Algeria formally involved in the negotiations, but that the Algerian authorities rejected dealing with the conflict bilaterally.

Southern Africa

The peace process that started in **Mozambique** on 21st December 2014 after the crisis that broke out during 2012 between the party in power FRELIMO and the

opposition party and former armed group RENAMO – which peaked on 21st October 2013, when RENAMO announced it was definitely abandoning the Rome peace agreement signed in 1992– dwindled down during the year, leading to the negotiation process to collapse in August over the doubts and tensions relating to the implementation of several points in the agreement. The start of the year was marked by tension generated after the legislative and presidential elections in October 2014, with a strong impact on the peace negotiations. FRELIMO won the elections and RENAMO failed to acknowledge the outcome, threatening to resume violence and create an independent republic in those places where it won a majority, in the country's centre and north provinces: Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambezia, Mampula and Niassa. This situation blocked the peace conversations during the first quarter of the year, forcing the negotiations on the programme for the demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of RENAMO militia fighters to a halt. This matter is included in point two of the peace negotiations relative to defence and security. In this regard, there was no progress on this matter during the year. RENAMO demanded equal distribution of the security forces (Police and Army) before handing over a list of its militia fighters to be integrated into the security forces. The government, in turn, refused to share the power of top security officers and demanded that militia fighters joined the national security forces. President Filipe Nyusi expressed his concerns over the lack of outcomes from the negotiations in this chapter. After more than 100 rounds of dialogue they had failed to generate any significant progress in the roadmap agreed for the DDR programme. This fact explains why, even when the Government had extended the mandate of the International Military Observation Mission (EMOCHM) – in charge of monitoring the cessation of hostilities– two months beyond what was initially agreed, its future was being questioned and finally it was not extended and ended in May 2015. The end of the mission was justified based on the high cost of maintaining it, and also because it had failed in meeting its goals, since it didn't manage to reintegrate a single RENAMO militia fighter. At the time when the Government decided not to renew the mandate of the EMOCHM it was only made up of military observers from the African contingent, since Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom had withdrawn their officials after the first stage, when it was seen the mission had had no impact.

The second semester of the year had a better start, in terms of the advances in the peace negotiations, although slowly the tensions and disagreements on different issues led the negotiation process to a halt. For point three, relative to the separation of political parties from the State, an initial agreement was reached on 23rd June 2015, in the 108th round of dialogue, reaching a first position statement that was to be acted into law in parliament. In July the round of negotiation on the fourth and last point in the peace dialogues started, focusing on economic aspects and the distribution of the country's resources. Dinis Sengulane, a retired Anglican bishop acting as the spokesperson of the mediation team, stated that the starting of the negotiation for the fourth point meant that the process was yielding results. Nevertheless, the tension generated by the demands of RENAMO relating to the municipalisation policy that was to grant them control of the six provinces where the party claimed it had won the 2014 elections, led the leader of RENAMO, Afonso Dhlakama to suspend the peace conversations in August, with accusations and counter-accusations of breaching the ceasefire. Filipe Nyusi, the president of Mozambique, offered to host a bilateral meeting with Dhlakama to try and redress the peace negotiations. However, RENAMO initially rejected this possibility stating it was not a priority, and accusing the Government of weakening the peace agreement by deciding to cancel the international observer mission, the EMOCHM. By the end of the year, in view of what was considered the failure of the five Mozambicans acting as mediators, who were accused of being inexperienced, RENAMO called for external mediation, suggesting the name of South Africa's president Jacob Zuma or someone linked to the Catholic Church.

West Africa

At the beginning of March, the Government of **Mali** signed a preliminary draft peace agreement drafted within the framework of a mediation process led by Algeria with the participation of the UN, the AU, France, China and Russia. Several Jihadist-like armed groups, however, were left out of the negotiations. As reported by the press, the so-called "Algiers document" suggested granting greater power to the north, creating a regional security taskforce and setting up a special development plan. Other sources declared that the initial proposal included the establishment of regional assemblies and transferring 30% of the State's budget to local governments starting in 2018. On **15th May the first Agreement for Peace and National Reconciliation was signed**, although the Azawad Movements Coordination (CMA) did not ratify the agreement while it informed and waited approval from its grassroots. The signing of the agreement led to another call, in Algiers on 25th May, to establish the mechanisms to enable the ceasefire in northern Mali, as well as the relevant monitoring procedures. Ramtane Lamamra, the Algerian Minister for State Affairs, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation informed that at least three agreements had been reached relative to the cessation of hostilities and highlighted the importance of the commitment of the parties to respect the agreed conditions and contribute to isolate the jihadist-like armed groups operating in the north. Finally, on **20th June the CMA finally joined and signed the agreement**, and this was considered by different actors and mediators in the peace process as a big step forward towards the consolidation of peace and stability in the north. The signing of peace meant the UN Security Council adopted an extension to the mandate of the MINUSMA for one year, up to

June 2016, granting authorisation for the inclusion of 40 military observers to supervise and monitor the ceasefire. The agreement was applauded by Germany and Canada, both countries that had played an active role in the international mediation team.

By virtue of the peace agreement, one of the measures included was the improvement of relations among the CMA and the coalition of pro-Government armed groups called Platform, which after a serious incident among both sides on 15th August in the city of Anéfis (in the region of Kidal),[4] started bilateral conversations in that same city. This episode, which tool the peace process to its limit, led to the start of conversations with a view of ending hostilities, and retaking the implementation of the agreed roadmap. From 27th September to 14th October the groups met in Anéfis, and finally reached an agreement to end armed hostilities among the groups and avoiding attacks on Government forces; it also defined the areas of influence of each party; and included a commitment to promote reconciliation between the confronted communities and ensure free circulation and security jointly in the regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu through the establishment of mixed patrols.

In addition, several reconciliation dialogues were held in and among communities, and the member of the Commission for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation were named. The Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee was set up on 20th June, chaired by Algeria. The Committee's aim was to define the rules of procedure and establish the deadlines for the provisions set forth in the peace agreement. On 21st and 22nd July, at its third meeting, the committee adopted its internal regulation (mandate, roles and committee bodies) and included France, Nigeria and the US as official members in the mediation. Also on 21st July it was decided that Algeria would co-chair the other four themed sub-committees foreseen in the peace agreement: Defence and Security (jointly with the MINUSMA); Political Institutions (with the AU); Justice, Reconciliation and Humanitarian Affairs (with the ECOWAS), and the sub-committee on Economic Development and Culture (with the EU). The meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee held on 19th and 20th November, and suspended after a terrorist attack carried out on the 20th November at the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, was marked by the frustration expressed by the CMA and the Platform over the Government's slow progress in implementing the peace agreement.

As for **Senegal (Casamance)**, during the second quarter of the year, the MFDC addressed President Macky Sall to demand lasting peace in the region and denounced the interlocutors chosen by the State, as well as the absence of a clear roadmap for the negotiations. Abdoulayé Baldé, the mayor of Ziguinchor, questioned the need to appoint the US ambassador to the peace process. It is worth remembering that the US ambassador to Senegal, Mark Boulware, had the mission of encouraging and helping the different actors to pursue the peace negotiations. In a statement released by the US Embassy, it was made clear that the ambassador, who held the role of special advisor for Casamance, had recently been reincorporated into the embassy after concluding his mission in November, but that he would not, in any case, act as a mediator in the process.

3.2.2. America

In **Colombia**, negotiations with the FARC continued. On two occasions, the FARC declared a bilateral ceasefire. The Government, in turn, gave the order to temporarily suspend the bombings on the FARC camps, also on two occasions. An agreement for the mine clearance was reached and the two delegations disclosed they had reached an agreement to establish, once the Final Agreement was signed, a Commission for Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, which shall be an independent and impartial mechanism with an extrajudicial nature. On 23rd September, president Santos and the leader of the FARC, "Timochenko" met in Havana to announce the creation of a Special Jurisdiction for Peace and, for this purpose, it was decided to create a Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition and a Special Jurisdiction for Peace that will include Justice Courtrooms and a Tribunal for Peace. The agreement includes a commitment to clarify the problem of disappeared persons. On 15th December, the full contents of the Agreement on the Conflict Victims were made public; the general lines had already been publicised in September. Presdient Santos and "Timochenko" also agreed to finalise the negotiations by 23rd March 2016, although some extremely complex points were still to be resolved. Nevertheless, the agreements reached to that point placed the FARC process as one of the most advanced in the world. At the same time, the ELN guerrilla finalised the exploratory stage and agreed to a negotiation agenda with the Government for the start of 2016.

3.2.3. Asia

South Asia

In **Afghanistan**, several meetings were held with the Taliban in different countries, with the help and coordination of a large number of countries: USA, Pakistan, China, Iran, Qatar and Norway. Reuters revealed that a Taliban delegation travelled from Qatar to Pakistan to meet with Pakistani representatives and Chinese diplomats and that the Taliban would have also travelled to Quetta (Baluchistan, in Pakistan) to meet with the Taliban leadership, although officially, the Taliban representatives and officials of the Chinese Government denied that the meeting ever took

4. See the summary on Mali (north) in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

place. During the second quarter, the most significant since President Ashraf Ghani came to power was the change in Afghanistan's policy towards Pakistan and the involvement of its neighbours and other allies in ensuring peace in the country. Ghani's outstretched hand policy to Pakistan made the rapprochement possible. The Afghan president was convinced that the Pakistani military held the key to get the Taliban involved in the dialogue. On 30th April it was published that the movement's supreme leader, mullah Omar, had died in April 2013. That same day, the negotiations were cancelled and a part of the Taliban leadership met to elect his successor, mullah Akhtar Mansur. His appointment did not please several Taliban leaders, including the family of mullah Omar, who showed their disagreement and accused Mansur of manipulating the election. These events abode for divisions within the Taliban ranks and possible internal struggles for the leadership, which distracted the group from the negotiations with the Government. In December, the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, and the Pakistani president, Nawaz Sharif, agreed to resume the peace dialogue once again.

In **India**, there was a first round of conversations among the Indian Government and the ULFA faction of the armed opposition group **Assam** that was favourable to negotiations. The delegation of the ULFA-Pro Negotiations highlighted that all the main issues were discussed and that their central claims were the granting of the status of Scheduled Tribes for six communities, and therefore, of reserved spaces, based on this status, at the State Assembly and other legislative bodies. The leader of ULFA-Pro Negotiations, Anup Kumar Chetia, who was imprisoned in Bangladesh from 1997 to 2005, and then confined to isolation in that same country, was initially deported to India to take part in the peace negotiations. Towards the end of December, Chetia was released. Also, the Indian Government and the armed opposition group from **Nagaland**, NSCN-IM, reached a pre-peace framework agreement containing 33 points; it was signed by the leaders of the armed group, Isak Chishi Swu and Th. Muivah, and the main Government interlocutor, R.N. Ravi, with the presence of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. The agreement, which was called a "preamble" by the Naga to find a final solution to the Naga issue and should serve as a framework to continue with the negotiation process until a final agreement is reached, was adopted after more than 80 rounds of negotiations, which had started in 1997. Both parties accepted the idea of "shared sovereignty" and coexistence. The format of these negotiations changed to make them more agile and effective. Negotiations will no further consist of formal rounds of negotiation, but rather a series of meetings between the Government interlocutor and the leaders of the NSCN-IM, who can meet with the former to discuss any issue, to allow accelerating the negotiation process.

As for the dispute between **India and Pakistan** over the **region of Kashmir**, the Pakistani Prime Minister proposed a new peace initiative for the Cashmere region to his Indian counterpart, based on an indefinite truce, the full demilitarisation of the territory and a joint withdrawal from the Siachen glacier. Later in time, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, held an informal meeting where they exchanged ideas to resume the peace dialogue. Towards the end of the year, both leaders flew together on Sharif's official helicopter from Lahore to Raiwind, where the Pakistani Prime Minister has his residence. There they mainly discussed the Cashmere and Afghanistan dialogue processes. It was the first visit from an Indian Prime Minister since 2004. The visit only lasted a few hours. In a similar way, at the border between the two countries, members of their armed forces met to discuss security issues.

In **Pakistan**, the Government and the nationalist leaders of **Balochistan** acknowledged the importance of starting a dialogue process to overcome the Baloch conflict through political means. The Government granted an amnesty for the Balochistan insurgents that would lay down their weapons and renounce violence. The leader of the Baloch Republican Party (BRP), Bugti, in exile in Geneva, granted an interview to the BBC, where he announced he backed a negotiated solution to the conflict and that he gave up the claims for the independence of Balochistan. By the end of the year, the Government was trying to initiate conversations with the Baloch leaders.

South-east Asia

In the **Philippines**, the ongoing process between the Government and the MILF experienced its worst crisis in recent years, after some 70 people, including 44 members of a special police corps, died in Mamasapano (Maguindanao Province) in January, during clashes where, among others, the MILF and the BIFF participated. In this regard, pressure on the President, Congress and Government increased to paralyse of decelerate the adoption of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and some congressmen, after the armed incident, even expressed their opposition to the draft bill. The MILF issued an official statement highlighting that if the Congress adopted a law that was susbstantially different from the writing and spirit of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, which were adopted in 2013 and 2014, respectively, then the MILF would put an end to the decommissioning of weapons and the demobilisation of combatants that had started symbolically in June. Therefore, Manila considered there wasn't sufficient time to reach a comprehensive agreement with the NDF before the end of Aquino's mandate in mid-2016, but that it was possible to make substantial progress in the negotiation agenda.

In **Myanmar**, towards the end of March, the Government and the armed opposition groups that are part of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team

(NCCT) declared they had reached an agreement, in Yangon, after the seventh round of negotiations, to reach a national ceasefire. The agreement should be ratified by the different groups before its signature, and the decision on which armed groups should sign was left for a later date, since at that point, five of the 16 organisations in the NCCT weren't recognised by the Government as political organisations and neither had they signed bilateral ceasefire agreements with the Executive. Also, during the negotiations, it was decided that some of the more sensitive issues, such as the establishment of a federal Army and the creation of a code of conduct, would be left aside until the ceasefire agreement had been signed and until a political negotiations process had been launched. In October, the Government reached a ceasefire agreement with eight armed groups –KNU, KNLA-PC, DKBA, Pa-O NLO, CNF, ALP, ABSDF, RCS/SSA– from the 21 insurgent actors in the country. Besides the signing groups, seven other armed groups had signed a part of the negotiation process with the Government. From those groups that didn't join the agreement it is worth noting the UWSA, the SSA or the KIA, all of which control large territories and have a large arsenal of weapons. In December the first steps were taken towards a political dialogue process in the country. Some of the central points being discussed would be a constitutional reform, the federal question and a greater autonomy.

In **Thailand (south)**, according to some analysts, the Government intended to establish to parallel dialogue pathways, one official (to discuss politically substantive issues) and another secret one to discuss issues of an operational nature. As for the secret pathway, at the time it was uncertain who would lead it from the Government, although it transpired that in December 2014 two meetings took place between two armed groups and senior officials from the Armed Forces in the south of the country. Towards mid-March, General Aksara Kerpol travelled to the south of Thailand and met with religious leaders in the region to discuss some of the issues relating to reconciliation and to encourage them to convince members of the armed groups to lay down their weapons. At a later date came conversations between the Government and a platform, known as the Mijlis Syura Patani (Mara Patani, Patani Advisory Council), bringing together six insurgent organisations: the BRN, three different factions of the PULO, the BIPP and the GMIP. A series of informal meetings started between the parties in Kuala Lumpur, facilitated by the Government of Malaysia. Mara Patani demanded recognition for the Patani nation (and therefore its right to self-determination) as well as the presence of international mediators and observers in the peace conversations. At the end of the year, the Government negotiator declared that the negotiations were divided in three stages: the establishment of trust-building measures, the ratification of agreements already reached, and agreeing to a "roadmap".

3.2.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

The new Prime Minister of **Moldova**, Chiril Gaburici –appointed to the post in February, after months of negotiations to conform a new Government since the elections held in November– and the leader of **Transdniestria**, Yevgeny Shevchuk, met on 14th March in Chisinau. This was the first meeting at that level since the one in October 2013. Both parties valued positively the meeting, which lasted two hours, and the climate of trust. Among the outcomes, they signed a protocol extending the agreement on transport of goods by railway up to December 2016. Despite the tension caused by the Ukrainian conflict, Moldova's vice-prime minister and chief negotiator, Viktor Osipov, highlighted at the end of June that he noticed differences between the escalation of tension in the Russian media and Russia's official political line. After the meeting with his Russian counterpart, Dmitri Rogozin, on 24th June, Osipov stated that Russia had underscored the need to cut down the tension and prevent further escalations.

In **Ukraine**, during the first three months, we witnessed a serious escalation of violence between January and mid-February, forcing international emergency negotiations that led to the signing of the Minsk II Agreement on 12th February. This then led to urgent negotiations in Minsk, within the framework of the Normandy Quartet (the German Chancellor Angela Merkel; the French President François Hollande; the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko; and the Russian President Vladimir Putin) and the Trilateral Contact Group, with representatives from the authorities in Donetsk and Lugansk. This resulted in a new agreement (Minsk II Agreement) and a political statement signed by Poroshenko, Putin, Merkel and Hollande, indicating a revision of the free trade agreement between the EU and Ukraine through a trilateral process that would also involve Russia, as well as responding to some of Russia's concerns. On the other hand, on 17th March, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a draft bill on the special status for areas under rebel control, which would enter into force after the local elections were held in those areas. Russia and the rebel authorities criticised that conditioning the status to the outcome of the local elections contravened the Minsk II agreement and included terms that were not in the negotiations. After conversations behind a closed door between Ukrainian representatives and from the rebel forces, with the participation of Russia and the OSCE, at the beginning of May, the working groups were established that same month, with a format under the umbrella of the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE, with the participation of the rebel forces), which will maintain decision-making power. Russia opened a bilateral diplomatic channel with the USA to tackle the Ukrainian crisis, which joined the dialogue spaces under the umbrella of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format. New agreements were reached relating to a ceasefire and

also the withdrawal of arms that led to a de-escalation of violence, and also there was a commitment to complete an amnesty law and a new constitutional status for areas currently controlled by the rebels.

Russia and Caucasus

As for the negotiations between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** regarding the **Nagorno-Karabakh** region, the process, which had remained at a standstill in recent years, was negatively impacted during the first quarter by the strong deterioration of the situation relating to the ceasefire line. The Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents agreed to study the proposals made by the Minsk Group to strengthen the ceasefire and they discussed the preparations for a future meeting between the two leaders. The escalation of incidents in September led the Minsk Government to express serious concerns over the use of mortars and heavy arms by Armenia and Azerbaijan near civilian areas, which they condemned as unacceptable, in a statement issued on 25th September. During the second fortnight of December, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in Switzerland and acknowledged that the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh had deteriorated.

In **Georgia**, a Treaty on Alliance and Integration between Russia and **South Ossetia** was signed, straining and hampering the climate of negotiations. Again, **Abkhazia** and Ossetia refused to guarantee the right to return, and their Governments' accusations against Georgia over the politicisation of the issue. During the second quarter, the 32nd round of international conversations took place in Geneva (30th June – 1st July), where a constructive climate prevailed, even if there were clear differences among the parties and no significant advances. The negotiation format maintained the structure of the two working groups, one on issues relating to security and another on humanitarian issues. In the first, issues linked to the non-use of force were dealt with, and preparatory work continued for a joint declaration on this point. South Ossetia and Abkhazia reiterated their refusal to discuss the right to return until Georgia withdraws its annual reports on displaced people and refugees at the UN General Assembly. However, they did discuss other issues on the instruction language at schools in areas of South Ossetia with a Georgian majority.

South-east Europe

In **Cyprus**, it was reported that the Greek and Turkish Cypriot authorities, in March, were considering stopping their unilateral activities to exploit hydrocarbons in the Mediterranean to facilitate going back to the negotiation table, also as a reaction to a Turkish seismic exploration vessel stopping its activities. The parties held a first meeting on 15th May, formally marking the re-launching of the process. The leaders agreed to meet at least twice a month, and to lead the negotiations personally, as well as establishing trust-building measures. The Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General announced, at the end of May, a set of five commitments adopted by the parties: work towards opening new border crossing points, starting by Lefka-Aplici and Deryneia; establishing practical measures to advance towards interconnecting the electrical grid; launching discussions and making proposals for the interoperability of the mobile phone networks; preventing radio interferences; and establishing a committee on gender equality. At the joint meeting on 17th June the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci, met under the auspices of the UN on 29th June, and again on 10th and 27th July, and on 1st and 14th September, while their work and negotiation teams increased the frequency of their meetings. At the end of the year, they decided to speed-up the pace of the dialogues.

Regarding **Kosovo**, the prime ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, signed an agreement in Brussels for the integration of the judicial structures in the north of Kosovo into the Kosovan judicial system. They also agreed to set up a direct line to discuss specific or unattended issues. An agreement was signed between Serbia and Kosovo for the dismantlement of the Serbian security corps that had been *de-facto* operating in the Serbian areas and to have them join the Kosovo police. There was a further round to the dialogue process, with the prime ministers, in Brussels, at the end of June, facilitated by the EU Foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini. According to Mogherini, the parties progressed in terms of the future creation of an Association of Serbian Municipalities of Kosovo and regarding telecommunications. In June, the parties agreed a packet of four relevant agreements: on energy, telecommunications, association of Kosovo Serb municipalities and the bridge dividing the town of Mitrovica. In December the political and social tension continued in Kosovo, with new violent episodes of tear gas being launched at the middle of the month in the Kosovar Parliament, by MPs of the three Kosovar Albanian opposition parties, who pretested against the agreement reached in August between Serbia and Kosovo on the creation of an Association of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo and against an agreement on the border demarcation with Montenegro.

In **Turkey (south-east)**, the dialogue process between the Government and the PKK continued amidst great uncertainty during the first three months, where the leader of the PKK called on the group to end the armed fighting against Turkey subject to some conditions. According to information in the press, a form of initial agreement on the declaration was reached at the meeting on 4th February between the HDP Kurdish delegation, Öcalan and Government representatives and the intelligence services. However, big obstacles remained. These included the messages from the Government, later on, pointing that the PKK would lay down its arms, which the PKK did not consider a prior issue but rather something that had to be negotiated during the

process. Finally, the joint public appearance took place on 28th February with political representatives of the Kurdish movement (a member of parliament from the HDP Sürreya önder, and a member of the HDP Pervin Buldan) and the Government (the vice-Prime Minister, Yalcin Akdogan, and the Minister of the Interior, Efkan Ala). During the appearance, Önder announced the 10 points that Öcalan considered were paramount and that some interpreted as issues to be discussed during the negotiations. Vice-President Akdogan declared, on 18th March, that the Government supported the creation of a dialogue monitoring committee, as a third party to the process. However, President Erdogan denied there was any agreement on this mechanism, rejected it, and declared that the joint appearance had been inappropriate, meaning he also rejected Öcalan's 10 points read out at the event. Erdogan stated on several occasions, from the end of March through to April, that the Government wouldn't take any further steps towards peace if the PKK did not lay down its weapons, denied that a local supervising committee was going to be created and denied the existence of the Kurdish issue, abandoning all the attempts made in previous months to start formal negotiations. As a consequence of the resumption of fighting, the PKK ended the unilateral ceasefire in place since 2013, with an escalation of acts of violence. In December the war situation deteriorated in the Kurdish areas of southeast Turkey with the multiplication and intensification of the special operations led by the security forces besieging urban areas, with long curfew hours and a large-scale military deployment (10,000 troops and special forces, supported by tanks and artillery), while the Kurdish militias kept up their strategy of responding with arms in the cities. The Kurdish movement, including political parties and organisations, and political representatives such as the co-president of the Kurdish party HDP, Selahattin Demirtas, backed the declaration of autonomy and legitimised the urban insurgence.

3.2.5. Middle East

Mashreq

As for the conflict between **Israel and Palestine**, the Palestinian Authority (PA) moved on with its strategy to internationalise the Palestinian cause and advanced in the process of joining the International Criminal Court, which became official on 1st April. Israel, meanwhile, retaliated by suspending the taxes levied on behalf of the PA. During the electoral campaign, Benjamin Netanyahu guaranteed that if he was elected, there would be no Palestinian State. These declarations broadened the gap between the Israeli Government and the US Executive, which valued negatively this move away from the two-state solution. After winning the elections, however, Netanyahu stated he was still favourable to the two-State solution. The Israeli Government rejected an initiative from France to reactivate the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, which included a calendar for the recognition of a Palestinian state. Towards the end of May, Tony Blair, the Quartet Special Envoy for the Middle East, resigned, after his total failure as a facilitator after eight years in the post. In August, the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flatly denied the versions on indirect conversations with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas.

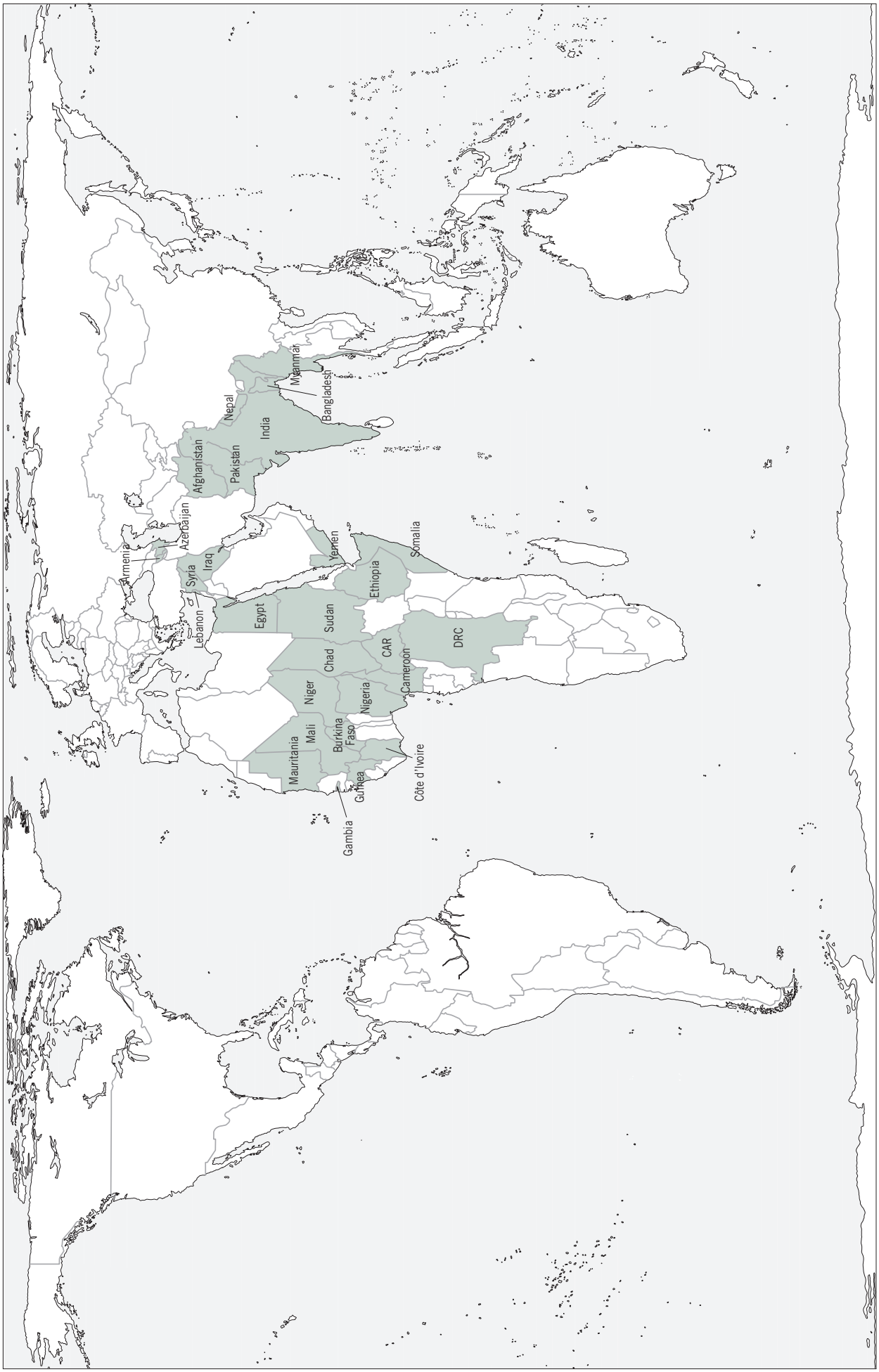
Regarding **Syria** and the attempts at finding a negotiated solution to stop the hostilities, towards the end of January 2015 Russia promoted a meeting between representatives of the dissidence and the Syrian Government in Moscow. Even if these were the first contacts since the failure of the negotiations fostered by the UN in early 2014 (known as the "Geneva II" process), the meeting took place amidst low expectations due to the refusal to participate from relevant sectors of the opposition, like the "Syrian National Coalition" which is the major dissident conglomerate. After a process of consultations with multiple actors linked to the conflict in Syria, the UN Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, presented a new proposal on how to tackle the crisis to the Security Council, which adopted it towards the middle of August. The plan consisted in deepening the process of consultations through the creation of thematic groups to discuss key issues (political and constitutional, military and security issues, public institutions, reconstruction and development). This approach, however, was met by resistance from several armed groups. Since October, in a context of a growing internationalisation of the armed conflict, the Vienna roadmap was activated. This city hosted a meeting with the International Syria Support Group comprising the UN, the EU, the Arab League, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE, the UK, USA and Iran (who was allowed to participate for the first time in the efforts to end the Syrian conflict). This group issued a statement in November where they recognised that the Geneva Communiqué (2012) remained the basis for a political transition in Syria and that they –except ISIS and the al-Nusra Front (a branch of al-Qaeda) had agreed to support the implementation of a ceasefire throughout the country and call on the Syrian Government and the opposition to dialogue, to advance towards the establishment of a government of unity that was "inclusive, credible and non-sectarian", and the drafting of a new Constitution within 18 months after elections are held. In December, the UN Security Council unanimously supported this plan. However, at the end of the year there continued to be differences among the parties as to who could participate in the negotiations on the future of Bashar al-Assad.

The Gulf

In **Yemen**, during the first three months of the year, the deepening of the conflict confirmed the collapse of the peace agreement that had been reached in September 2014, aiming at finding an answer to the

deep political conflict affecting the country. However, preliminary agreements were announced in the country between several rival factions to form a transitional council. Faced with the serious escalation of violence and the deterioration experienced by the conflict, the UN Special Envoy, Jamal Benomar, resigned from his post in April after more than four years trying to facilitate a political transition in the country, amidst criticism from the Gulf countries. He was replaced by the Mauritanian diplomat Ould Cheikh Ahmed who, during the second quarter of the year, tried promoting negotiations between the parties. After several weeks of efforts, the new special envoy managed to get representatives both from the al-Houthi rebels and the deposed president Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi to travel to Geneva to try negotiating. The contacts ended without any agreement and the special envoy for Yemen insisted that any new attempt at dialoguing should be preceded by a ceasefire. It is worth mentioning that Saudi Arabia also tried fostering a meeting between the Yemeni actors with the alleged goal of finding a political solution to the crisis, but the al-Houthi refused to participate, taking into account that Riyadh was leading the military coalition that had been launching attacks on the armed group since the end of March. A further four-point proposal from Iran to tackle the crisis –considered an ally of the al-Houthi– wasn't successful either. During this period, information in the press also picked up on a meeting held in Oman between the al-Houthi and representatives from the USA to discuss the crisis. During August, information transcended that, for the first time, the al-Houthi had made some significant concessions, including the withdrawal in cities under their control, in line with the provisions included in UN Security Council resolution 2216, adopted in April. A new round of negotiations between the parties took place in Switzerland after 15th December, but not progress was achieved towards an agreed solution and it was tainted by persistent violence in the country, despite the initial ceasefire declaration. This was the first time that the parties sat at the same table to dialogue, but at a political level, significant differences remained between the Government led by Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the al-Houti forces.

Map 4.1. **Gender, peace and security**



4. Gender, peace and security

- 70% of the armed conflicts that were ongoing during 2015, and for which there was data on gender equality, took place in contexts where there were serious or very serious gender inequalities.
- During 2015 the use of sexual violence was documented in several armed conflicts, among which one can highlight the cases of Darfur (Sudan), Central African Republic (involving UN personnel) or Myanmar, among others.
- The Armed Forces of the DRC signed a declaration which committed them to combat sexual violence and to implement a government action plan within the institution.
- The refugee crisis in the EU included a marked gender dimension and there was evidence of serious human rights violations against people fleeing wars.
- During 2015 a high level review was conducted of the 15 years of implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- The peace negotiations in Colombia, Cyprus and Afghanistan demonstrated the importance of the gender dimension in peace processes.

This chapter provides an analysis of the various initiatives that are being carried out, both from the ambit of the United Nations and from different local and international organisations and movements, with regard to peacebuilding from a gender perspective.[1] This perspective allows to bring to light the differential impact of armed conflict on women and men, but also to show to what extent and in what ways women and men are involved in peacebuilding and what contribution women are making to peacebuilding. The chapter is structured in three main sections. The first makes an assessment of the global situation with regard to gender inequalities, by analysing the Social Institutions and Gender Index. In second place the impact of armed conflicts and socio-political crisis is analysed in terms of the gender dimension. The final section is devoted to peacebuildling from a gender perspective.[2] At the beginning of the chapter a map is included which shows the countries with serious gender inequalities, according to the Social Institutions and Gender Index. The chapter includes a specific follow up of the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, established following the adoption in the year 2000 of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

4.1. Gender inequalities

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)[3] is a measure of the discrimination against women in social institutions. It reflects the discriminatory laws, regulations and practices in 160 countries, in terms of five dimensions: discrimination within the family, violence against women, preference for male children, women's access to resources and women's access to public space. Discriminatory social institutions (formal or informal norms, attitudes and practices) restrict women's access to rights, justice and empowerment, and perpetuate gender inequalities in areas such as education, health, employment or political participation.

1. Gender is an analytical category which shows that inequality between men and women is a social product and not the result of nature. The social and cultural element is highlighted to distinguish it from the biological differences between the sexes. The gender perspective refers to the social construction of sexual differences and the sexual division of work and power. The gender perspective seeks to prove that the differences between men and women are a social construction which is the result of unequal power relations that have been historically established in a patriarchal system. The aim of gender as an analytical category is to show the historical and situated nature of sexual differences.
2. This chapter is a summary of the most important events over the course of the year. For further information in this field please consult the Escola de Cultura de Pau's quarterly publication, *Gender and Peace*.
3. SIGI is an index developed by the OECD that measures 5 sub-indices made up of 14 indicators including: legal age of marriage, early marriage, parental authority, violence against women, female genital mutilation, reproductive autonomy, sex-selective abortions, fertility preferences, secure access to land, secure access to non-land assets, access to financial services, access to public space, access to participation and political representation. OECD, *Social Institutions & Gender Index. 2014 Synthesis Report*. OCDE, 2014.

Table 4.1. Countries which have armed conflict and socio-political crises and high or very high levels of gender discrimination[4]

	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination
Armed conflicts[5]	Afghanistan CAR Ethiopia India (3) Iraq Myanmar Pakistan (2)	DRC (2) Egypt Mali Nigeria Somalia Sudan (2) Syria Yemen (2)
Socio-political crises	Armenia[7] Azerbaijan Burkina Faso Cameroon Côte d'Ivoire Ethiopia (3) Guinea India (3)[6] Iraq Lebanon (2)[8] Myanmar Nepal Pakistan (2)	Bangladesh Central Africa (LRA) Chad DRC (3) Egypt Gambia Mauritania Niger Nigeria (2) Somalia Sudan (2) Syria Yemen

According to the SIGI, levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 38 countries, mainly concentrated in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The analysis obtained by cross-referencing the data from this indicator with that for the countries that have ongoing armed conflicts reveals that **21 of the 35 armed conflicts that took place during 2015 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination, and that five armed conflicts took place in countries for which no data is available: Algeria, Libya, Israel-Palestine, Russia and South Sudan.** Thus, 70% of the armed conflicts for which there was data on gender equality took place in contexts in which there were serious or very serious gender inequalities. Meanwhile, in seven other countries where there was one or more armed conflict, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with intermediate levels (China, Burundi, Philippines) and others with low levels (Ukraine, Colombia, Thailand and Turkey). The high percentage would coincide with the arguments of some authors which suggest that gender inequality in a country increases the probability that this country will experience internal armed conflict.[9] With regard to socio-political crises, at least 33 of the 83 situations of tension that were ongoing during 2015 took place in countries where there were serious gender inequalities (at high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 51% of the socio-political crises for which data was available.

21 of the 35 armed conflicts that took place in 2015 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities

4.2. The impact of violence and conflicts from a gender perspective

This section addresses the gender dimension in the cycle of conflict, especially with reference to violence against women. Armed conflicts and socio-political crises are phenomena with a significant gender dimension. A gender-based analysis dismantles the traditional view of armed conflicts as neutral situations and questions the belief that the origins of armed conflict are independent of the gender power structures that exist in a given society. From this perspective, serious doubts are also raised about the attempts to present a homogeneous view of the consequences of conflicts, without taking into account the gender dimension and gender inequalities.

4.2.1. Sexual violence in armed conflicts and socio-political crises

Sexual violence[10] was present in a large number of the armed conflicts that were ongoing during 2015. Its use, which in some cases formed part of the armed parties' deliberate military strategies, was documented in several reports.

The UN Secretary General presented in March his annual report monitoring the impact of this violence in armed conflicts, covering the period from January

4. Table created from data on the levels of gender discrimination according to the SIGI (OECD) and the classifications of armed conflict and socio-political crises of the Escola de Cultura de Pau. The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low, very low.
5. In brackets the number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in that country.
6. One of the socio-political crises involving India refers to the dispute it has with Pakistan.
7. Armenia and Azerbaijan are involved in one single international socio-political crisis, related to the dispute over Nagorno Karabakh.
8. One of the socio-political crises in Lebanon refers to the international socio-political crisis that involves Lebanon, Israel and Syria.
9. Mary Caprioli, "Gender equality and state aggression: the impact of domestic gender equality on state first use of force", *International Interactions* 29, no. 3, 2003: 195-214.
10. According to the UN, Conflict-related sexual violence refers to "incidents or patterns of sexual violence [...], that is rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity against women, men or children. Such incidents or patterns occur in conflict or postconflict settings or other situations of concern (e.g. political strife). They also have a direct or indirect nexus with the conflict or political strife itself, that is, a temporal, geographical and/or causal link. In addition to the international character of the suspected crimes (which can, depending on the circumstances, constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide or other gross violations of human rights), the link with conflict may be evident in the profile and motivations of the perpetrator(s), the profile of the victim(s), the climate of impunity/State collapse, cross-border dimensions and/or the fact that they violate the terms of a ceasefire agreement." UN Action Against Sexual Violence In Conflict, *Analytical and Conceptual Framing of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, November 2012.

Box 4.1. **Armed actors and sexual violence in conflicts**[11]

The UN Secretary General's 2015 report on conflict-related sexual violence included a list of armed actors concerning which there are well founded suspicions of having committed systematic acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, or of being responsible for them, which are under consideration by the Security Council.

CAR	LRA; former Séléka forces; Anti-balaka militias, including associated elements from the CAR armed forces; Revolution and Justice; Democratic Front of the Central African People
Côte d'Ivoire	Groups of former militias members, including the Patriotic Alliance of the Wê, the Front for the Liberation of the Great West, the Ivorian Movement for the Liberation of the West of Côte d'Ivoire and the Union of Patriots for the Resistance of the Great West; Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire
DRC	Armed Groups: APCLS; ADF-NALU; Forces for the Defence of Congo; FDLR; Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri; LRA; Mai-Mai Cheka/Nduma Defence of Congo; Mai-Mai Kifuafua; Mai-Mai Simba/Morgan; Mai-Mai Simba/Lumumba; Nyatura armed group; Raia Mutomboki. Armed Forces of the DRC; National Police of the DRC
Iraq	ISIS
Mali	MNLA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM
Syria	ISIS; other armed groups in the disputed areas such as Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasaka, Damascus and Rural Damascus, including: Al-Nusra Front, Liwa Al-Islam, Aknaf Bait Al-Maqdis, Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, Harakat Ahrar Ash-Sham al-Islamiyya; Government forces including the armed forces and Syrian intelligence services and pro-Government forces, including militias of the National Defence Forces
Somalia	Al-Shabaab; Somalia National Army; Somalia National Police and its allied militias; Puntland military forces
South Sudan	LRA; Justice and Equality Movement; Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition; People's Liberation Army of Sudan; National Police Service of Southern Sudan
Other cases	Other parties that raise concerns that have been placed under consideration at the Security Council: Boko Haram

to December 2014, identifying armed groups responsible for committing systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also documents the patterns and trends in the use of sexual violence in the context of the conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur (Sudan), Syria and Yemen; of the post-conflict cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nepal and Sri Lanka; as well as the situation in Nigeria. The report also includes different initiatives in response to this problem taken by governments or by other actors such as United Nations and civil society.

During the year several cases were recorded of sexual violence in different places affected by armed conflicts, by socio-political crises or that were in a post-conflict situation. One of the most serious cases was that of the **Darfur** region in Sudan, where various organisations reported on the impact of sexual violence over recent years. Human Rights Watch (HRW) denounced that the Sudanese army had raped 221 women and girls in an organised attack on the town of Tabit, in North Darfur, in October 2014.[12] Radio Dabanga, a media outlet based in the Netherlands, emitted the first warning in early November of that year when it carried out the first investigation into the facts. The Sudanese government rejected that first report and refused to permit access to the town for the hybrid mission of the UN/AU (UNAMID). Subsequently, security forces allowed the mission brief access to the town but prevented it from carrying out a credible investigation. Later on, despite the block on access to the town, HRW conducted an investigation documenting 27 separate incidents of rape and obtained credible information about another 194 cases. The Sudanese Armed Forces conducted several military operations during which their soldiers ransacked the town, arrested men, carried out torture and ill-treatment against the inhabitants of Tabit and raped women and girls, most of them belonging to the Fur ethnic group. The government blocked access to the international community, so HRW called on the UN and the AU to put in place the necessary measures to protect civilians, prevent future abuses and conduct a credible investigation into the facts. HRW added that sexual violence committed by government forces has not only taken place in Darfur, since they also discovered that the government's Rapid Support Forces were responsible for attacks and sexual violence against civilians in Blue Nile State. Different organisations such as the Sudan Social Development Organisation (SUDO) or Radio Dabanga documented rapes carried out during different attacks by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the Sudanese army and the Janjaweed militias in all areas of Darfur. The British NGO Waging Peace also published research in which

11. UN Security Council, *Conflict-related sexual violence: Report of the Secretary-General,* S/2015/203, 23 March 2015.
12. Human Rights Watch, "Mass Rape in Darfur: Sudanese Army Attacks Against Civilians in Tabit", *HRW*, 11 February 2015.

they denounced that the use of sexual violence in the Darfur conflict had become "rampant".[13] All armed actors are involved, including the Sudan army. Waging Peace denounces the total defencelessness in which women find themselves in this region, where neither the justice system, nor the security forces, nor the UN mission in the country, UNAMID, have been capable of responding so as to protect the population.

Particularly grave were the **cases of sexual violence committed by United Nations personnel,** reported at different times during the year. An especially notable case was that of the CAR, after the UN had admitted that its peacekeeping mission in that country (MINUSCA) had been accused of the sexual abuse of minors in the capital, Bangui. Some of these acts may have been committed during 2014, but they were not reported to the MINUSCA until June 2015.[14] One of the abuses was reported to have been perpetrated against two girls under 16 who were sexually exploited in exchange for food and other products. In August the UN Secretary General appointed the Gabonese Parfait Onanga-Anyanga as the new UN Secretary General Special Representative and head of the MINUSCA (CAR) to replace Babacar Gaye of Senegal. Ban Ki-moon had demanded the resignation of the latter for failing to address the numerous and serious allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in the central African country. This was an unprecedented decision which was reported to the UN Security Council behind closed doors, in the context of the policy of accountability and zero tolerance, following the publication by Amnesty International of different cases of rape in the CAR by UN troops.[15] This dismissal was the result of the high number of allegations of sexual crimes against children committed by the UN peacekeeping mission in the country: there are 57 allegations of sexual abuse of which 11 correspond to child abuse.

During 2015 there were accusations of serious cases of sexual violence by UN personnel, especially in the CAR

In this context, in September the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on those Member States whose soldiers were responsible for rapes and sexual exploitation on UN peacekeeping missions to stop protecting them for their crimes and to subject them to trial.[16] Sources in the institution and the Secretary-General himself recognised that the response of the organisation had been limited, given that states were reluctant to cede authority and to take measures that went beyond ordering those responsible for sexual abuse to return to their country of origin. Ban Ki-moon contacted the leaders of the countries involved in recent abuse cases to try to ensure that they prosecute those responsible for crimes, in accordance with the laws of those states. The UN Secretary General did not disclose the names of the individual countries, but while France, Morocco and South Africa announced the prosecution of the soldiers involved, others like Pakistan or DRC have not taken steps of any kind. In addition, according to UN officials, some countries use the international organisation to protect their armies, thus leaving United Nations exposed as the object of public criticism. The organisation has decided to initiate the suspension of payments to troop contributing countries that refuse to act when there are credible allegations of sexual abuse, but has declined to reveal the names of such countries. In June, the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services noted in a report that despite the organisation's efforts since 2003, complaints persist, and that transactional sex (sex for money, jewellery, mobile phones, televisions or food) is a very common but scarcely investigated practice. The organisation has received 480 allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by members of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions between 2008 and 2013, with South African troops being those who face the largest number of accusations, followed by Uruguayans and Nigerians. Moreover, despite the effort to discourage transactional sex that was declared in the UN Secretary General's 2003 report, research conducted on two UN missions (Liberia and Haiti) indicates that this practice between UN personnel and the beneficiary populations is very common on both missions, and is investigated very little.

In **Myanmar**, human rights organisations denounced the persistence of sexual violence, especially against women of the different ethnic minority groups. These organisations reported that despite the Burmese government's commitment to end violence in the conflict, made at the London summit on sexual violence in 2014, no measures had been taken in this direction during 2015. Among the different cases of sexual violence that were reported in the country one could highlight that of the two Kachin women who were raped and killed by the Burmese Army in January, without the case being properly investigated nor those responsible being punished. In addition, the organisations that denounced the case received threats. Many other cases of sexual violence attributed to government security forces have still not been investigated properly.

Another notable case in 2015 was that of **Egypt**, where according to the investigations carried out by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), a significant increase was recorded in the use of sexual violence on the part of the security forces following the

13. Crowther, Madeleine and Chalaby, Odette, *Rape in Darfur: A History of Predation*, Waging Peace, November 2015.
14. Jeune Afrique, "Centrafrique: nouvelles accusations d'abus sexuels sur enfants par des Casques bleus", *Jeune Afrique,* 23 June 2015.
15. Amnesty International, "CAR: UN troops implicated in rape of girl and indiscriminate killings must be investigated", *Amnesty International*, 11 August 2015. Amnesty International, "UN peacekeeper reform plan falls short on sex abuse", *Amnesty International*, 11 September 2015.
16. The Guardian, "Stop protecting peacekeepers who rape, Ban Ki-moon tells UN member states", *The Guardian,* 17 September 2015.

military coup of July 2013, with the aim of repressing political opposition and preventing protests.[17] Their report explains that sexual violence is widely used during arrests and in detention centres, and affects members of the opposition to the government of General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, but also demonstrators, NGO representatives and persons accused of threatening the moral order. Thus women, children, students and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities have been among the victims of these abuses. Concerning women, the report specifies that in many cases they become targets since they are considered to be the repositories of a collective identity, and are abused as a way of punishing the communities to which they belong. They also denounce abuses against women during raids and search operations, arbitrary arrests of women to pressurise their families, and sexual violence against political prisoners and activists. According to sources close to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) –a movement declared illegal and terrorist by the government– cited by the media, there are about 150 women members of the organisation in prison and there are records of at least 20 cases of rape and some forced abortions. Meanwhile, it has been stressed that, traditionally, abusive practices involving the use of sexual violence were applied against detained people or within police stations, but it has been observed that they are becoming increasingly prevalent in public places, a fact associated with an increased presence of the police, the army and security personnel in public spaces (streets, highway checkpoints and universities, among other locations).

With regard to the situation in **Sri Lanka**, the United Nations submitted its report on human rights violations during the armed conflict.[18] The report states that between the breakdown of the cease-fire between the government and the LTTE on 21 February 2002 and the end of the armed conflict on 19 May 2009, serious human rights violations were committed that may constitute international crimes. With regard specifically to gender violence, the report notes that there was systematic sexual violence by security forces basically against men and women detainees and especially after the end of the armed conflict. Sexual violence was a specific form of torture to extract information and punish and humiliate those accused of having links to the armed opposition group, the LTTE. The report notes the enormous difficulties in investigating and establishing the scale of this violence, but states that all the indications imply that the violations could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. A significant proportion of the cases of sexual violence were committed against people who were arrested following their return to the country after the armed conflict had ended. Moreover, there were reports of violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law which had a significant gender dimension, such as deliberate attacks on civilians by security forces in the final phase of the armed conflict, attacks on humanitarian facilities and especially hospitals, and the recruitment of children by the LTTE and Colonel Karuna's militia. In addition, the report also notes that there are 60,000 female-headed households in Northern Province seriously affected by food insecurity and a lack of means of subsistence, making them particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, exploitation and violence.

4.2.2. Responses to sexual violence in armed conflicts

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of the **DRC** signed a statement committing themselves to combating sexual violence and implementing a government action plan within the Congolese armed forces. The statement was seen by several analysts as an integral and decisive step in the implementation of the first Action Plan Against Sexual Violence in Conflict approved by the country's government in September 2014. The latter was a historic breakthrough but will have to be put into practice. The Action Plan aims to strengthen and increase the visibility of military justice, and improve the protection of victims and witnesses. This Action Plan builds on the commitment made by the DRC to carry out more decisive action to put a brake on the persistent sexual violence in the country, within the framework of the London summit on sexual violence of 2014. The UN Secretary General's Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, celebrated this decision during the signing of the declaration, together with the commanders of the Congolese Armed Forces; several senior government officials such as the ministers of Justice, Defence, Gender, Education and Health; the Congolese president's special representative on sexual violence and the recruitment of children; and various senior officials of the UN mission in the country (MONUSCO).

The declaration will have to be put into practice by every commanding officer in the army and requires the implementation of a series of concrete actions on the part of the military leaders, such as respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in relation to sexual violence and the implementation of specific measures against the sexual violence committed by soldiers under their command. The declaration also includes the prosecution of alleged perpetrators of sexual violence, facilitating access by military justice to the areas under their control, and handing over presumed perpetrators who are being investigated, whether these have only been accused or have already been convicted. Finally, it seeks to raise awareness

17. FIDH, *Exposing State Hypocrisy: Sexual Violence by Security Forces in Egypt*, FIDH, 19 May 2015.
18. OHCHR, *Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (A/HRC/30/61).

among soldiers about the zero tolerance policy and to carry out specific measures to ensure the protection of victims, witnesses, court officials and other key actors involved in this issue. It is worth highlighting that the defence minister established a commission which must oversee the implementation of this action plan; it includes representatives of the Army, the Ministries of Justice, Health and Gender, MONUSCO and UN Women. However, civil society denounced the lack of political will and of real progress in its implementation. In addition, relations between the UN and the DRC went through serious difficulties as a result of the government's responsibilities in the armed conflict.[19]

The Government of **Colombia** and the FARC signed an agreement on the victims of the conflict and the creation of a comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. The agreement establishes that this system will adopt a differential gender approach that takes into account the special needs of women and children and that this approach be applied to the different aspects, such as the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non Repetition, to show the diverse impacts of armed conflict on all the groups that make up Colombian society. With regard to sexual violence, it is noteworthy that it was agreed to exclude this from any amnesty, pardon or equivalent measure, along with other crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. Women's organisations had several times made contributions on how such violence should be addressed within the framework of agreements on transitional justice.[20] The women's organisations had called for the eradication of sexual violence, for the establishment of a truth commission on sexual violence and for its exclusion from amnesties and pardons. They had also stressed the importance of recognising that sexual violence is not conduct aimed at achieving the objectives of the parties and therefore cannot be related to political offences. The organisations had also called for the creation of a special program for women and children survivors of sexual violence that establishes measures for reparations, and a plan with specific structural measures to advance towards the inclusion and equality of women and girls, as a guarantee of the non-repetition of such violence. They also emphasised the importance of the commitment to the eradication of sexual violence being immediate; the importance for the civilian population of the principle of distinction; the establishment of a verification commission; of immediate care for victims of sexual violence; and of parity in the verification structures.

The Governments of **Japan** and **South Korea** reached an agreement on the issue of comfort women, under which the Japanese government apologised to the former sex slaves and committed $8 million to a fund managed by the Korean government to provide different services to the victims. It is not contemplated that victims receive any direct compensation. About 200,000 women (different investigations give figures that range from 45,000 to 410,000), mostly from South Korea, but also from other countries such as China, Philippines or The Netherlands, among others, were made into sex slaves in Japanese military brothels during World War II. However, since this issue began to receive more attention in the 1990s, only 238 women have recognised publicly having been victims, and of these only 46 are still alive. In return for the apology and the money, the Government of South Korea pledged to close the diplomatic dispute and to study the removal of a statue in tribute to the victims erected in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. Victims' organisations rejected the agreement, saying they were not consulted during the negotiating process and stressing that for these organisations a crucial aspect was the recognition by Japan of its legal responsibilities as well as the offer of formal reparations, since the compensation agreed by Japan takes the form of humanitarian aid, not of legal redress. In addition, the joint statement of the two countries avoids the circumstances in which the sexual slavery occurred, making no reference to its systematic, forced and organised nature. According to different analysts, the signing of the agreement must be understood in the context of the geo-strategic relations between the two countries and other actors of enormous importance in the region such as China or the USA. Thus, the agreement sought to strengthen diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan in the context of the existing confrontation with North Korea, and also to pave the way for the integration of South Korea into the economic association under the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP). In addition, the USA would have pressed for the completion of the agreement on comfort women, given that the strengthening of relations between Korea and Japan represents a counterweight to the power of China in the region.

The Governments of Japan and South Korea reached an agreement on the issue of comfort women that was considered insufficient by the victims

4.2.3. Other gender-based violence in socio-political crises or armed conflicts

There were a growing number of initiatives by Turkish and Kurdish women denouncing the grave escalation of violence in **Turkey**, especially in the second half of the year, with demonstrations and protests, participation as human shields, calls for the resumption of the peace process and meetings with international government

19. See the summary on DRC (east) in Chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
20. Red Nacional de Mujeres, Sisma Mujer, No es hora de callar, Corporación Humanas, *Cinco claves para un tratamiento diferencial de la violencia sexual en los acuerdos sobre la justicia transicional en el proceso de paz* and *Cinco subclaves para un tratamiento diferencial de la violencia sexual en los contextos de desescalamiento, cese de hostilidades y de cese al fuego*, 2015.

representatives, among many other examples. Also the prestigious Kurdish MP and Sakharov Prize winner, Leyla Zana, threatened on 10 September to begin a hunger strike if all acts of daily violence were not put to an end; she addressed this message to all the armed actors, and urged a restart of the negotiations. As of late July onwards, Turkey entered a scenario of a renewed war between the state and the PKK, especially after the launch of a vast military, police and judicial offensive against the PKK and the Kurdish movement, with repeated aerial bombardments in northern Iraq and areas of the south east of Turkey; the declaration of security zones, curfews, siege operations against urban centres and large scale military and police deployment; and arrests, including of journalists, of joint mayors and mayoresses, and of Kurdish activists, among other actions. In this context, the clashes between security forces and PKK guerrillas multiplied, including the actions by the PKK –which announced the end of its ceasefire in July, following the attack on a Kurdish cultural centre in Suruç attributed to ISIS– and by Kurdish urban militias.

The resumption of the war had a serious impact on civilians, including Kurdish women and girls in urban centres, mainly because of the military siege operations, which were described as disproportionate by numerous human rights advocates and organisations, both locally and internationally. Local organisations denounced deaths of civilians, including of children; cuts in electricity, water and telephone networks; blockages on access to health care; harassment of those civilians who denounce the situation, among others; and forced displacement. Women activists of the Kurdish movement and female lawyers also reported cases of the use of sexual torture by security forces against Kurdish women and the murder of women activists. The Kurdish movement also warned of the blocking of access to delegations of observers at various times. A women's delegation that visited Cizre after the end of the blockade in September informed of specific impacts on women, including several abortions as a result of the stress caused by violence. Other voices, including international organisations and agencies, also expressed concern. Thus, in the context of the siege of Cizre in September, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, expressed grave concern at the escalation of violence in the country and the "alarming" information that he was received about the situation in Cizre, including serious allegations of the disproportionate use of force by security forces against civilians, the grave disruption of public life, including basic services such as health care, and a situation close to a complete news blackout. In terms of figures, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey stated that between mid-August and early February 2016, at least 224 civilians, including 31 women, had been killed in the 58 military siege operations that took place in at least 19 districts of seven cities. The civilian casualties included 42 minors and 30 people of more than 60 years of age. Particularly affected were localities such as Cizre and Silopi (Sirnak province), and Sur (Diyarbakir). Furthermore, some human rights defenders also expressed concern about the impact on civilians of the urban warfare strategy carried out by the urban Kurdish militias, given that it puts the civilian population of urban areas in a vulnerable situation.

Box 4.2. **The refugee crisis in Europe from a gender perspective**

The refugee crisis that has been going on over the last few years and that achieved great public visibility during 2015 is a reflection of the very serious consequences of armed conflict and socio-political crises on the lives of people, forcing millions of human beings to flee their homes. Analysing this human rights crisis from a gender perspective allows us to bring to light some important elements that permit a more complete and less partial approach. One factor that must be taken into account is demography. While there are no figures broken down by sex for all the forcibly displaced persons in the world, the truth is that in recent years there has been a significant increase in the availability of statistics, and one can see from the partial data available that of the forcibly displaced population, around half are men and half women. At the end of 2014, women represented 49% of the refugee population and 52% of the internally displaced population, according to the UNHCR. However, in the refugee crisis affecting Europe, the numbers are significantly different. According to some partial statistics provided by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), of the 382,000 migrants and refugees who entered Macedonia between June and December 2015, 51.4% were adult males, 16.9% were adult women, and 29% were minors, with the latter figure not being broken down by sex.[21] Different media reports have indicated, however, that most of the minors who reach European shores are boys, and especially so in the case of unaccompanied minors. According to figures provided by the UNHCR, of all persons arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean between January 2015 and January 2016, 49% were men, 19% were women and 31% were minors, the latter figure not being broken down.[22] Thus, demographics do matter and should be the subject of closer attention. On the one hand they reveal the need for a deeper analysis of the reasons for this imbalance between men and women in the composition of

21. International Organisation for Migration, Situation Report, Europe/Mediterranean Migration Response, 31 December 2015.
22. UNHCR, Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean [consulted on 14 January 2016].

the population that reaches European shores fleeing war and poverty. On the other, the experience itself of the process of displacement and refuge must also be addressed from a gender perspective.

With regard to the causes of forced displacement, some factors that could explain the figures would include the differential gender impacts of armed conflicts, which mean that a larger number of men are victims of forced recruitment and also constitute most of the direct casualties of armed conflict.[23] Armed conflicts impact differently on men and women, a point which has been the subject of much attention by feminist researchers. These have analysed aspects which go from how gender has shaped the genesis of armed conflict, legitimising patriarchal ideologies that justify and support militarisation, to more concrete aspects such as the impact of conflict on women's health or on sexual violence. In the case of the forced displacement of adult men, which as noted above appears to be the main demographic group within the refugee population, a key factor could be the great impact in terms of lethality of the Syrian armed conflict. During 2015, for example, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the deaths of nearly 21,000 civilians (of a total of 55,000 deaths as a result of armed conflict), of which about 9,000 were adult men and 2,000 were adult women.[24] The proportion of men among dead combatants is much higher, since the presence of women in the armed groups is very low.

Another added factor to consider is the impact of forced recruitment policies. In Syria there is a policy of forced conscription for all men of 18 years of age. This has led a large number of young men to move to areas not under government control, but also, and especially with the advances by the jihadist insurgency and their growing power, has led to an increase in the number of men fleeing the country.[25] Despite the ban on any man of between 18 and 42 years of age leaving Syria without prior authorisation and despite the restrictions of countries like Iraq and Jordan on Syrian men entering their territory, the fact is that many Syrian men are crossing borders illegally and resorting to the trafficking networks to reach Europe. In the case of women, one of the factors provoking displacement would be the impact of sexual violence. The UN Secretary General's report on sexual violence in armed conflict presented in March 2015 explains how women who have fled Syria frequently refer to the fear of sexual violence as one of the important factors behind their decision to seek refuge.[26] Sexual violence can be used as a military strategy in armed conflict not only because it allows the "clean up" of a territory but because such actions also ensure that the will of the population to return to that territory will be much reduced.[27] Moreover, many women report having been the victims of sexual violence during the journey undertaken to reach Europe, or having been forced to resort to sex to cover the high costs of illegal access to Europe.

It is also important to analyse from a gender perspective not only the causes of forced displacement or the dynamics that take place during the transit to countries of refuge, but also what happens once those people fleeing war arrive in Europe. Women face specific difficulties in the processes for obtaining asylum, since gender violence is not always recognised as a motive which justifies access to this fundamental right. Moreover, the humanitarian assistance provided to refugees does not always respond to gender criteria; it often doesn't take into account specific aspects, such as attention to the sexual and reproductive health of women, or deal with sexual violence. With regard to men, especially in the case of young men travelling alone, sometimes they are perceived as a security threat, since they are subject to the stereotypes of combatants or terrorists, and it is not always recognised that on many occasions such men are fleeing to avoid having to actively participate in the use of violence. These gender stereotypes are sometimes mixed in with other racist and Islamophobic prejudices concerning Muslim men, such as in the reports of sexual assaults against women in Cologne,[28] highlighting the importance of carrying out an intersectional analysis that addresses the complexity of the situation, taking into account the fact that sexual violence always responds to dynamics of inequality and the abuse of power between men and women.

Thus, the refugee crisis that is affecting Europe is shown to be a phenomenon of enormous complexity that must be analysed from a gender perspective which highlights how inequalities between men and women, as well as gender roles, have a clear impact on the causes, dynamics and consequences of the forced displacement of the population, as well as on the responses to it.

23. Ormhaug, Christin Marsh; Patrick Meier and Helga Hernes, *Armed Conflict Deaths Disaggregated by Gender*, PRIO Paper. Oslo, PRIO, 2009.
24 Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, *Syria is still bleeding... more than 55,000 thousand persons were killed during the year of 2015*, 31 December 2015.
25 Rochelle Davis, Abbie Taylor and Emma Murphy, "Gender, conscription and protection, and the war in Syria" *Forced Migration Review,* Nº 47, September 2014.
26. UN Security Council, *Conflict-related sexual violence. Report of the Secretary General,* S/2015/203, 23 March 2015.
27. Wood, Elisabeth J., "Rape Is not Inevitable during War" in Morten Bergsmo, Alf B. Skre, and Elisabeth Jean Wood, eds., *Understanding and Proving International Sex Crimes*. Oslo, Torkel Opsahl Academic Epublisher, 2012.
28. Hundreds of women were assaulted on New Year's Eve in Cologne and other German cities. Some of the men arrested as suspected assailants were identified as asylum seekers, generating a response in the form of racist attacks against refugees residing in Germany.

4.3. Peacebuilding from a gender perspective

This section discusses some of the most important initiatives aimed at incorporating a gender perspective within different areas of peacebuilding.

4.3.1. Resolution 1325

The year 2015 marked the 15th anniversary of the adoption by the UN Security Council of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Coinciding with this anniversary, an extensive review was carried out of its implementation over those 15 years by the United Nations, governments and civil society.[29] For this purpose different evaluation reports were presented and **dan open debate was held at the Security Council.** In addition to the **UN Secretary General's annual report,** submitted to the Security Council in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, the United Nations presented the ***Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*** produced independently by the expert Radhika Coomaraswamy. In addition, the Security Council adopted a **new resolution, 2242 (2015)**, which comes on top of the seven previous resolutions that make up the agenda on women, peace and security — 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013).

The Global Study conducted by Radhika Coomaraswamy represents the most comprehensive review that has been carried out so far into the implementation of resolution 1325. It is based on a comprehensive review of this implementation, including specific research on the various issues involved as well as numerous consultations with the different stakeholders (civil society, governments, regional organisations and the United Nations), providing relevant conclusions. **The study, which insists that resolution 1325 must be interpreted as a human rights mandate for the international community**, provides evidence of the importance and the positive impact of the inclusion of the gender dimension in conflict prevention and peacebuilding –especially in peace processes and agreements– emphasising the importance of reinforcing prevention, as against the use of force and the securitisation of conflict. In addition, it notes the many challenges that remain for its implementation. Among these one could highlight the fact that most of the advances made are still far from being standard practice and are rather "first achievements". It is also noted that the persecution and prosecution of sexual violence is very limited; that it has not been possible to demonstrate that the regulatory frameworks have served to deter future acts of violence; and that the underrepresentation of women at all levels is a persistent practice, especially in peace processes and peacekeeping missions, where the equal and meaningful participation by women is still a distant goal. The report also identifies as one of the greatest obstacles the lack of funding for the agenda on women, peace and security. Another of the challenges identified refers to the rise of extremism and of violent antiterrorism policies which have a severe impact on the lives of women. In the process of preparing the report various consultations were carried out with civil society, which presented contributions to enrich the report.[30] The study makes a number of recommendations and proposes lines of action for Member States, international organisations and civil society:

- No to militarisation: yes to prevention.
- The women, peace and security agenda must be respected as a human rights mandate.
- Mediators of peace processes and leadership of UN field missions must be proactive with regard to women's participation: the presence of women makes peace sustainable.
- Perpetrators must be punished and justice must be transformative.
- Localisation of peacebuilding programmes must involve the participation of women at every level and be supplemented by a comprehensive security plan to protect women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.
- Funding women peacebuilders and respecting their agency is one important way of countering extremism.
- All key actors must play their role: Member states, regional organizations, media, civil society, youth.
- It is necessary to work toward a well-informed security council that applies a gender lens to all issues that come before it.
- Across the board, 15% of all funding for peace and security must be earmarked for programmes impacting women.
- Toward a strong gender architecture at the United Nations, in the field and at headquarters.

As noted above, during the holding of the open debate at the Security Council, resolution 2242 was approved and Member States took on a series of commitments to improve the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.[31] With regard to the new resolution, its terms refer to issues such as the financing of the implementation of the women, peace and security

29. For a broader evaluation of the high level review, see: María Villellas, *15 years of resolution 1325. An assessment of the women, peace and security agenda*. ICIP/ACCD, 2015.
30. See for example: WILPF, *Through the Lens of Civil Society: Summary Report on the Public submissions to the Global Study on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,* WILPF, 2015; Danielle B. Goldberg, *Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Survey for the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security. CSO Perspectives on UNSCR 1325 Implementation 15 Years after Adoption,* GNWP, Cordaid, ICAN, NGOWG on WPS, 2015; María Villellas, *Enhancing women's participation in peace processes. Submission to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security*, Escola de Cultura de Pau, 2015.
31. For a complete list of the commitments taken on by Governments in October 2015, see: http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states/call-to-action-2015.

agenda; the integration of gender within the analysis and the work of the different United Nations entities; the strengthening of the participation of civil society and the integration of the agenda on women, peace and security within the so-called fight against terrorism and the fight against violent extremism. The latter was one of the major issues throughout the whole revision process of the 15 years of implementation, and revealed tensions and differences between governments' agendas and civil society's priorities. Women's organisations expressed their concern that the agenda on women, peace and security may be used to legitimise militarist actions that may come to involve violations of human rights, at the service of governmental interests and policies, and stressed the importance of strengthening the process of empowerment of women living in contexts affected by extremism. They pointed out the difficulties involved in categorising violence and making distinctions between extremist violence and other forms of violence. However, there was agreement on highlighting the serious impact of violence on the lives of women in those contexts that the international community identifies as affected by extremist violence and the ongoing violations of their rights which these women have to face up to.

The European Union (EU) established a high-level position dedicated to gender and to resolution 1325: the EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325

With respect to the **open debate at the Security Council,** it should be noted that this had both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, there was a significant presence of governments, an indication that this agenda has managed to achieve a higher political profile over recent years. In addition, the resolution adopted as a result of the debate was approved with the support of a large number of Governments. On the negative side, one must point out the fragility of the commitments adopted, which do not allow to conclude that there is political will to advance substantively in the implementation of the agenda. Many of the commitments listed in the resolution refer to activities that are already being carried out by the different countries and the sums promised in the financial commitments are very small. Thus, it becomes clear that governments give importance to the issue because of the visibility it has acquired internationally, but that there is no genuine desire to reinforce its implementation.

With regard to the **implementation of resolution 1325 by other organisations,** it should be noted that the **European Union** (EU) established a high-level position dedicated to gender and to resolution 1325: the EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and appointed Mara Marinaki to the post. The creation of a high level post on gender was a demand made by civil society organisations in the field of gender and peacebuilding. Also, the subsequent Joint Staff Working Document of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020* (SWD [2015] 182 final) of 21 September, makes a commitment to "set up a gender advisory board with leading experts from partner countries". Unlike the situation in the EU until now, other regional and international organisations did have high level posts in the field of gender equality and the women, peace and security agenda (for example, at the UN the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; the AU's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security; the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representative for Gender Issues). The EU has developed a significant normative framework on women, peace and security, which commits its institutions to implement that agenda and evaluate and report on its implementation. However, independent evaluations and reports coincide in pointing to a lack of implementation, despite certain progress in recent years. The Swedish NGO Kvinna till Kvinna has described the creation of a high-level position dedicated to resolution 1325 and the gender perspective as a great success.

4.3.2. The gender dimension in peace negotiations

Various cases of peace negotiations during 2015 were especially relevant from a gender perspective. Different recent studies have highlighted how the presence of actors apart from the direct parties to the conflict, and especially from civil society, increases the sustainability of peace processes. In addition, the inclusion of civil society and, specifically, of women's groups, has positive effects both on the chances of reaching peace agreements, and on their sustainability.[32]

Colombia

The peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC progressed well throughout the year, with the significant incorporation of different gender related issues and the participation of women and LGBTI groups, which is unusual in processes of this type. Especially noteworthy aspects of the process included, for example, the holding of several meetings of the gender subcommittee, which brought together representatives of women's and LGBTI organisations in Havana. In February there was a visit by a second delegation, comprising representatives of the following organisations: Alianza tejedoras de vida, Corporación Caribe Afirmativo, the Women's Section of the National Coordination of the Displaced (CND), ANMUSIC, Red Mariposas and the

32. See "The gender perspective in peace processes: inclusion and sustainability" in chapter 5 (Opportunities for peace in 2016).

National Network of Women Ex-Combatants of the Insurgency. In March a further meeting was held with the participation of representatives of the Asociación Campesina del Catatumbo (Ascamcat), Asociación de Mujeres Araucanas Trabajadoras (AMART), Colombia Diversa, Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) as well as a leader of the university student movement. As on previous occasions, the participating organisations urged the negotiating parties to agree to a bilateral ceasefire and an immediate de-escalation of the armed conflict and to put an end to violence against women, in addition to making an explicit statement condemning discrimination against the LGTBI population. Moreover, after the visits by civil society representatives, a meeting was held by the subcommittee with the experts Magalys Arocha, Mireia Cano and Hilde Salvesen in order to present recommendations to guarantee the inclusion of a gender perspective within the agreements already reached. In August, a delegation of women representing various women's organisations and research centres –Corporación Humanas, IMP, DEJUSTICIA, the School of Gender of the National University, Sisma Mujer, Taller Abierto, Corporación Mujer Sigue Mis Pasos, Ruta Pacífica, Casa de la Mujer and PROFAMILIA– participated in a further session of the Gender Subcommittee in Havana and met with representatives of the government and the FARC to address the issue of gender violence and sexual violence. The participating organisations called on the parties to commit themselves to eradicating gender violence in all its forms, including sexual violence, and to promoting measures for the acknowledgement of what has occurred, reparations, clarification, access to justice and participation in the design of the justice mechanisms agreed upon, as well as non repetition. The women's delegation stressed the need for sexual violence to be framed within a broader context concerning gender inequalities and discrimination, which is necessary in order to achieve a sustainable and lasting peace.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the UN Secretary General's special representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, visited Colombia and later went to Havana to meet with the delegations to the negotiations. This meeting coincided with the declaration by the Colombian Government of the National Day for the Dignity of Women Victims of Sexual Violence in the Internal Armed Conflict. And finally, there was the especially remarkable agreement reached between the government and FARC on victims of the conflict and the establishment of a comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition.[33] In parallel, civil society and women's organisations continued their intensive work to promote the participation of women in the process and to press for it to integrate a gender perspective.

Cyprus

Within the framework of the resumption in May of the formal process of peace negotiations, at the end of that month the parties to the conflict agreed –along with other commitments– to the creation of a technical committee on gender equality, whose mandate includes reference to UN Security Council resolution 1325. The participants were appointed to the committee (men and women: Xenia Loizidou, Soula Zavou, Mary Papadopoulou, Soula Hadjikyriacou, Helen Apegitou, Harris Chrysostom, Maria Hadjipavlou, Olga Demetriou and Nicolas Kyriacou) and the first meeting was held in August, followed by other meetings during the rest of 2015. The European Women's Lobby, which expressed its support for the resumption of peace talks, warned that negotiations were clearly lacking in a gender perspective and that the adequate participation of women had been excluded from the process.

The conflict parties in Cyprus agreed to the creation of a technical committee on gender equality as part of the peace process

In October the committee proposed various measures to the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, who were leading the negotiations, including for the negotiating teams, working groups and technical committees to have a gender balance, a ratio of between 30 and 50%. Furthermore they urged each working group and technical committee to include an expert on gender and peace. The committee has the objective that all the documents prepared with a view to being incorporated in a future peace agreement and a constitution comply with international standards on gender equality and with practices relating to resolution 1325. In his report in January 2016, the UN secretary General welcomed the steps taken to strengthen the participation of women in the negotiations, including the creation of the committee as well as an increase in the number of women involved in the peace process, whether as members of the negotiating teams or in groups of experts, though he did not specify percentages or numbers.

Afghanistan

The revival of the peace process with the Taliban insurgency in 2015 also brought with it the need for a greater presence of women in the framework of the negotiations and there were some interesting initiatives in this regard. The most significant of these during the year was the unprecedented meeting held in Oslo between Taliban representatives and a delegation of nine women, which included female members of parliament, members of the High Council for Peace and

33. See section 4.2.2 of this chapter.

human rights defenders. The meeting was facilitated by the Norwegian Government as part of its support for the peace process in Afghanistan, but had no official status and was described as preliminary. The women did not participate as representatives of the Afghan government. The Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid acknowledged that the meeting, which continued over several days, had taken place, but said discussions were informal and that they could not be described as peace negotiations. Regardless of the degree of official status of the meeting, its symbolic value is undeniable, since the participation of women in formal peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan has been greatly restricted by all the actors involved. Alongside the Oslo meeting, there was also a direct meeting between the Taliban and women in the framework of the informal meeting in Qatar organised by the Canadian organisation Pushwag Council. This was attended by a delegation which included several women from the Afghan government, and a Taliban delegation. The former MP, Malalai Shinwari, who was present at the meeting and who held direct talks with the Taliban during its celebration, reported that the Taliban had several times made reference to women's rights, and had stated that they were not opposed to women's political participation. The text recording the conclusions of the meeting noted that all attendees stressed the importance of the right to education for men and women.

These meetings were preceded by some mainly symbolic gestures following the formation of the new government led by President Ashraf Ghani, which could indicate that the new government will be more committed to improving the situation of women in the country. For example, in a gesture that was widely reported by the media, especially the international media, during his speech on taking office Ghani directly recognised his wife's work. Also, the fact that she is actively engaged in the defence of the internally displaced population is something unprecedented in the political life of the country. Meanwhile, some women were appointed to political positions such as governorships, in line with the new government's electoral promises. However, these appointments have been plagued by difficulties for various reasons, which include the opposition of Parliament and the difficult security situation. Afghan women who occupy important public posts are subjected to continuous threats and aggressions, and in some cases have even been killed. On the other hand, in June the Afghan Government presented its National Action Plan (NAP) on resolution 1325, one of whose aims is to ensure the effective participation of women in the peace process. The NAP does not for the moment include any concrete implementation plan, although during the meeting of the country's donors held in September, the donors demanded the implementation of this plan. The human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) called on several occasions for decisive steps by the Government to actively involve women in peacebuilding in the country.[34] HRW called on the Afghan Government to include women in the top level advisory team for the peace negotiations, for the women who form part of the High Council for Peace to have a more significant role, for the effective implementation of the NAP on 1325, and for a greater presence of Afghan women in the various international forums in which the country participates. Meanwhile, women's organisations called on donors to give no support to processes that exclude women and called for more demands to be made on the Government to carry out real changes. However, no woman participated in the peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government held at Murree (Pakistan) in July.

The revival of the peace process with the Taliban insurgency in 2015 also brought with it the need for a greater presence of women in the framework of the negotiations

Turkey

With regard to the negotiations between the Government of Turkey and the Kurdish armed group, the PKK, which came up against numerous obstacles in the first months of the year and eventually collapsed in the middle of 2015, it should be noted that in January the process of dialogue incorporated Ceylan Bağrıyanık. This Kurdish activist and writer began to participate as a representative of the Kurdish women's movement within the Kurdish delegation which visited the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Imrali prison. The Kurdish delegation was one of the actors in the Imrali process of dialogue between Turkey and the PKK leader, after the failure of the earlier Oslo process (2009-2011), with the aim of acting as a bridge between Öcalan and the leadership of PKK, as well as making contact with the Turkish authorities. The direct involvement of the Kurdish women's movement in the delegation had been a repeated demand which was finally accepted by the Turkish government after earlier reticence and many obstacles. Her incorporation brought a strengthening of women's participation in the process, due to the greater interaction and direct communication between the women's movement and the delegation, and the greater opportunity that implies for reinforcing the specific demands of Kurdish women. Bağrıyanık's participation is part of the double organisational system of the Kurdish movement (a mixed system and a women only movement). The female MP, Pervin Buldan, who also participated in the delegation, stated that the women's perspective had been discussed at all meetings of the Kurdish delegation. Furthermore, among the ten points of the so-called Dolmabahçe Declaration in February –in reference to the joint appearance of representatives of the Kurdish movement and of the Government, and which allegedly declared the existence of the basic elements of

34. HRW, "Afghanistan: Don't Leave Women Out of Peace Talks", *HRW*, 1 March 2015; HRW, "Afghanistan: Accept Full Role for Women in Talks. Donors Need to Back Women's Rights, Uphold UN Resolution 1325", *HRW*, 27 September 2015

an agreement to proceed with negotiations– a point was included which referred jointly to solutions and legal guarantees for questions relating to women, culture and ecology. At the same time, the women's movement intended to work on all issues from a gender perspective.

After the collapse of the negotiating process –with the authorities banning visits to Öcalan from April onwards, and the resumption of open war in July– there followed calls for peace talks to be restarted. From the Kurdish side, among other voices, the Free Women's Congress (KJA, organisation of the Kurdish women's movement, which has had legal status as an association since May) called for the immediate resumption of peace talks in Turkey. In their appeal they put special emphasis on the process ensuring the security and freedom of the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Moreover, civil society organisations such as Women's Initiative for Peace, an independent platform that brings together women from diverse backgrounds and fields, including Turkish and Kurdish academics and activists, called for dialogue and organised events during the year in favour of a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

On the other hand, in the context of the increasing repression against activists and civil sectors, legal proceedings were initiated during the year against Kurdish municipal councils. In addition to allegations concerning support for a terrorist organisation, among others, charges were also included against the co-leadership system. For years the Kurdish movement has promoted the co-representation of men and women at all levels, including in the political party and in councils. Thus, informally –since it is not covered by Turkish law– they have created the position of co-mayor or co-mayoress, a person that in practice exercises mayoral functions jointly with the legally elected mayoress or mayor. This forms part of their political agenda of promoting gender equality and combating discrimination.

4.3.3. Civil society initiatives

During 2015 women's civil society organisations carried out many different peacebuilding initiatives. A study by the Badael Foundation documented **the peacebuilding work undertaken by women's organisations in the context of the armed conflict in Syria**.[35] The study covers the work of 49 organisations, includes 35 individual interviews with activists, and reports on discussion groups organised with 100 Syrian women in the greater part of Syrian territory, although excluding some areas particularly affected by violence, such as Homs, Hama and Raqqa. The work of these organisations includes aspects from the political arena (eg. promoting the introduction of a gender perspective in a future Syrian Constitution or organising hearings with victims of sexual violence), efforts to reduce violence and the fight against extremism (working against the recruitment of children by the various armed groups) and the promotion of the nonviolent transformation of conflicts, among other issues. The investigation documents the extremely difficult conditions faced by women activists and their organisations in carrying out their activities, although it acknowledges that a civil society, active against violence, does exist. The report identifies the urgent need for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire as the first requirement for a process leading to negotiations that can open the way to a political solution.

In May, a delegation of 30 international peace activists from 15 countries, together with hundreds of women from **North and South Korea**, held a march, "Women Cross DMZ", in the demilitarised zone separating the two states. They demanded the formal end of the Korean war, the reunification of families separated by the conflict and a leading role for women in the negotiations between the two countries. The march, held on International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, was composed of activists from around the world, including the Nobel Peace Prize winners Leymah Gbowee and Mairead Maguire, among other prominent women, who crossed the 4km that make up the territorial frontier of the truce that was reached in 1953, although with some restrictions by the South Korean Government. The participants' proposals, with the aim of promoting peace negotiations between the two countries, include the demining of the demilitarized zone and the signing of the treaty to ban landmines, as well as the establishment of protocols to allow international delegations to cross the demilitarised zone in representation of the citizens of both countries. The participants cited UN Security Council resolution 1325 in support of their call for a greater participation by women in the resolution of this dispute and warned of the profoundly negative impact of militarisation on the living conditions of the population. The march was criticised by different social sectors, which accused the activists of serving the interests of North Korea.

Hundreds of women from North and South Korea held a march in the demilitarised zone separating the two states

The **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** celebrated the centenary of its creation in 1915 during World War with the organisation of an international congress and conference that brought together more than 1,000 women activists for peace from around the world. Under the slogan "Women's Power to Stop War", WILPF agreed the manifesto that will guide its work for peace over the coming years, calling for complete global disarmament; economic systems that provide welfare for all human beings and for other forms of life on the planet; for

35. Razan Ghazzawi, Afra Mohammad and Oula Ramadan, *"Peacebuilding Defines Our Future Now" A Study Of Women's Peace Activism In Syria.* Badael Foundation, 2015.

multilateral organisations capable of mediating between countries and ensuring compliance with international law; democratic governance from the local to the global level; social systems that do not grant privileges to individuals or populations of a particular physical type, culture or religion; the end of male supremacy and respect for women's rights and human rights.

4.3.4. International gender equality agenda

In March the 59th session was held of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59), thus marking the beginning of a year with many meetings and events related to the international agenda on gender equality. Coinciding in 2015 were the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+20), which was revised during CSW59; the review of the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325; and the impulse for a new agenda for sustainable development with the completion of the process of the Millennium Development Goals. The balance made by women's civil society organisations at the end of the CSW59 was negative, pointing to the disturbing lack of commitment by governments to real progress on the international agenda of gender equality. The CSW59 ended without having agreed any document of its final results, only a Political Declaration that 1,000 women's organisations around the world considered to be low profile, generalist, and with language that was a long way from focussing on human rights. Thus, the content of the Political Declaration contrasted sharply with the strong emphasis on gender equity within the framework of rights in the Beijing Platform for Action 20 years ago. Some of the most important issues absent from the Declaration were sexual and reproductive rights, the impact of climate change on women's lives, the situation of women who defend human rights or the key role of the feminist movement in advancing towards gender equality.

Women's civil society organisations pointed to the lack of commitment to real progress during the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Box 4.3. **Sustainable Development Goals: Are they sufficient for gender equality?**

In September the United Nations adopted the new development agenda that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) whose term ended in 2015. The new agenda, known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is made up of 17 goals to be achieved over the next 15 years. It should be noted that the agenda includes a specific goal on gender –"Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". This is an important point, since one of the main weaknesses of the MDG agenda was that it did not explicitly set the objective of equality. In addition, other objectives contain explicit references to equality or lay down targets that will be critical to achieving full equality. Women's organisations carried out intensive work during the years prior to the adoption of the agenda to ensure that the gender dimension had a significant presence in the final document, on the premise that it is impossible to achieve genuinely sustainable development without achieving full equality between men and women. Some of the most important goals for equality established by the final document are the eradication of all forms of discrimination; the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and of harmful practices such as forced marriage or genital mutilation; the recognition of unpaid work; achieving the full participation of women with equal opportunities for leadership; or universal access to sexual and reproductive health, among other issues. It should be noted that following the adoption of the SDG agenda a UN conference took place, "Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action", which brought together different governments with the aim of showing specific commitments on equality matters.

Despite the recognition that the document approved represents a significant step forwards compared to the MDGs, different women's platforms that have carried out close monitoring and advocacy work throughout the process stressed that the text of the SDGs is still not ambitious enough. The agenda does not address with sufficient force the question of deep inequality in the distribution of wealth worldwide or the international system of trade and finance, issues which lie at the root of global inequalities and have important implications in terms of inequality between men and women. It also concedes an important role to the private sector without addressing the responsibility of this sector for generating poverty, exclusion and inequality worldwide. On more specific points, the SDG agenda does not explicitly address the rights of LGBTI people and neglects some forms of discrimination such as those arising as a result

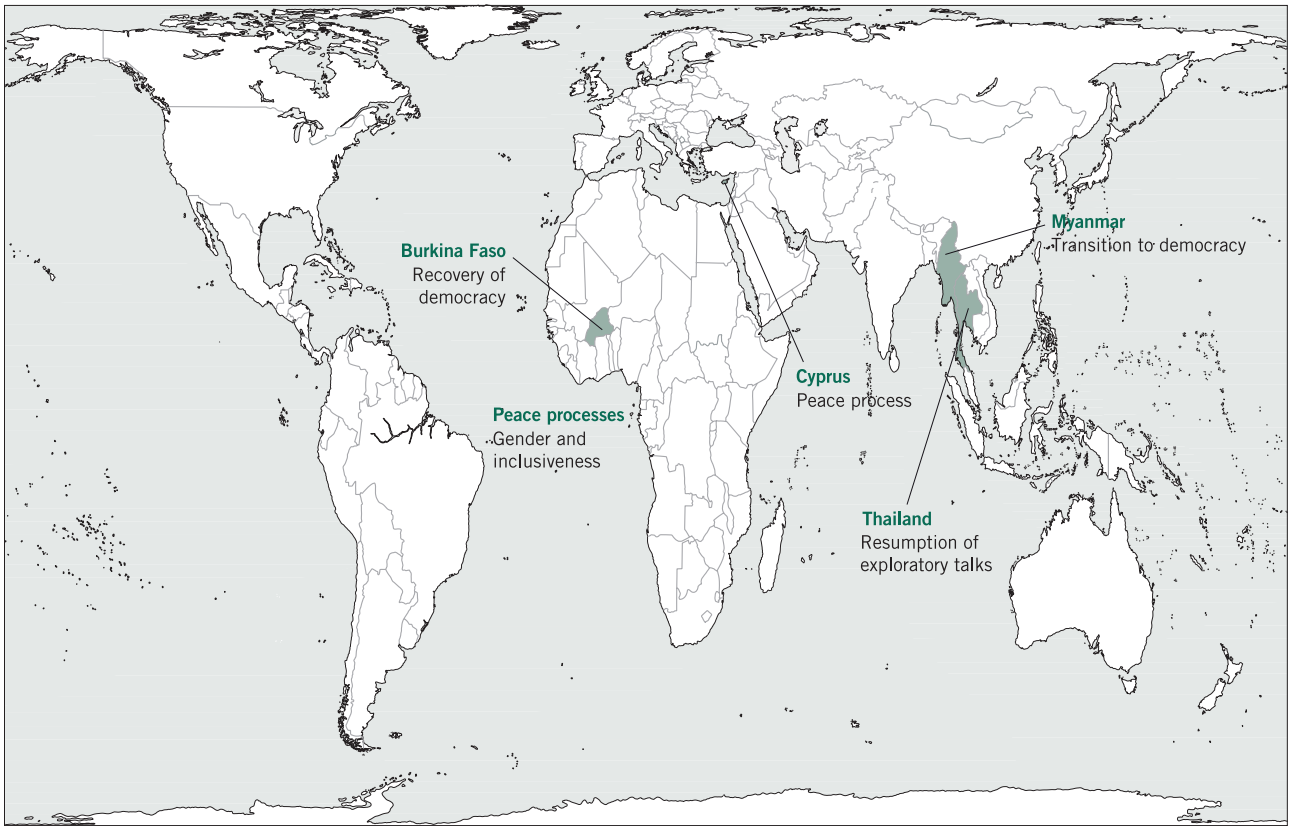
of processes of migration. Moreover, some authors highlighted the fact that several countries include reservations regarding the targets related to sexual and reproductive health (targets 3.7 and 5.6), which means a weakening of the text, since the States express reservations concerning the fulfilment of these goals. Moreover, the weakness of the implementation mechanisms provided for by the text was also highlighted. Furthermore, it must be noted that in goal 16 on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, there is no specific reference to gender equality or to the international agenda on women, peace and security, which are crucial aspects for building international peace, despite the clear demands for this made by women's organisations. So the overall balance is uneven, because although progress has been made by giving visibility to the crucial and essential role of gender equality in complete sustainable development, the mechanisms adopted are not strong enough to achieve this.

5. Opportunities for peace in 2016

After analysing the year 2015 from the perspective of conflicts and peacebuilding, the UAB's School for a Culture of Peace highlights in this chapter five areas that are opportunities for peace in 2016. They are contexts where there is, or has been, an armed conflict or socio-political crisis in the past where a series of factors converge that could lead to a positive turn in the situation and/or issues of the international agenda that may, in the short to mid-term, contribute to building peace. The opportunities identified for 2016 refer to the resuming of peace negotiations in Cyprus; the new political stage in Burkina Faso after the transitional process was completed; exploring peace scenarios in Thailand; the transition process to democracy and peace in Myanmar; and the positive impact of gender mainstreaming in peace processes in terms of inclusiveness and sustainability.

All these opportunities for peace will require a real commitment and huge efforts from the parties involved and, whenever required, the support of international actors for the existing synergies and positive factors to lead to the building of peace. In this regard, the analysis by the School for a Culture of Peace aims at offering a realistic view of these scenarios and issues, identifying the positive elements that feed the hope for changes, but without neglecting the difficulties that exist and could be an obstacle for the realisation of these peace opportunities to come true.

Map 5.1. **Opportunities for peace in 2016**



5.1. The resumption of negotiations in Cyprus: the definitive peace process?

The year 2015 witnessed the resumption of formal negotiations in Cyprus to achieve a solution to the unresolved conflict dividing the island, which has been split de facto since Turkey's military invasion in 1974 in response to the overthrow of Cypriot President Makarios in a coup aimed at uniting it with Greece. In recent years, attempts at peace officiated by the UN have not yielded any positive results, such as the Annan Plan (2004), the Gambari Process (2006), the process begun in 2008 and other successive approaches. After a stagnant period lasting just over six months, the negotiations were resumed in May 2015, boosted by encouraging new factors: a local leadership fully committed to the process, clear support from the international community, a relaunch of the dialogue in an intense format aimed at achieving tangible results and progress between May and December, including significant measures of confidence, preliminary agreements on weighty issues and the mobilisation of non-governmental actors from both communities of the island. At the same time, the unresolved conflict in Cyprus has a long history of failed attempts at peace, including in the final stage of popular ratification, as both sides still have deep differences on substantive issues and its internationalised dimension puts it in a sensitive position owing to outside factors. The window of opportunity is clear, which requires sustained and fully engaged support in order to overcome obstacles and take advantage of the favourable situation.

Based on the will of local leaders, initiatives by non-governmental actors and a wide array of confidence-building measures, the resumption of negotiations in Cyprus in 2015 could produce substantial results in 2016

The periodic interruptions in the negotiations in recent years, including a breakdown between late 2012 and February 2014 due to the economic crisis on the island and the influence of the rotating presidency of the EU held by Cyprus, then another between October 2014 and May 2015, finally gave way to the formal resumption of the peace process in May. The decision of both sides and Turkey to halt unilateral exploration of hydrocarbon reserves in the Mediterranean was influential in restarting the talks. From there, in a context where the UN confirmed the presence of appropriate conditions for dialogue, the new negotiating process was launched in line with the seven-point joint statement of February 2014 (acknowledgment that the status quo is unacceptable; determination of the leaders to resume structured and results-oriented negotiations, in which all unresolved issues would be put on the negotiating table and addressed separately in order to reach an agreement as quickly as possible; the admission that resolution of the conflict in Cyprus is based on a united Cyprus, under a bicommunal and bizonal federal model with political equality and a single citizenship and international legal personality; the requirement of approval of the solution in separate but simultaneous referenda; the principle that nothing is decided until everything is decided; full powers for the negotiators and the possibility that the leaders of both communities may meet as many times as necessary; and the parties' commitment to create a positive atmosphere). Moreover, in this decision to resume the talks on a consensual basis, several factors came together to strengthen the prospects for sustainable negotiations.

First was the commitment to the process shown by both local leaders: Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and new Turkish Cypriot President Mustafa Akıncı, who was elected in the runoff of the Turkish Cypriot elections in April 2015. In his time as mayor of the Turkish part of Nicosia between 1976 and 1990, Akıncı promoted cooperative projects between both communities of the island. The will of both leaders was reflected in commitment to an intensive process and the implementation of significant measures from the beginning. The first such actions included the symbolic walk of both leaders around the old town of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot parts of Nicosia, during which they stressed their commitment to reach a solution and a shared vision for a united Cyprus. The expression and symbolism of clear will is key to the negotiating format followed in Cyprus, which is based on the political leaders and their negotiating teams. Also of note, Cyprus will hold parliamentary elections in May 2016, which could influence the political atmosphere, though Anastasiades, who was elected in February 2013, has two years left in his term and may possibly serve another. In any case, to prevent possible negative influence in the electoral campaign, President Anastasiades indicated that it would not be possible to organise a referendum on the solution only a few months prior to the election date.

Another factor strengthening the new electoral process is international support through the mediating role played by the UN and the explicit support shown by international stakeholders involved in the conflict, like Greece and Turkey, leading figures of the Green Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities and the Turkish military presence on the island. The UN Secretary-General's new special advisor on Cyprus, the Norwegian diplomat Espen Barth Eide, who was appointed in August 2014, has played a prominent role in restarting the process. Regarding the support of countries relevant to the Cypriot conflict, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras have been in regular telephone contact over various issues, including the conflict, and after a visit by Tsipras to Turkey in November 2015, both leaders declared that there was a window of opportunity. According to Davutoglu, there was a common approach

between Turkey and Greece to support the negotiations in Cyprus. Other international actors, like the European Union, have also shown their support for the talks to resume. As part of the process, the political leaders of Cyprus have stressed that the final agreement include the principles of the EU and the working group on EU issues will meet in the second half of the year to address the inclusion of the acquis communitaire of the island. In turn, the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, visited Cyprus in July as a sign of commitment to the process. The United States and the United Kingdom also expressed confidence that the process would move forward.

Furthermore, since it restarted in May, the negotiating process advanced at an intense pace, with a wide array of confidence-building measures and preliminary results. Thus, the presidential and negotiating teams met in many rounds in 2015, as did lower technical levels. As a sign of true engagement, confidence-building measures were implemented from the beginning. One such measure came during the joint meeting prior to the resumption of formal negotiations, when Anastasiades provided information on the coordinates of minefields installed by the Cypriot National Guard before 1974. Likewise, Akıncı announced the cancellation of the administrative forms required at crossing points to enter the Turkish Cypriot area. Other measures agreed in May included the commitment of cooperation to open new crossing points, practical measures to advance towards interconnecting power lines, the beginning of discussions and proposals regarding the interoperability of mobile telephones, the prevention of radio interference and the establishment of one committee on gender equality and another on culture. In turn, as part of the evolution of the discussions in the negotiating process, the parties reached an agreement in July to respect individual property rights and create a commission on property with a mandate to resolve claims under agreed criteria and with equal participation of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot members. This is a substantive issue in the process. According to the UN advisor, there will be different alternatives for regulating property rights, with various options for people dispossessed as a result of the conflict to reclaim their property. However, the difficulties around this and other issues became apparent over the course of the year, and in September the parties acknowledged that there was hard work ahead. At the same time, the continuation of the process until the end of the year and new approaches in various areas continued to point to the possibility of making progress towards a definitive solution. Thus, among other moves, the parties agreed to create a Technical Committee on Education aimed at promoting confidence-building measures in the field of education and good practices in education for peace, a measure agreed after incidents in which Greek Cypriot students attacked Turkish Cypriot vehicles in the capital in November.

International stakeholders like the UN, the EU and key regional players like Turkey and Greece have given their support to the new stage of the peace process in Cyprus

Another factor that has accompanied the process and has helped to create a social atmosphere more conducive to a negotiated solution is the mobilisation of local non-governmental actors, including religious leaders, economic players, women's organisations and people in the sports industry, among others. Though not new, this mobilisation has continued over time, increasing social support for a solution and eroding lines of division. Thus, for example, Anastasiades and Akıncı met in September with Orthodox, Armenian, Maronite and Catholic Christian religious leaders and with the Turkish Cypriot Muslim leader, the Grand Mufti. However, despite the role of women in demonstrations for peace in Cyprus, complaints persisted that the negotiations lacked a gender perspective. Thus, despite the announcement that a committee on gender equality would be created in May, there was hardly any information about its scope and activities.

In brief, on the whole there is a host of factors and conditions conducive to a negotiating process that could be decisive in achieving a negotiated solution in Cyprus. At the same time, the accumulated experience of past failures shows that the dividing issues are complex and that substantive disagreements and agreements among the negotiating elite do not always obtain support from the population later if it is not included throughout the process. As such, great effort is required for 2016 to be a decisive year in the transformation of the conflict in Cyprus.

5.2. New political era in Burkina Faso after the transitional stage ends

On 29 November 2015, Burkina Faso held its first presidential and parliamentary elections since the fall of the regime of Blaise Compaoré. The elections, which spelled the end of the transitional government, returned control of the country's political institutions to the Burkinabe people after 18 months, ushering in a new era of democracy. The elections have had great historical significance as they are the first open elections in decades, the first in 27 years in which Compaoré's name does not appear on the ballot, and especially because the new incoming president has become the first civilian elected head of state in 50 years. Altogether, this represents the start of a new period of democracy for Burkinabe society, in which the withdrawal of the Army from political life would be a central element helping to establish the new era.

The celebration of the presidential and legislative elections were the final stage in the country's transitional period after the fall of the Compaoré regime on 31 October 2014 after 37 years in power, thanks to the Burkinabe people's historic uprising against its attempt to reform the Constitution to allow the president to run for a new term. The Constitution prevented Compaoré's re-election, as it stipulated that the president of the country could only be elected to two five-year terms of office, which he had already completed. The popular revolts that led to the regime's ouster prevented passage of the constitutional reform and opened a transitional process under civilian leadership (though with the Burkinabe Army present) that appointed an interim civilian president, Michel Kafando, and planned to hold presidential and legislative elections after one year of transition, among other measures. At first the elections to end the transitional stage were planned to be held in October 2015, but a coup d'état on 16 September, the sixth in the history of the country since it won independence, dissolved the transitional government and institutions and postponed the elections. The coup was carried out by the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP), an elite corps created by the Compaoré regime and composed of around 1,200 troops. General Gilbert Diendéré, who had been Compaoré's right hand man during his regime, seized power, jeopardising the continuity of the transition in the country. However, Burkinabe civil society, led by the civic movement Balai Citoyen, took to the streets once again to defend the transition. This popular pressure and the international community's reactions to the coup, with the UN, AU, ECOWAS, France and the United States condemning the new destabilisation of the country, among others, forced the coup leaders to give up their ambitions and hand power back to the transitional authorities. The government was restored days after the coup and immediately agreed to dissolve and disarm the RSP, arrest those responsible and set a new timetable for the elections.

Undoubtedly, this event marked the biggest threat experienced by the country in the 18-month transition period, a process that was marked by other significant hurdles, especially linked to the suspension of Compaoré's party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), and other forces and movements related to the former regime that were blocked from participating in politics and from running in the elections. The new electoral law issued by the transitional authorities prohibited members close to the deposed President Compaoré from running in the elections, thereby raising tensions in the country. In this scenario, the presidential and legislative elections are presented as the definitive end of the previous regime and the beginning of a new period in the history of the country.

Characterised by greater plurality, the new national political scenario in Burkina Faso spells the end of the one-party dominance of the state and opens a new political framework for establishing democracy

On 29 November, the Burkinabe people elected Roch Marc Christian Kaboré to be the new president with 60% turnout. The candidate of the People's Movement for Progress (MPP),[1] he won the first round with 53.49% of the votes, beating out Zéphirin Diabré, of the Union for Progress and Change (UPC), who received 29.65%. The results of the legislative elections, where 99 different political parties competed in a historic high, were much more balanced. No political party won an absolute majority,[2] which forced the formation of coalitions and pacts to rule, increasing the plurality of the political system in the country but also laying fragile bases for the new government. The elections were declared free, clean, transparent, peaceful and valid by different domestic and international observation agencies, and all participating political forces acknowledged the results. This is without a doubt a step forward in the national history of Burkina Faso, since before, during the Compaoré regime, opposition parties frequently boycotted the elections and did not recognise their results.

While it does open a new path in Burkina Faso's history, the victory of Kaboré's MPP has been questioned by some analysts about its ability to break with the

1. The People's Movement for Progress (MPP) party was created by Kaboré after he split from Compaoré's hegemonic party, the CDP, in January 2014, due to the attempts to reform the Constitution to make the president's re-election possible. The MPP is a centre-left party, although its ranks include many former members of the CDP.
2. Kaboré's party (MPP) obtained 55 of the 127 seats, Diabré's UPC won 33 seats, supporters of the former regime achieved 18 seats and the Sankarist party received (UNIR/PS) 5 seats.

previous regime due to the fact that the MPP and its candidate Kaboré come from the former ruling party, the CDP. Under Compaoré´s regime, Kaboré held the offices of prime minister, president of the National Assembly and chair of the CDP. However, the new president-elect had resigned in opposition to the attempts to reform the Constitution to change the presidential term limits, joining the opposition and the popular demonstrations that led to the fall of the regime. This history casts doubt on the MPP's ability to break with the old politics, and yet the post-election scenario, characterised by a greater plurality of national political forces that push the parties into dialogue, provides a more competitive form of politics for Burkina Faso and the end of the one-party system of domination by the state. These factors make the situation at the end of the transition conducive to breaking with remnants of the former regime.

In this new era beginning in the country, the strengthening of the civic movement will be essential to controlling the institutions and consolidating democracy, as it has amply demonstrated its capacity for coordination and mobilisation. Events like the demonstrations that precipitated the fall of Compaoré's regime and civilian resistance to the presidential guard's coup d'état, which helped to make it fail, have revealed the capacity of civil society in the country. Its members will undoubtedly continue to play a key role as guarantors of the new national politics.

On the other hand, the reform of the security sector, especially regarding the Armed Forces, whose appointed commission was already established by the interim government of Michel Kafando, is presented as crucial for definitively relegating the Army from control of the national political system. In June 2016, the appointed commission must present its proposal for reform, which may include a permanent ban on the participation of members of the military in politics, as well as proposals to strengthen mechanisms of accountability and good governance in the military. The dissolution of the presidential guard has been a great step towards national stability, although the state's ability to reposition members of it in other military corps and to prevent them from becoming a factor of instability in the country again remains to be seen.

The reform of the security sector in Burkina Faso is presented as crucial for definitively relegating the Army from control of the national political system

In this regard, it should be noted that the main risk factors to bear in mind in this new era in Burkina Faso include the arrest and subsequent legal proceedings begun against General Diendéré, the leader of the RSP, who has been charged by a military tribunal with being directly responsible for the coup d'état and with high treason, as well as sharing responsibility along with ten other people for the death of former President Thomas Sankara, cases that may undoubtedly open old wounds and bring instability to the country. Another factor that could negatively affect national stability is regional destabilisation, marked by the armed conflicts in Mali and Nigeria, and the impact that they could have on the country's borders.

Although there are some factors of risk that could destabilise the consolidation of democracy in the country, the prospects raised by the end of the transitional period, coupled with the strength of civil society that has given proof of its role as a guarantor of democracy, is generating high hopes in Burkinabe society for the new political period under way.

5.3. Exploration of scenarios of peace in southern Thailand

With the facilitation of the government of Malaysia, exploratory meetings and talks resumed in 2015 between Bangkok and the main rebel groups active in the Muslim-majority southern provinces fighting for the independence, self-determination or cultural and religious singularity of the region that was once the Sultanate of Patani. These are the first exploratory talks to take place since the collapse of the last dialogue process in late 2013 and after the coup d'état carried out by the Armed Forces in May 2014. The prospects of reaching an agreement in the short term seem highly unlikely, mainly because of the military junta's flat refusal to come to terms with the main substantive demands of the insurgent groups, the doubts expressed by the most important armed groups in the south regarding the start of negotiations with the government and the transitory nature of the current military junta, which in principle should be dissolved after the approval of a new Constitution and the holding of elections at a date still to be determined. However, despite the difficulties experienced by the talks and the scepticism voiced by some analysts about the future of the current dialogue process, there are some reasons to believe that during 2016, both parties can make substantial progress in understanding their demands, identifying aspects they share and building mutual trust. In short, pending better political circumstances, these exploratory talks could lay the groundwork for a formal negotiating process to resolve or channel the armed conflict, currently one of the most virulent in all of Southeast Asia.

The three conditions that had been agreed in 2014 by the Thai and Malaysian governments to begin any peace process were partially or completely fulfilled in 2015: a substantial drop in violence before the start of negotiations, the inclusion of all armed groups operating in southern Thailand and the presentation of common or unified demands by the insurgent organisations

One of the aspects that has generated the most optimism regarding the prospects of the current dialogue process is the fact that three conditions that had been agreed in 2014 by Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak to begin any peace process were partially or completely fulfilled in 2015: a substantial drop in violence before the start of negotiations, the inclusion of all armed groups operating in southern Thailand and the presentation of common or unified demands by the insurgent organisations. Regarding the first point, both the government and various research centres have observed a notable reduction in violence in the three Muslim-majority southern provinces in 2015. Bangkok has even indicated that it has fallen by approximately half. The reasons for this decrease are varied and surely include the improved effectiveness of the state security forces and greater collaboration with the citizenry in counterinsurgency operations, as claimed by the government, but it should not be ruled out that the leaders of the armed organisations may have decided to reduce the intensity of their armed struggle as a gesture of goodwill and a demonstration of their ability to influence the combatants on the ground. Notably, one of the main reasons for the collapse of the peace process was the inability of the armed group sitting at the negotiating table, the BRN, to demonstrate its real influence and control over the combatants on the ground and to achieve a reduction in violence during Ramadan in 2013.

Regarding the other two principles agreed by the Thai and Malaysian governments, the inclusion of all armed groups in the peace talks and the presentation of unified demands, an umbrella organisation called Mara Patani (Majilis Sura Patani, or the Patani Consultative Council) was created in 2015, which groups together six armed groups active in the southern part of the country: the BRN, GMIP, BIPP and three PULO factions. During their presentation in August, the representatives of Mara Patani declared their intention to use the dialogue and other peaceful means to achieve the end of the conflict and a solution based on recognition of the Patani people's right to self-determination. They also said that their minimum demands included formation of an autonomous region with powers over taxation, local security and natural resource management, with official recognition of the Malay language and Jawi alphabet, the application of sharia to the Muslim population and the introduction of an Islamic education system. Mara Patani also raised three preconditions for dialogue: guarantees of safety and immunity for their negotiators, recognition of Mara Patani as the legitimate representative of the six aforementioned armed organisations and official acknowledgement from the government and Parliament that the peace process forms part of the national agenda and is a state policy, regardless of the changes to government that could occur in the future. Beyond the internal cohesion of Mara Patani and the government's desire to come to terms with some of its proposals or conditions, various analysts stressed the importance of reaching this common platform among insurgent organisations with different paths, compositions and objectives after many months of discreet meetings and the decisive participation of the government of Malaysia, which has historically had influence over some of these rebel groups.

Another positive aspect noted by some analysts is the military junta's recognition on various occasions over the course of the year that the counterinsurgency strategies pursued by the state since 2004, the year when the armed conflict resumed, have been mistaken or

insufficient, so the only option for ending the conflict or substantially reducing the violence was through dialogue and cooperation between the state, the rebel groups and the civilian population. This acknowledgement of dialogue as another (though not the only) strategy for the military junta to redirect the armed conflict is even more relevant considering that previous negotiating processes, and particularly the one that took place in 2013 under the government of Yingluck Shinawatra, faced strong opposition from the Thai Armed Forces and the main security institutions in the country. Thus, the fact that the military junta is promoting a dialogue process substantially lowers the chances that a boycott by some parts of the state could weaken or shut down the peace talks. In this regard, some reports have underscored that the current government negotiating team, led by former General Aksara Kerdphol, is much more coherent and cohesive than that of the previous government. Likewise, the fact that the insurgent movement has not won a single significant concession from the state after 12 years of armed struggle caused some discouragement among certain groups while also encouraging a more pragmatic and positive view among some insurgent leaders.

Despite all these positive aspects, many reports have cast doubt on the chances of success of the current negotiating process due to the lack of political will on both sides and to the political and social circumstances in Thailand. On various occasions, Bangkok has categorically rejected the fundamental core of the insurgent movement's demands, ranging from recognition of the right to self-determination for the Patani people to the granting of autonomy or even administrative decentralisation to the Muslim-majority provinces of the south. It has also been reluctant to accept some of the procedural conditions set by Mara Patani, like its formal recognition as a partner, the inclusion of the peace process in the national agenda and the acceptance of international observers. Regarding the final point, the successive Thai governments have always considered the conflict in the south of the country as a strictly domestic affair and have been opposed to any sort of internationalised resolution to it. Indeed, media sources revealed that the government is even afraid that by posing as a coordinating body of insurgent groups, Mara Patani may attain an international visibility and importance that Bangkok regrets. Thus, according to some analysts, the current government is a prisoner of its own nationalism and unitary and homogeneous view of the country, and therefore cannot offer anything that could be attractive to the insurgent groups. According to these analysts, Bangkok is trying to lure the rebel movement to the negotiating table in order to achieve a reduction or elimination of the violence (hence its insistence on agreeing on safety zones or violence-free zones with the armed groups) or achieve its submission or demobilisation with hardly no political cost.

From the insurgency's point of view, the main obstacle to the current process is the seeming lack of clarity on the position of the southern armed group BRN concerning the peace process. Officially it forms part of Mara Patani (in fact, the president of Mara Patani is also a member of the BRN), but shortly after the public presentation of this unitary platform, several BRN representatives released a statement harshly criticising the government for a lack of political will and clearly stating that they would not participate in the negotiations. According to some sources, an important core of the BRN's leadership is wary of the current peace process and supports resuming negotiations with an elected government that is not subject to the current interim military junta and is not opposed as clearly as the current government to some forms of autonomy or decentralisation. Whatever the case may be, it is not clear whether the conflicting statements concerning the peace process issued by different members of the BRN reflects some internal factionalism within the group or is BRN's strategy to maintain control of Mara Patani while putting pressure on the military junta. Regardless, it appears beyond doubt that the BRN's position will end up being decisive for the future of the region, as it is the groups responsible for the vast majority of the acts of violence committed by the insurgency. According to some sources, the rest of the Mara Patani groups have little influence over the violence in the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat and are participating in the negotiations to try to win certain concessions.

In short, the difficulties facing the dialogue process are so considerable that a peace agreement (or even a rapprochement of positions regarding its contents) is unlikely in the short term. However, on several occasions both the government and Mara Patani have declared their commitment to the negotiating process and the meetings were never interrupted at any point during the year, even during major acts of violence. The many discreet meetings that took place in 2015 resulted at the end of the year in a government proposal to form a joint working group with the participation of civil society organisations to address the subjects of security, development and justice simultaneously. Given the social and political polarisation that Thailand has experienced since the start of the 21st century and the intensity of the armed conflict since 2004, any attempt at dialogue should be seen as a positive aspect in the resolution of an armed conflict that seems unlikely to be solved through military means.

5.4. The transition to democracy and peace in Myanmar

Since 2011, Myanmar has set out on a path of political transformation and transition towards democracy following the dissolution of the military junta and the formation of a civilian government, with the country undergoing important changes. Although there are many challenges ahead in terms of respect for human rights, security and democracy, 2015 has been a year of crucial events for deepening this transition, especially after general elections were held in November and a ceasefire agreement was signed with different rebel groups in October.

The elections gave an overwhelming majority to the main opposition party, the NLD led by Aung San Suu Kyi. The NLD received 79% of the seats in contention in elections where the incidents were minor in nature, considering conditions in the country. Even with 25% of the seats reserved for the military, the NLD maintains a majority, which will allow it to legislate. It may also designate two of the three presidential candidates and elect the future president of the country. The result was accepted by the current government without hesitation and points the way to a great opportunity for establishing democracy in the country in the near future, though not without risks or uncertainties in a context fraught with political and security problems.[3] The elections were considered credible by observers and although some incidents were reported, they were generally described as fair and transparent.

In 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi won a victory at the polls in Myanmar and a ceasefire agreement was signed with eight insurgent groups

The government finally resulting from these elections, which will be formed in March, is the first elected through the polls and created without direct or indirect military guardianship in the past five decades. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who cannot serve as president of the country because the Constitution prevents anyone with foreign children from holding the office, has invited the chief of the Armed Forces, the current president and the speaker of Parliament to begin talks about a future national reconciliation government. The ability of the NLD, and particularly its leader, to manager relations with representatives of the former regime will be key to the possible success of the transition, given that the military retains significant amounts of power in the country. In addition to the seats directly reserved for the military, a constitutional provision assigns management of the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and Border Affairs to the Army, which are key portfolios in a country like Myanmar. Therefore, the ability to conduct a constructive dialogue will largely depend on the possibility that the NLD may consolidate its power and ensure the sustainability of the transition and of the political and institutional changes that may take place. Constitutional reform will remain one of the central themes of political debate in the country, as the NLD gives it maximum priority. The Burmese Army currently has effective veto power over any reform, so any step that may be taken in this direction must necessarily be agreed by the military. The negotiations will undoubtedly be complex and striking the right balance between transformation and sustainability will require great negotiating skill. The NLD should try to stress the legitimacy given to it by the polls, but weakening the power of the hitherto almost omnipotent military establishment will not be an easy task. Without a profound transformation of the Burmese Armed Forces, it will be difficult to establish democracy in Myanmar.

The elections have demonstrated the high levels of popular support enjoyed by the NLD and the majority's rejection of the current government. Therefore, the NLD has enormous legitimacy to take political action. However, the expectations that have been created around its victory and its ability to transform the political and social situation in the country may lead to enormous frustration. since the towering constraints can hardly be overcome in a short period of time. Therefore, the NLD will have to manage these expectations so its massive support does not lead to widespread social discontent that threatens its government action. Furthermore, management of the tension surrounding the situation of the Rohingya population will be another key issue that it will have to address and a litmus test for the quality of democracy in the country.

In addition to the elections and the political process, a ceasefire agreement was signed in October between the government and eight armed ethnic insurgent groups, the KNU, KNLA-PC, DKBA, Pa-O NLO, CNF, ALP, ABSDF and RCS/SSA. The process to achieve an end to the armed conflict in Myanmar had begun in 2011 with the signing of bilateral ceasefire agreements between the government and 14 armed groups from 2011 to 2013. The agreement reached in 2015 was the result of a long negotiating process that had included 15 armed groups, although seven did not sign it in the end. As some have noted, while the agreement is far from optimal, it paves the way for a broader political agreement.[4] The negotiating process and the signed ceasefire agreement have served to strengthen the peace agenda in the country, giving greater visibility and legitimacy to ethnic actors and breaking some taboos, such as the territorial organisation of the country and recognition of its minorities. The fact

3. International Crisis Group, *The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications*, Asia Briefing no. 147, 9 December 2015; Transnational Institute, "The 2015 General Election: A New Beginning?" *Transnational Institute,* 4 December 2015.
4. International Crisis Group, *Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive,* Asia Briefing no. 146, 16 September 2015; Horsey, Richard, "The Importance of the Myanmar Peace Deal", In Pursuit of Peace, International Crisis Group, 16 October 2015.

that it was signed before the elections were held was a major achievement. Risks would have grown otherwise, because the formation of the new government resulting from the elections would cause delays in its ratification and boost the risk of a change in the direct dialogue. In fact, the text of the agreement was accepted by all the groups participating in the elections, even those that finally did not sign it, as the only issue where agreement had not been reached was over which groups could sign it. Another point that has been identified as a great hurdle in this process is its national and internal nature, since at least publicly, international presence and support has been minimal.

So while the agreement is extremely important because it opens the door to a subsequent agreement to end the armed conflict in the country, many risks flow from the process. For example, even though the ceasefire agreement has been described as "nationwide", many rebel groups have been excluded from it, since the government refused to allow groups with which it had not reached a previous bilateral ceasefire accord to sign the joint agreement. Especially significant is the fact that the UWSA, SSA and KIA, groups that control vast territories and possess many weapons, were left out of the agreement. The armed clashes have persisted in recent months and clashes have been reported between the Burmese Armed Forces and especially the KIA, SSA-N, TNLA, MNDAA and AA. The civilian population continued to be forcibly displaced as a result of the clashes, highlighting the difficult security conditions that much of the population experiences in areas affected by the violence and the serious impact that it is continuing to have on daily life.

In addition to the evident risks stemming from the persisting violence, there are others of a political nature, mainly the change that will occur in the government negotiating team as a result of the elections. Although an NLD representative attended the agreement ceremony, the party was not represented at the highest level and did not sign it, claiming that the exclusion of different insurgent organisations undermined its "nationwide" scope and made it partial, helping to create misunderstandings between the groups that signed it and those that did not. The coming months will be decisive for the future of the political negotiations with the insurgency and also for the possibility that more armed groups will join the ceasefire agreement. Meanwhile, the insurgent coordinating body UNFC, which unites 11 armed groups, has announced the formation of a committee to start talks with the NLD.[5]

Myanmar is going through a crucial period for the future of the country. The many challenges in terms of democratisation and security are pressing and require prudent analysis unswayed by triumphalism. On the one hand, the Burmese Army, the greatest exponent of the former regime, wields enormous power and has a great ability to control the political institutions of the country, which is a major burden for any democratisation process. On the other hand, armed violence persists with some intensity and many groups, some with important military capacity, have been excluded from the ceasefire agreement. However, since the transition in the country began in 2011, reforms have gradually been established. An especially clear demonstration of this is the fact that the election results were accepted by the sitting Burmese government. If the progress achieved in recent years is consolidated in 2016, backsliding in Myanmar will move towards the horizon.

5. Radio Free Asia, "Myanmar Chief Negotiator Briefed Aung San Suu Kyi on Peace Process: NLD", Radio Free Asia, 9 December 2015.

5.5. The gender perspective in peace processes: inclusiveness and sustainability

Peace processes are extremely important opportunities for transforming armed conflicts, overcoming violence and building peaceful and fair societies. In recent years, the role of civil society in peacebuilding in societies affected by armed violence and conflict has become a subject of great and growing importance for peace research. More specifically, one of the central questions revolves around the role that civil society should play in peace processes and how its participation should be organised. Alongside more classic views sustaining that the peace negotiations should give priority to the presence of the actors engaged in the armed conflict for the purpose of achieving peace agreements that effectively end the direct violence and clashes, other perspectives point to the importance of creating inclusive processes that would lead to greater sustainability of the agreements potentially reached.

Parallel to this debate, the adoption in 2000 of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and the subsequent establishment of the women, peace and security agenda also demonstrated how important it is that peace processes are inclusive from a gender perspective and do not reproduce dynamics of inequality that relegate women away from the public sphere. Traditionally, peace processes have been profoundly patriarchal and excluded women, in line with the dynamics that have prevailed in armed conflict. Since the players at the negotiating table are usually those who have fought on the battlefield—or more specifically, the elite of such groups—and given that they are heavily male-dominated, women have had little opportunity to participate in negotiating for peace.

Agreements reached in more inclusive peace processes are more sustainable

The research available on women's participation in peace negotiations indicates that the presence of women is very low, despite an increase observed in recent years. In 2012, the United Nations indicated that in a sample of 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2012, only 2% of the main mediators, 4% of the witnesses and signatories and 9% of the negotiators were women.[6] The UN Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security in 2015 echoes some partial progress, indicating that there was at least one woman in all the UN mediating teams for the 12 peace processes the organisation supports and in nine of them the women held senior positions, which represents an increase over previous years. Moreover, all these processes included mechanisms for consulting with civil society and women's organisations were consulted in 88% of them.

Despite the progress, these figures still reveal some very specific aspects of the peace process and do not allow a thorough assessment of women's ability to influence. Trying to go beyond the purely quantitative aspects of the presence of women in peace processes or other actors that have also been traditionally excluded, some recent research has tried to evaluate the impact of this presence in more qualitative terms. Different studies have tried to answer the question of whether more inclusive peace processes get better results, especially in terms of sustainability, than those that are not. Although this is an emerging field of research that requires further development, the first findings suggest that in addition to the parties to the conflict, the presence of other actors boosts the sustainability of peace processes, especially when coming from civil society. A study conducted by the University of Uppsala concluded that in cases in which a peace process has been reached and where civil society participated in some way, this presence has a positive impact on the sustainability of the peace processes, increasing it.[7] From a sample of 83 agreements signed after the Cold War, the author concludes that the possibilities of failure of signed agreements reached with the participation of civil society drops by 64%, compared to 50% in all cases.

Other authors have focused specifically on the impact of the presence of women and after analysing 48 cases of peace negotiations and political transitions, they conclude that when groups of women had a substantive ability to influence the results, the odds increased that an agreement was reached and there was no case in which this presence had a negative impact.[8] Only in one case with a significant presence of women was an agreement not signed, compared to six cases without the presence of women in which agreements were not reached. In addition, according to this study, the presence of women's groups was crucial to promoting the signing of agreements and overcoming moments of deadlock and also increased the chances that the agreements achieved were implemented.

Therefore, these studies show that the inclusion of civil society, and especially women's groups, has positive effects on the possibilities of reaching peace agreements and their sustainability, without this presence leading to any negative effects that could hinder the signing of the accords. Thus, the arguments traditionally used to justify the exclusion of civil society and women's organisations, claiming

6. UN Women, *UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security,* UN Women, 2012.
7. Desirée Nilsson, "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace", *International Interactions,* 38(2), pp. 243–266, 2012.
8. Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin and Thania Paffenholz, *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes,* International Peace Institute, June 2015.

that their presence undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of peace negotiations, are demonstrated to be wrong.

The trend cited in the UN Secretary-General's aforementioned report related to the growing presence of women in peace negotiations could present an opportunity to build more inclusive processes that are more sustainable at the same time. In addition to greater inclusiveness, other authors have stressed how important it is that peace agreements include the gender perspective in their content and also make increasing (though insufficient) reference to women and the gender dimension in the signed texts. Before Resolution 1325 was approved, 11% of the 1,168 total peace agreements reached between 1990 and 2014 included references to women or the gender dimension, whereas 27% did so after it was approved.[9] Not only have agreements increased, but so have the processes of which they form part.[10] The greater presence of women in negotiations, as well as their growing capacity in influencing peacebuilding efforts resulting from the adoption of Resolution 1325, could be one of the main factors explaining this greater reference to the gender dimension in signed peace agreements. The presence of groups of women with the ability to influence has helped to add to the discussions various specific issues and concerns on the agenda of the negotiations[11] and this may be having a material impact on the wording of the agreements. The inclusion of women's rights and the gender perspective in the peace agreements is of great significance for the design of post-war rehabilitation processes that are inclusive and respectful of gender equality.

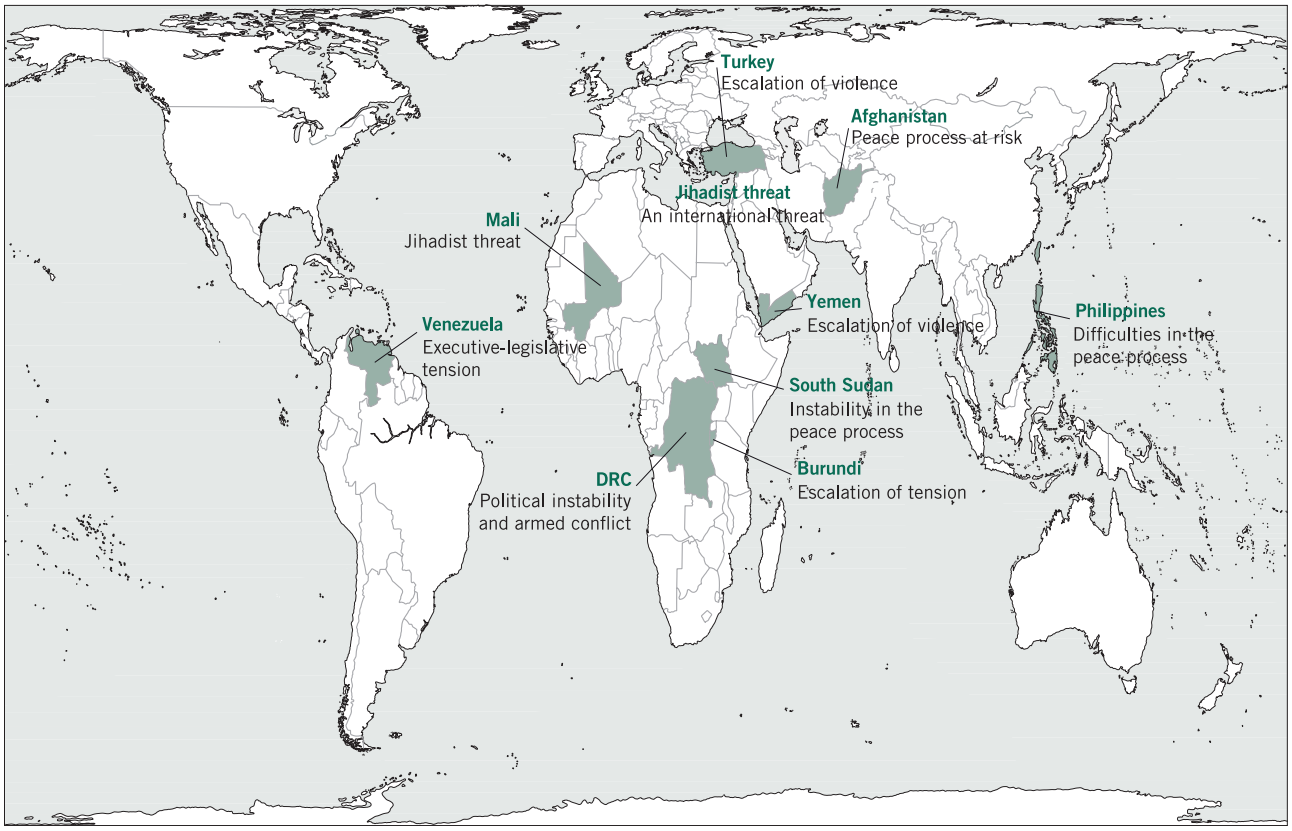
In conclusion, based on the observation that women have traditionally been excluded from negotiations, studies have tried to show how their inclusion is an issue of social justice as well as a way to make peacebuilding forces more sustainable and effective. Recent research reveals that processes upholding the principle of inclusiveness for civil society stakeholders in general and women in particular have concrete positive effects on sustainability. It also shows the impact that this presence may be having on creating agreements that include gender equality to a greater extent and how this addition may lead to more equitable post-war rehabilitation processes. Therefore, this trend must be strengthened in order to make progress in implementing processes that help to build a sustainable and inclusive peace.

9. Christine Bell, *Text and Context. Evaluating Peace Agreements for their 'Gender Perspective'*, Political Settlements and Research Programme, October 2015.
10. Several agreements may be signed in the same process, so it is important to include the gender perspective in agreements signed in different processes.
11. Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin and Thania Paffenholz, op. cit.

6. Risk scenarios in 2016

Drawing on the analysis of the contexts of armed conflict and socio-political crisis in 2015, in this chapter the School for a Culture of Peace identifies ten scenarios that, due to their conditions and dynamics, may worsen and become a focus of greater instability and violence during 2016. The risk scenarios for 2016 refer to an increase in violence and instability in Burundi that have taken the country to the verge of a civil war; the risk posed to stability by the activities of Jihadist groups in Mali; the prospects of increased violence and political turmoil in DRC; the fragility of the peace agreement in Sudan that may call into question its implementation; the polarisation of powers in the new political scenario in Venezuela; the impact of the lack of legitimacy of the Taliban leadership in the Afghan peace process; the difficulties experienced in the Mindanao peace process; the risks of the conflict between Turkey and the PKK to drift further; the severe deterioration of the situation in Yemen after a surge in the dynamics of violence in the country; and the destabilising effects of the Jihadist threat at a global level.

Map 6.1. Risk scenarios in 2016



6.1. On the brink of civil war in Burundi

A significant deterioration in governance in Burundi has taken place in recent years. Signs of the gravity of the situation include the growing authoritarianism of President Pierre Nkurunziza, revealed during the political crisis stemming from the 2010 elections, the increasing institutional deterioration and the shrinking of the public space available to the opposition, Nkurunziza's controversial candidacy for a third term, his victory in a presidential election lacking all credibility, the escalation of political violence and failed coup attempt in May, human rights violations and pressure on the opposition media.

The transition process that began with the signing of the Arusha Accords in 2000, aimed at ending the armed conflict that started in 1993 and the ethno-political violence that had affected the country since independence in 1962, formally ended in 2005 with the approval of a new Constitution that formalised the sharing of political and military power between the two main communities, the Hutus and Tutsis, and the elections that led to the formation of a new government led by Pierre Nkurunziza. Meanwhile, it was not until December 2008 that the last armed group, the FNL of Agathon Rwasa, signed a definitive agreement that opened the door to its participation in the elections in 2010. However, by 2005 relations between the authorities and the opposition had already become difficult and there were also divisions within the ruling party (CNDD-FDD), including the expulsion and subsequent imprisonment of its chair, Hussein Radjabu, accused by Nkurunziza's government of organising a new armed group. The growing authoritarianism and social polarisation was reflected in the elections in 2010, marked by an atmosphere of violence and the opposition's complaints about pressure and acts of intimidation that it blamed mainly on the CNDD-FDD and the government itself, though also on the new party FNL to a lesser extent. The CNDD-FDD triumphed in the communal elections in May amidst accusations of fraud from the opposition. Based on this situation, the opposition boycotted the presidential election, which was accompanied by an escalation of violence that continued after it had ended, including attacks, cases of torture and detentions of activists, explosions, arson against offices and demonstrations by youth groups, especially the youth wing of the CNDD-FDD, the Imbonerakure, among other issues. The institutions remained under the control of the CNDD-FDD, which stepped up pressure on the opposition and shrank the public space, while corruption grew.

Until 2014, the guarantors of the Arusha Accords were complacent with the regime despite growing corruption and authoritarianism in Burundi

This development towards authoritarianism after the 2010 elections triggered opposition protests that led to an action-reaction loop between the CNDD-FDD, the government and the opposition in the climate of a permanent pre-electoral campaign prior to the elections in 2015. The harsh repression of the opposition in 2014 and the beginning of 2015 included the arrest and trial of opposition leaders,[1] threats against journalists (100 exiled, almost the whole sector) and human rights advocates (trial and subsequent release of famous local human rights activist Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa due to international pressure) and government strategies to divide the opposition by promoting factions within the political parties, among other issues. This situation worsened because of the calculated ambiguity with which President Nkurunziza and the CNDD-FDD raised the possibility of him running for a third term. The Arusha Accords of 2000 set a two-term limit by direct universal suffrage (Article 96 of the Constitution), but faced with the possibility of him forcing his candidacy for a third term, in January 2015 over 300 civil society organisations launched a campaign called *Halte au troisième mandat* ("No to a third term"), in line with the Arusha Accords and the Constitution. He announced his candidacy in April 2015 and it was ratified by the Constitutional Court in May. Nkurunziza argued that his first term after the transition should not count because he was selected by the upper and lower chambers, as admitted exceptionally in Article 302 of the Constitution to accommodate the outgoing president of the transition in 2005. Even leaders of his own party and the Council of Elders of the CNDD-FDD (executive body) were opposed to his candidacy, which led to some of them being expelled. His candidacy set off widespread demonstrations in April and May in an atmosphere of political violence that killed around 240 people between April and November, according to the UNHCR, and more than 210,000 people fled the country. Despite the social protests, the legislative and communal elections were held on 29 June. They were won by the CNDD-FDD in a climate of fear and boycotted by the opposition. Later, the presidential election took place on 21 July, which the opposition boycotted again. The election was criticized unanimously, including by the local Catholic Church, and described as not credible by the international community due to the atmosphere of violence, intimidation, restrictions on the media and lack of legitimacy of Nkurunziza's third term.

There is some division within the security forces on how to deal with the situation, as indicated by analysts

1. Prominent cases include the leader of the ADC Ikibiri, Léonce Ngendakumana, tried and sentenced to a year in prison for "damaging accusations, slanderous denunciations and ethnic aversion"; the leader of the MSD, Alexis Sinduhije, who fled to Belgium, and hundreds of his detained MSD supporters; the historical leader of the CNDD, Léonard Nyangoma, in exile; and the former chair of the ruling CNDD-FDD, Hussein Radjabu, who escaped from prison with the alleged support of his gaolers and went into exile.

such as the International Crisis Group, alongside the emergence of pockets of insurgency. Although much of the Burundian Army remained neutral, the attempted coup d'état in May demonstrated this division and the seriousness of the situation. On 13 May, the former chief of the secret service, General Godefroid Niyombare, announced the dismissal of President Pierre Nkurunziza while he was in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) attending a meeting of the East African Community (EAC). Niyombare had been dismissed in February 2015 after advising Nkurunziza against running for a third term. The government managed to foil the attempted coup since the Burundian special forces and the Imbonerakure remained loyal to Nkurunziza, triggering heavy fighting in the capital. The three generals who led the coup later surrendered to the authorities. Furthermore, the police and the military have taken different approaches to the social demonstrations. While the police, secret services (SNR), Imbonerakure militias and opposition groups and militias –to a lesser extent– have used excessive force and stand accused of committing many extrajudicial executions, the Burundian Army has remained neutral. Former armed groups have become integrated into it and parallel chains of command have been confirmed there, so loyalties linked to the former insurgencies could be reactivated. The first major action in this regard took place in December 2014 with the execution of around 100 combatants coming from the DRC in the Kibira forest, in Cibitoke, some of whom had already been disarmed. Some militias proliferated later during 2015 and there were various clashes, like in July when the Burundian Army announced the death of 15 rebels and the capture of another 170 in different battles in the north. In October, MONUSCO confirmed that the Burundian Army was present in the Congolese province of South Kivu in pursuit of FNL groups, which led to several firefights. The deaths of senior government and opposition leaders like General Adolphe Nshimirimana, the chief of the security services and a close ally of Nkurunziza; the former chief of staff under Pierre Buyoya (1993-2006), Colonel Jean Bikomagu; and politicians such as Pontien Barutwanayo (FNL), Patrice Gahungu and Zedi Feruzi (UPD), among others, as well as the attempted assassination of the chief of the Armed Forces, General Prime Niyongabo, and of activist Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa, whose son was murdered, reveal the gravity of the situation.

Furthermore, the international community has reacted slowly and has been unable to curb the crisis. Overall, until 2014 the guarantor countries and organisations of the Arusha Accords were complacent with the regime despite the growing corruption and authoritarianism. In 2014, the EU increased official development assistance (ODA) to Burundi and the UN Security Council closed the political mission there, the BNUB, on 31 December, supposedly because the country had made important progress towards peace. The president's announcement in April 2015, the serious protests resulting from it and the attempted coup d'état in May raised alarms in African and European foreign ministries. Thereafter, all the various initiatives undertaken, including pressure from EU countries and even the freezing of funds for holding the elections and the attempted mediation of the EAC and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGRL), led by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, only served to postpone the date of the elections and have failed to improve the conditions in which they would be held and to strike up any dialogue. The pressure exerted by the EAC and the AU was weakened by leaders in neighbouring countries who have followed strategies very similar to Nkurunziza to remain in power, like Yoweri Museveni, Robert Mugabe and Paul Kagame, among others. His re-election led to the freezing of the bilateral ODA, pressure on the EAC to do the same since 70% of the funding for the EAC comes from the West, and deterioration in relations with Belgium and Rwanda. The United States and the EU decided to establish sanctions against some of those responsible, and in November the UN Security Council condemned the rise in violence and indicated its intention to consider additional measures, although Russia, China and several African countries blocked the imposition of sanctions. In conclusion, the different elements show that in the near future only more determined pressure on the parties to force dialogue between the government and the opposition, monitoring of the situation and the establishment of sanctions to curb the incitement to violence by neighbouring countries, regional organisations and the international community can prevent the country from backsliding to the climate of violence that it was believed to have overcome.

6.2. Mali: jihadist group activities threaten stability

In June 2015, Mali achieved the signing of the Algiers Accord between the main Arab and Tuareg rebel groups operating in the north: the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA), which unites the groups fighting for the independence of the region of Azawad, and the Platform, which coordinates the Arab and Tuareg movements that support national unity.[2] Reached with Algerian mediation, the peace agreement heralded a new scenario for peacebuilding in the north of the country after three and a half years of armed conflict and ended the fourth Tuareg uprising against the state of Mali since national independence was obtained in 1960.[3] Each of these armed uprisings ended with the signing of different peace agreements[4] that tried to respond to northern demands, focusing mainly on the distribution of political power, acknowledgement of their identity and development. The Algiers Accord of June 2015 used old agreements as a basis for resolving the historical dynamics of the north's grievances against the Malian government in order to move forward in national reconciliation and reconstruction.

However, the signing of the peace agreement raised important questions about the real possibilities of obtaining the commitments acquired to resolve the north's historical demands and put an end to the periodic escalations of violence due to the mistrust generated by systematic violations of the previous peace agreements and deals. Uncertainty about the background and especially the ability of this Algiers Accord to lead to an end to the violence in the country has been great from the beginning due to the exclusion of jihadist armed groups from the negotiations. Groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), previously known as the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC); the organisation Ansar Dine (defenders of the faith), led by historic Tuareg leader Iyad Ag Ghaly; the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO); the group led by the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar known as al-Mourabitoun; and the recently emerged, self-proclaimed Macina Liberation Front (MLF), led by Hamadoun Kouffa, were excluded from the peace process negotiating table, as Bamako took a strictly military approach to dealing with them.

These armed movements have remained active in the country and pose a great risk to stability and peace in Mali. Even though the French-led international Operation Serval in January 2013 momentarily managed to contain the spread of jihadism in the country, which had taken control of the north and threatened to size the capital, these groups and their capacity for articulation and destabilisation remain. The jihadist movements have been stepping up attacks and actions since peace was signed with the secular movements, aimed primarily at international forces as well as foreign interests. Some of these movements' most notorious attacks, like the one on the Byblos Hotel in Sévaré (7 August) claimed by the MLF and another on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako (20 November), which was claimed by both the al-Mourabitoun in collaboration with AQIM and by the MLF in cooperation with Ansar Dine, reveal the capacity for destabilisation that these groups still possess. One of the current features of jihadism in the country, which was seen in the attack on the Radisson Blu, in which up to four jihadist groups claimed involvement, is related to its ability to form alliances, which presents a new scenario bringing a greater potential for destabilisation. In speech captured on audio, the leader of AQIM, Abu Musab Abdul Wadub, confirmed that al-Mourabitoun had joined his group and claimed responsibility for the attack on the hotel as a symbol of their unity. The assault, which involved the kidnapping of around 170 people for hours and claimed the lives of 22, showed the jihadist organisations' growing offensive abilities by capturing what was supposedly one of the most secure centres in the country while also exposing the vulnerability of the Malian government before the jihadist menace, which decreed a 10-day national state of emergency.

One of the current features of jihadism in Mali, which was seen in the attack on the Radisson Blu, is related to its ability to form alliances among different organisations

These actions have revealed the national security forces' inability to respond to jihadism and raise doubts about the effectiveness of the securitisation initiatives carried out in the region. Both programmes to train national security forces implemented by the United States and the European mission EUTM and French combat operations in the area (first under the umbrella of Operation Serval and then under Operation Barkhane) have been ineffective in substantially containing, much less eliminating, the jihadist threat to the country. Contrary to what might be expected, the presence, areas of operation and capacity of radical movements in the country have intensified. The United Nations mission in the country, MINUSMA, which has 11,240 assigned by the Security Council under

2. Armed movements belonging to the CMA include: the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) and the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA). Movements belonging to the Platform: the Imghad and Allies Tuareg Self-Defence Group GATIA), the Coordination of Movements and Fronts of Patriotic Resistance (CMFPR) formed by the "Ganda Koy" and "Ganda Iso" Songhai militias, the Coalition for the People of Azawad (CPA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FNLA).
3. The four Tuareg revolts against the state took place in 1963-1964, 1990-1996, 2006-2009 and 2012-2015.
4. The different peace agreements signed between the government of Mali and the Arab and Tuareg rebel movements behind the various insurrections include the 1991 Tamanrasset Accord, 1992 National Pact, 1996 Timbuktu Accord, 2006 Algiers Agreement, 2009 Sebha Agreement (Libya) and 2015 Algiers Accord.

a mandate based on protecting the population and not on combating terrorism, has become the jihadists' main target, making it the UN mission with the highest number of casualties.

While the actions of jihadist groups had previously been concentrated in the northern regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, taking advantage of the context of war between Arab and Tuareg movements and the Malian government, this scenario has changed substantially with the signing of the peace agreement in the north, which forced the radical movements to diversify their methods and fields of action, moving from their traditional areas of operation, in the north, to regions in the centre and south of the country. The scenario of constant clashes and ceasefire violations perpetrated by the armed groups that signed the Algiers Accord (the Coordination and the Platform) provided the jihadists with fertile ground for pursuing their armed activities. This context persisted when the peace agreement was signed, reporting its worst incident in August, when members of the CMA and the pro-government GATIA militias (Platform) fought for days for control of the city of Anéfis, north of the region of Kidal. Since then, a new scenario of stability has emerged between the rival Tuareg factions that damages the Islamist movements.

Both programmes to train national security forces implemented by the United States and the European mission EUTM and French combat operations have been ineffective in containing the jihadist threat in Mali

Following the clashes in Anéfis, which caused the first major crisis in the peace process, direct negotiations were begun between the CMA (Ifogha Tuareg group) and the Platform (Inghad Tuareg group), achieving a cessation of hostilities agreement between them in mid-October and ratifying the commitment to peace. The CMA and the Platform agreed to set up mixed patrols in the regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu to monitor peacekeeping, which has led to clashes between them and jihadist groups. The Anéfis agreement was harshly criticised by some jihadist movements, especially by Ansar Dine, led by the Tuareg Iyad ag Ghaly, who accused the secular movements of betraying the people of Azawad. Some analysts pointed out that the attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako could be interpreted as a response to the Anéfis agreement in an attempt to destabilise the peace process.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the impact that the current global context may have on Mali, characterised by the prominence of the actions of Islamic State (ISIS) and its competition with al-Qaeda on the international scene, although it is still unclear if ISIS is present in the country. The spectacular media coverage of the actions of ISIS and the impact that it is having worldwide, acquiring affiliations from armed movements in different regions, is creating a situation of competition between ISIS and the al-Qaeda network to be the leading jihadist organisation.[5] In Mali and in the Sahel region in general, this scenario is leading to a rise in the armed actions of groups linked to al-Qaeda, increasingly charged with greater media impact, to block the possible influence of ISIS. In 2015, the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the network led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In this context, al-Qaeda-linked groups like AQIM and Ansar Dine are trying to revive their military actions and notoriety to avoid becoming eclipsed. This seems to indicate that this type of media violence, aimed at attaining front-page coverage and destabilising the country, will continue to be present in 2016.

Characterised by the exclusion of jihadist movements from the negotiations, the ineffectiveness of securitization measures to contain them and the global context of the struggle for prominence between the al-Qaeda and ISIS networks, these different scenarios present serious hurdles to achieving an end to the violence in Mali and may even pose severe risks to effectively implementing the peace agreements in the north.

5. See "The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide" in this chapter.

6.3. DRC faced with the risk of an escalation of political instability and armed conflict in 2016

Although the intensity of the war suffered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has gradually subsided in the last two decades, the armed conflict that broke out in 1998 continues in the eastern part of the country and has killed around five million people to date, according to different sources. There have also been at least 200,000 female victims of sexual violence, which has been and continues to be used as a weapon of war and even persists in post-conflict zones, the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and a chronic humanitarian crisis. Some positive aspects, like the end of the violence in most of the country, the start of institutional reforms and economic growth (though distributed unequally), among others, may be compromised by the upcoming electoral cycle, which should help to strengthen the DRC's political system, but may involve many risks. The country is experiencing growing political instability because the second term of Joseph Kabila's presidency is coming to an end. The process to hold 11 direct and indirect local, provincial and national elections before December 2016 began in February 2015, after the publication of the election calendar and the electoral law. The gravity of the situation is demonstrated by the different political initiatives implemented by Kabila's government, the rise in political violence that took place in 2015 and the president's attempts to postpone the presidential election and thereby prolong his mandate, the little progress made in the military operation against the Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the failure of the amnesty and return of the armed group Mouvement du 23-Mars (M23), which could lead to the resumption of the conflict and influence the overall situation.

The growing political violence in 2015 in DRC and Kabila's attempts to postpone the presidential election and thereby prolong his term of office raises fears that the situation will worsen in 2016

First, the consequences of failing to honour the election calendar must be noted, which may lead to delays in holding elections and an extension of the term of President Joseph Kabila. The Constitution does not allow for a third presidential term, but Kabila has still not expressed whether he would step down and obey the Constitution or consider running for a third tem in the presidential election in 2016. According to the various constitutional provisions, the new legislative and presidential elections must be held prior to 19 December 2016 to elect a new president and members of Parliament, since their term ends on that date. The local elections, scheduled initially for 2008, have been postponed many times, and in January 2015 Parliament adopted a draft bill that included a provision making the holding of the legislative and presidential elections dependent on the organisation of a new national census. However, the technical and financial difficulties of creating such a census prompted many civil society activists and members of the opposition to interpret this provision as manoeuvring to delay the election calendar. On 23 January, after large protests broke out, the controversial provision was struck from the draft bill. However, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) made implementation of the election calendar dependent on the resolution of 23 external issues linked to the legal framework (census, vote abroad, provincial decentralisation and others) and the availability of funds to carry out the process. Action on some of these issues is delayed and others have not yet been addressed by the competent authorities, so the regime has created conditions that make sticking to the election calendar practically impossible.

This situation has been accompanied by the attempts of President Joseph Kabila to promote a national dialogue since April between the majority coalition in power, the political opposition and civil society. This dialogue intends to address the election calendar, the inclusion in the census of several million voters who have acquired the right to vote since 2011, the funding of the process and security during the elections. Although the sharply divided political opposition expressed its willingness to participate in the process on some occasions, in the end it pulled out of the preliminary consultations, claiming that the dialogue could be used to justify postponing the presidential election in order to prolong Kabila's term of office. The same government coalition has also suffered divisions resulting from the evolution of the process, and in September a group of seven political parties (the G7) of the governing coalition warned Kabila of the risk of destabilising the country if the Constitution is violated. The group asked for the local elections to be held after the national and provincial ones, since they fear that revising the calendar will also cause a delay in the presidential election and mean the de facto prolongation of Kabila's presidency. Due to this position, the G7 was expelled from the government coalition.

Instability and political violence also rose during the year. The most important demonstration in years was staged in January by Congolese civil society with the support of the Catholic Church to curb the attempts to modify the election calendar. The Congolese security forces cracked down hard on this demonstration, the most significant since the elections held in late 2011, killing over 40 people and wounding and arresting hundreds. Political violence has escalated since then and the government has attempted to silence dissidents with threats, violence and arbitrary arrest, according to various local and international human rights organisations. In December 2015, the UN Human Rights Office issued a

report published jointly with MONUSCO and the OHCHR covering human rights violations committed between 1 January and 30 September, including a rise in violations of political rights and freedoms committed by state agents and the prevalence of a climate of impunity. The report stressed the serious human rights abuses and repression by the security forces in January during the protests against the electoral law, and although there were less incidents after March, starting in July there was a resurgence of threats, arbitrary arrests and the cynical use of justice against civil society activists and the media. These restrictions and threats marked a trend of the gradual shrinking of the political space that will likely affect the credibility of the process.

Furthermore, despite the gradual reduction in violence in the eastern part of the country, there are different aspects to bear in mind that may change the current status quo and could contribute to instability across the country. Operation Sukola II, waged by the military against the Rwandan armed group FDLR during 2015, was a failure. The deadline set by the UN Security Council to proceed with the voluntary disarmament of the FDLR following Rwanda's refusal to accept a political dialogue proposed by the armed group and the lack of regional and international pressure in this regard expired in January, giving the green light to military operations against it. Although the FDLR had not launched any military operations against Rwanda since the year 2000, their presence in the DRC had given Rwanda excuses to intervene directly or indirectly through local armed groups allied with Kigali. As the voluntary deadline expired, only 339 FDLR fighters had surrendered out of a total of 1,500. The government launched the limitary operation in February. Many analysts had doubted the government's will to conduct this offensive against what has been its ally at certain times to stop the activities of Rwanda and pro-Rwandan groups in the country. Meanwhile, the UN had announced that it was withdrawing its military support for the Congolese Army against the FDLR after the government refused to replace two generals involved in the operation because they face serious accusations of human rights violations. The government decided to launch the offensive without MONUSCO's support. In fact, Kinshasa has been pressuring to reduce the size of MONUSCO in the country.

These decisions were criticised as populist by various analysts, arguing the need to restore the government's battered image following the slow pace of reforms in the country and the crackdown on the protests in January against the president's desire to amend the Constitution in order to prolong his term of office. Meanwhile, Russ Feingold, the UN representative to the Great Lakes region, resigned. He had been critical of the president's re-election attempts and sceptical of the DRC's real desire to pursue the FDLR. Months into the offensive, towards the end of 2015 the operations had enjoyed limited success since the FDLR had not been broken up and their military capacities and command structures remained intact. In addition to this situation, or directly resulting from it, are the negative developments of the application of the Nairobi Declaration, which two years ago called for the surrender of the armed group M23, amnesty and the return of its former combatants. Though the M23 officially has 2,000 fighters, only 180 members have returned to the DRC. Both the Congolese government and the M23 have accused each other of violating the agreement. The government had denounced the infiltration of former rebels into eastern DRC and around 1,000 former M23 combatants and civilians are estimated to have disappeared from Uganda and Rwanda. Only 640 of the 1,600 people identified in Uganda a year ago are still present. Furthermore, the shortage of funds to pay for the national disarmament and reintegration of former combatants and the proliferation and fragmentation of groups and militias in the east (around 70, according to some sources), demonstrate the persistence of the conflict and even the volatility of the situation. A deterioration in the conflict in the east together with instability potentially stemming from changes that could delay the election calendar and do not result from dialogue and negotiations agreed between the government and the political opposition with the backing of the international community raise fears of a drift to authoritarianism and an escalation of the armed conflict in 2016.

6.4. South Sudan: a very fragile peace agreement

After 20 months of a bloody civil war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives and caused a serious humanitarian crisis with more than 2.3 million people displaced from their homes and 4.6 million in an emergency situation due to the high risk of famine, a peace agreement was signed in mid-August 2015 under the auspices of mediation by the IGAD-Plus.[6] The warring parties, the government of South Sudan (GoSS) headed by Salva Kiir and the main opposition group, the SPLA/M-IO, commanded by former Vice President Riek Machar, signed the text proposed by the IGAD-Plus and decreed a cessation of hostilities amidst a climate marked by heavy international pressure, with threats of sanctions and embargoes on both sides if the violence did not stop. The agreement was signed first by Machar on 17 August and then by Kiir on 26 August. The GoSS printed its signature in the text, showing its dissatisfaction with it and with how it had been achieved, through pressure and threats, and included a list of 16 reservations to the agreement that were not accepted by the IGAD-Plus.[7] The resulting peace agreement consists of measures in seven different areas of action: 1) national unity transitional government; 2) permanent ceasefire and security mechanisms; 3) humanitarian assistance and reconstruction; 4) economic and financial resources; 5) transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and restitution; 6) the Constitution; and the 7) monitoring and evaluation commission.[8]

The distance that the GoSS maintains from the terms of the agreement prompt it to unilaterally take important political steps that are putting peace in South Sudan at risk

The IGAD-Plus presented the agreement as the definitive text for achieving peace and national reconstruction, even after up to nine previous agreements were never signed. However, events related to the external threats and pressure that got both sides to sign it, as well as developments in the situation in the closing months of the year, have raised concern about compliance with it. Therefore, various events are affecting the process, representing warning scenarios that may reignite the fighting in 2016.

First, it should be noted that the agreement was reached without the consent and approval of the warring parties, posing a major risk to its continuity. The GoSS not only expressed its dissatisfaction with how the deal was signed, but also objected to the text, including an appendix of 16 reservations to it. This document included important aspects that clash with major articles of the agreement, which is described as "humiliation", "rewarding rebellion" and even "neo-colonialist". Many analysts have interpreted this point of departure as a major weakness in the process, since it limits the parties' ownership of the commitments acquired, making their application difficult. This was seen in the first few months of their implementation, where the failure to meet the stipulated deadlines was evident. For example, the national unity transitional government, which was the fundamental institution of the agreement and was supposed to be created within a maximum of 90 days after it was signed, had still not been created at the end of the year.

In a second risk scenario, which is directly linked to the previous one, the distance that the GoSS maintains from the terms of the agreement prompt it to unilaterally take important political steps that should be the responsibility of the transitional government. These steps are placing the value of the deal in doubt and putting great stress on relations with the opposition. One of the measures taken independently by Kiir was related to the dismissal of three governors in the region of Equatoria, which provoked harsh political criticism. Another measure adopted outside the peace process was the dissolution of all of the leadership structures of the SPLM except the office of the president. A similar event set off the crisis in December 2013 that started the civil war. Opposition leader Riek Machar criticised the move harshly, describing it as a threat to peace. This action ignores the Arusha Declaration signed in Tanzania in January 2015, in which the different factions of the SPLM (government, SPLA/M-IO and the faction SPLM 7) achieved an agreement for reunification in Tanzania aimed at reconciling all three factions and facilitating peace talks.

However, of all the risks that the government is running with its unilateral policies, the move creating the greatest controversy is undoubtedly the announcement on 2 October that South Sudan would adopt a federal state system. Kiir's government announced fragmenting the current administrative divisions, based on 10 states, into 28 federal states. The new system designed by the president, without consulting the opposition forces, changes the territorial divisions established by the current Constitution by creating new boundaries based mainly on ethnic characteristics. In the new proposed scheme, the Dinka group, of which Kiir and the senior officials of the GoSS are members, would obtain administrative control of

6. The IGAD-Plus consists of the members of the IGAD (Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda), some AU countries (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria) and finally by China, Russia, Egypt and the Troika (the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway).
7. See the list of the 16 reservations of the GoSS to the peace agreement: https://es.scribd.com/doc/276484376/On-South-Sudan-Salva-Kiir-s-12-Pages-of-Reservations-to-CPA.
8. See the full peace agreement at: http://southsudan.igad.int/index.php/91-demo-contents/news/299-agreement-on-the-resolution-of-the-conflict-in-the-republic-of-south-sudan.

42% of the country's territory, with 12 of the 28 proposed states, compared to the 25% administrative control that it possesses under the 10-state system. Moreover, the Nuer community, which holds a majority in the SPLA/M-IO and to which Machar belongs, would go from having 15% administrative control under the 10-state system to 13% under the new divisions proposed. Riek Machar asserted that this new unilateral decree was a serious violation of the peace agreement, jeopardising its continuity, and emphasised that it could derail the agreement if it does not revoke it. The IGAD-Plus also vigorously condemned Kiir's announcement. Expressing concern and warning the government that the announcement directly contradicts the agreement, the IGAD-Plus stated that any fundamental change in the country must be made under the national unity transitional government, urging Kiir to withdraw the decree.

One interpretation of this government strategy is related to blocking one of the clauses of the agreement that the government had vetoed in its list of 16 reservations. Article 15 of Chapter 1 stipulates the creation of transitional governments in the states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity. The two latter states would come under the administration of the opposition, whereas Jonglei would remain in government hands. With the new proposed divisions, both states would fragment into three parts: in Unity State, two parts would be dominated by a Nuer majority and one would be under Dinka control, while in Upper Nile State, which would also change its physical borders, one part would be controlled by the Nuer, another by the Dinka and the third by the Shilluk. Therefore, both states designed in the peace process that were supposed to be governed by the opposition would be subdivided into six, of which it would control only three. This new administrative division designed by the GoSS is a serious obstacle to the aforementioned Article 15, which has been blasted by the SPLM/A-IO. Another problem that the unilateral fragmentation of the country is creating, and that Kiir himself has recognised, relates to the boundaries of the new states. Many of them do not follow the current lines of territorial demarcation, creating a new source of tension and confrontation that could result in fresh military disputes.

A third threat to the peace process is the growing internal division and fragmentation of the parties, as well as the emergence of new armed actors in the country. As soon as the peace agreement was signed, division and splintering appeared on both sides. On the GoSS side, senior military officers questioned the document and described it as a form of surrender to the rebels. On the SPLA/M-IO side, a group of commanders deserted and announced the creation of another armed movement opposed to the agreement. In turn, other armed groups that existed when the treaty was signed, like the Revolutionary Movement For National Salvation (REMNASA) and the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM), did not sign it, demonstrating that they were continuing with armed struggle. Later, in November 2015, at least two new armed groups emerged. In the state of Equatoria, local media reported the appearance of the South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (SSPPF), which declared war on the government and in the state of Upper Nile. Furthermore, in reaction to the new border division, which divides the Shilluk Kingdom and delivers some of its land to the Dinka Apadang community, members of the Shilluk ethnic group created the Tiger Faction New Forces (TFNF), affirming their intention to fight against the government and to not lay down their weapons until the new administrative divisions are overturned.

The measure causing the most controversy is the announcement that South Sudan would adopt a federal state system, fragmenting the current administrative divisions, based on 10 states, into 28 federal states

Fourth, the peace agreement has been unable to effectively maintain the agreed ceasefire, resulting in different clashes between the parties and expanding military action due to the growing presence of new belligerent actors. These repeated violations of the cessation of hostilities could make the current agreement worthless by resuming large-scale clashes or at least make it difficult to implement other chapters of the agreement as a consequence of the insecurity. The IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism has reported 50 violations of the ceasefire since the first cessation of hostilities signed in February 2014, five of which have occurred since the agreement in August (three by the government and two by the SPLA/M-IO).

This series of elements represents a serious risk for peacekeeping in the country. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that the constant ceasefire violations, as well as the parties' failure to meet the stipulated deadlines in implementing the agreement, seriously compromise peace in the country. At this juncture, predicting a new escalation of violence, the Secretary-General recommended that the UN Security Council maintain the UNMISS mission, which ended operations on 15 December, and send 1,100 extraordinary UN peacekeepers to protect civilians and improve security in camps for displaced people. Much will depend on the role of the international mediators and pressure from the international community if the country is to make progress in national reconciliation and overcome the different risk scenarios that are calling the path to peace of the newest country in Africa into question.

6.5. Venezuela, a new political scenario marked by polarised branches of government

The opposition's resounding victory in the parliamentary elections has opened a new political scenario marked by polarisation between the executive and legislative branches of government. After more than 15 years of absolute control over the institutions that had allowed Chavism to enact the reforms necessary to carry out its socialist project, the elections on 6 December were a major blow to the regime and its Bolivarian revolution, giving rise to an uncertain scenario characterised by the fear of increased political tensions, greater social polarisation and possible outbreaks of violence.

In legislative elections envisaged as complicated beforehand by the executive government headed by Nicolás Maduro, the opposition coalition, Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), won a resounding victory, attaining 112 seats of the 167 that make up the National Assembly and reaching the qualified majority of 2/3 of the chamber, which gives it absolute control over it. According to data provided by the National Electoral Council (CNE), with 74.25% turnout, the MUD won 67.07% of the votes (7,707,422 votes), while the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) carried 32.93% (5,599,025 votes), giving it 55 seats. The MUD obtained 343,000 more votes than those won by Henrique Capriles in the presidential election in 2013, while the PSUV lost nearly two million votes in comparison.[9] These results mark Chavism's second electoral defeat in 15 years (the first was the referendum to reform the Constitution in 2007)[10] and are the worst in its history in terms of popular support, dealing a serious blow to the regime. One of the interpretations offered by local analysts about the opposition's comfortable victory is related to its ability to unite and bring forces together, as well as its major vote mobilisation efforts thanks to a local context characterised by powerful social discontent with the economic crisis and its effects on product shortages and high inflation in the country.

After more than 15 years of absolute control of government institutions by Chavism, the regime has taken a heavy blow that gives rise to an uncertain scenario characterised by the fear of increased political tensions, greater social polarisation and possible outbreaks of violence

The opposition alliance emerged from the elections significantly stronger, with an absolute majority in Parliament that grants it the possibility to transform national politics and the ability in the chamber to approve important organic laws, amend the Constitution, repeal enabling laws, cast votes of no confidence and dismiss the vice president and ministers of the country, appoint and remove electoral officials and more. In brief, it may now take the initiative in Parliament. The opposition forces are even ready to resume collecting signatures to promote a recall referendum in 2016 that could lead to a new presidential election, thereby preventing President Maduro from finishing his term, which ends in 2019.

However, the Venezuelan government retains the ability to respond, since it still controls all state powers de facto and can use the figure of the president and the government-controlled Supreme Court of Justice to block any parliamentary initiative, vetoing whatever it deems unconstitutional.

This new national political scenario, which will officially begin on 5 January 2016 when the new National Assembly is constituted, is viewed with hope by the Venezuelan political opposition, which is anxious for important change and reforms in the direction that the country is taking. It is also a crisis of major dimensions, according to Maduro, and threatens the government's socialist project. In this polarisation of interests, and with a new balance of forces in Venezuela, it is to be expected that political tensions, confrontation in a fragmented society and even outbreaks of violence are potential future risk scenarios for the country. In fact, both sides' reactions to the election results have given a glimpse of the pulse looming in the new correlation of positions.

Even during the election campaign, Maduro's government, employed contradictory discourses in a hypothetical scenario of defeat. For example, he declared his willingness to recognise any adverse situation that might arise, while at the same time using threatening allegations concerning the possibility of an opposition victory, saying that the revolution would never "surrender" in any way. As the results were made public and the blow suffered by the government became clear, his declarations gradually rose in tone, making it obvious that he would not extend any bridge of dialogue and would defend the Chavist legacy, although he also showed a more moderate side, recognising the opposition's victory as an achievement for the national democratic system. In this polarised discourse, the government has tried to interpret the results as the triumph of the counter-revolution through an economic war to topple it and has warned that it would set off a major crisis leading to significant tensions. As these statements rose in tone,

9. The presidential election of 2013, the first after the death of Hugo Chávez, had a turnout of 79.68% and handed victory to Nicolás Maduro, with 50.61% of the vote (7,587,579), compared to the 49.12% won by opposition candidate Henrique Capriles, who received 7,363,980 votes.
10. On 2 December 2007, a referendum was held to amend the Constitution. Over three million Venezuelans abstained, enabling the "no" vote to win in the first setback for Chavism.

the government reacted by taking advantage of the last few weeks of parliamentary control to try to protect its power. Diosdado Cabello, the speaker of the National Assembly and the ruling party's second-in-command, announced the appointment of 12 new judges to the TSJ and the designated the judge that convicted opposition figure Leopoldo López, Susana Barreiros, to be the general public defender of Venezuela. These moves make it perfectly clear that for the time being, Maduro's government has reacted defensively, trying to protect its policies while also attempting to send a message of cohesion faced with possible internal divisions within the party and its allies due to the election debacle, which has shown again, like after the narrow victory in the 2013 presidential election, that Maduro is not Chávez, and that the death of the emblematic Venezuelan leader was the beginning of the end of a trend in national politics.

The legislative elections in Venezuela gave a resounding victory to the opposition bloc, attaining 112 seats of the 167 that make up the National Assembly and reaching the qualified majority of 2/3 of the chamber, which grants it absolute control over it

Furthermore, different internal fault lines run through the opposition. While it managed to smooth them over to run in the election as a coalition, they remain present. This includes a hard line group, led by Leopoldo López, currently sentenced to over 13 years in prison, which will seek a recall referendum to put an end to Maduro's government, and another more moderate group headed by Capriles that aims to build bridges of dialogue to begin the national transition. One of the first measures that the opposition has announced that it will raise as a bloc in the first sessions and that may lead to the first clash with the government will be related to approval of the amnesty law, which will benefit around 80 people that the opposition considers political prisoners. The president has already flatly declared that the law will not be approved under any circumstances.

In this scenario, some prominent elements will influence the future of political life. First is the social impact that the measures necessary to alleviate the serious economic crisis currently gripping Venezuela will have on it, conditioned by the collapse in oil prices that has reduced government revenues. Widespread social discontent could increase based on whether or not the country emerges from its economic crisis and on the nature of these measures, along with the unpopularity that they could entail, which the government has so far tried to avoid, sinking deeper into the crisis of governance. Meanwhile, the role played by the Venezuelan Armed Forces will be crucial. It remains to be seen if they will stay loyal to the Chavist regime in the new political cycle or will take the side of legality, as some sectors of the military have indicated.

Venezuela's new political situation, which has substantially changed the balance of forces after 15 years, will undoubtedly give rise to new tensions and disputes between executive and legislative branches of government that are completely polarised, loaded with historical grievances and conflicts that can degenerate and further rattle the nation's political scene, widening the gaps and fragmentation of society and leading to new outbreaks of violence.

6.6. Afghanistan: the lack of legitimacy of the new Taliban leadership and its impact on the peace process

On 7 July 2015, representatives of the Taliban movement and the Afghan government sat down at the negotiating table for the first time in the Pakistani city of Murri in order to find negotiated solutions to the armed conflict ravaging the country. During the previous months, in rounds of meetings in different scenarios, the conditions for rapprochement were established. However, the meetings were held amidst the most violent insurgent offensive in recent years. Nevertheless, the signals coming from the parties were contradictory. While acting Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor agreed to negotiate (on behalf of leader Mullah Omar), a series of messages from the political bureau delegitimised the Taliban delegation in Murri. The divisions arising from the negotiations with the government required the Taliban leader to give his opinion publicly. Therefore, on 15 July, Mullah Mansoor conveyed a message from Mullah Omar[11] backing the negotiations with the government, though it also reminded that the office in Doha was in charge of the Taliban's political affairs. The day before the second round of negotiations, planned for 30 July, Mullah Omar was reported dead. The following day, the Taliban admitted the same and appointed Mullah Mansoor as his successor. Disagreements were made public immediately. The leader's death was evidence of the manipulations of Mullah Mansoor, who had spent years managing the movement and, according to his detractors, manipulating its leaders and commanders to assume leadership of it. However, the process not only divided the Taliban. President Ashraf Ghani's support for the negotiations amidst the violence and his rapprochement with Pakistan weakened his position in the divided government of Afghanistan.

While the Taliban resolve their leadership problems, dissidents may form more radical groups or join Islamic State (ISIS), which is already present in some provinces

After 14 years of armed conflict, the need to reach a peace agreement between the Taliban movement and the Afghan government became obvious for all parties involved. The United States, which for a long time purposed a strategy to eliminate the insurgency completely, finally admitted that the only way to end the conflict was through dialogue with the Taliban. The first meetings explored the parties' demands. These preliminary meetings were the first step towards opening the Taliban's political office in Qatar as their official representative body, including in the reconciliation process. In 2009, there were several meetings between German and Taliban representatives in Dubai.[12] At the International Conference on Afghanistan in London in January 2010, Hamid Karzai received definitive support when he submitted his road map for reconciliation and reintegration.[13] Among other meetings, UN representative Kai Eide sat down with a Taliban delegation sent by Mullah Baradar in Dubai at the start of 2010, there were several meetings between Afghan MPs, members of the Hizb-e Islami and of the Taliban in the Maldives in February and May 2010 and the United States held intermittent meetings between 2010 and 2012 in Germany and Qatar. In January 2012, after a round of consultations with all Taliban groups (including both commanders in the field and unofficial governors), the Taliban office in Doha officially declared its willingness to begin political efforts to resolve the conflict. The year 2015 began with a new round of meetings described as "simple contacts" in Qatar, China, Dubai and Norway between representatives of the Afghan High Peace Council and the Taliban. This process ended on 7 July in Murri.

However, the revelation of the death of Mullah Omar (the official date was April 2013) marked a turning point, shedding light on the power struggles that had thus far taken place in private. Omar had been a figure that united the movement. Obedience to the emir was a religious duty that was part of Taliban doctrine,[14] though rumours of his death had been constant since he vanished from the public eye at least a decade before. Akhtar Mansoor was the minister of civil aviation and tourism under the Taliban government. According to his official biography, in 2007 he was one of the two acting leaders, the other being Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. When Baradar was imprisoned in Pakistan in 2010, he became the acting leader of the Islamic Emirate and of the Taliban leadership council.[15] Opposition to Mansoor centred on various well-known leaders and members of Mullah Omar's family.[16] His main adversary is Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, who has always been opposed to negotiations. Zakir is a veteran leader and commander of the insurgency in the south, which like the militarily strongest groups is opposed to the talks. He has a history of clashing with Mansoor, which worsened after the office was opened in Doha. Furthermore, Zakir has always been opposed to Mansoor's leadership. In fact, after months of verbal

11. His edicts and political opinions were published twice per year, during the festivals of 'Eid ul-Fitr and 'Eid ul-Adha.
12. Thomas Ruttig, "Is the Afghan Peace Process Really in Shambles?", *Afganistão*, Naçao e Defesa. no. 130, Lisbon, 2011, pp. 31-54.
13. Thomas Ruttig, "The Taliban Arrest Wave. Reasserting Strategic Depth?" *CTC Sentinell*, Vol 3(3), pp. 3-6, 3 March 2010
14. Michael Semple, "The Mullah Omar Myth", *Politico*, 30 July 2015.
15. According to B. Rubin, his support base could reach 40%, while Mullah Zakir may control around 20%. Barnett Rubin, "Turmoil in the Taliban", *The New Yorker*, 31 July 2015.
16. Mullah Omar's younger brother, Abdul Mannan, and son, Mullah Muhammad Yakub.

sparring, Mansoor dismissed him as a commander "on behalf" of Omar in August 2014.

Regarding the Afghan government, shortly after he was sworn in as president on 29 September 2014, Ashraf Ghani made two official trips to the countries closest to Pakistan: Saudi Arabia and China. He visited Pakistan not long thereafter, despite the opposition of Parliament and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. Prior to his trip in November, the chief of staff of the Armed Forces, General Raheel Sharif, and the director of Pakistan's intelligence service, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had visited Kabul. To achieve success in the negotiations, Ghani believed it was necessary to involve Pakistan in the process. According to him, Pakistan was obliged to cooperate with the Afghan government, since he thought that the conflict was not being waged between his government and the Taliban, but between Afghanistan and Pakistan. But the pressure to which Pakistan was subjected to make the Taliban sit down to negotiate demonstrated both its position of power in the process and the fact that it did not control all its leadership.

Pakistan has not changed its strategic vision of what it wants in Afghanistan. Although the government has always denied it, the Taliban leadership has been located in the capital of the province of Balochistan, Quetta, since the US invasion in 2001. Since the announcement of the withdrawal of foreign troops, Pakistan has moved closer to the Taliban leadership in an attempt to establish an alliance. The election of Mullah Mansoor was understood in this light, as it was done in haste and on Pakistani soil. With the date of the withdrawal of the last troops in mind, since March 2015, Pakistan has increasingly pressured the Taliban to sit down to negotiate. The role of the political office in Qatar was questioned from the beginning, and not only due to divisions over reconciliation. In large part, the problem has to do with the control that Pakistan wants to exercise in the negotiations. One of the reasons that it was opened was to conduct official contacts in a more neutral environment. Although they were seen as mere puppets of Pakistan, the Taliban showed their intention to keep the reconciliation process away from its influence. But from the beginning of the meetings, Pakistan made its stance clear that it would not allow them to continue without its knowledge or consent. An example of this was the arrest of Mullah Baradar in February 2010, when it became known that it was holding negotiations with the Afghan government independently.[17]

A number of Taliban accused Pakistan of manipulating the meeting in Murri and some even claimed that they were not authorised to negotiate.[18] Moreover, members of the ISI were seated next to them. A similar accusation was made after the meeting in Urumqi (Xinjiang, China), when Pakistan was unable to bring relevant leaders to the table. This delegation consisted of Mullah Abdul Jalil (former acting foreign minister), Mullah Hassan Rahmani (former governor of Kandahar) and Mullah Abdul Razaq (former minister of the interior) and had no connection with the Taliban political commission or influence in their hierarchy.[19] Mohammad Naim Wardak, the spokesman for the office in Qatar, accused Pakistan of "hijacking the process by bringing unelected and non-representative members of the movement to the table".[20] The Taliban also wanted the meeting in Murri to be secret, but Pakistan made the negotiations public.

While waiting for the Taliban to resolve their leadership problems, it must be kept in mind that dissidents may form more radical groups or join the armed group Islamic State (ISIS), which is present in some provinces. In fact, a new splinter group in Zabul led by Mullah Rasool Akhund is fighting alongside ISIS. A divided Taliban movement hopes that the future agreement with the government will be fragile and will not be respected. In addition to further weakening President Ghani's position in the government, pressure from the US administration, which has elections on the horizon and a troop withdrawal plan scheduled for December 2017, is putting the process at risk by trying to speed it up. Moreover, Pakistan cannot keep up the duplicity of launching a military offensive against the Taliban while it continues to harbour Afghan Taliban, even though this year saw the largest campaign of violence since 2001. The future of Afghan reconciliation depends on it.

17. Thomas Ruttig, "The Taliban Arrest Wave. Reasserting Strategic Depth?", op. cit.
18. Abdul Latif Mansoor, Haji Ibrahim Haqqani and Mullah Abbas. Barnett Rubin, "Turmoil in the Taliban", op.cit.
19. These three leaders later came out against the appointment of Mullah Mansoor as leader. B. Rubin, What Could Mullah Mohammad Omar's Death Mean for the Taliban Talks? *The New Yorker,* 29 July 2015.
20. Abubakar Siddique, "Talks divide Taliban. Herald an End to its Relationship with Islamabad", Gandhara, 10 July 2015.

6.7. Philippines: The peace process in Mindanao, at the crossroads

In March 2014, after over 17 years of negotiations, the government of the Philippines and the armed opposition group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro to try to put an end to the armed conflict that dates back to the end of the 1960s and that according to some sources has caused the deaths of over 120,000 people and forcibly displaced more than two million people in Mindanao, the southern region of the country. Previously, in October 2012, both parties had laid the foundations for this historic event by signing the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, facilitated by the government of Malaysia. In general terms, the peace agreement provides for the demobilisation of the MILF and the replacement of the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) after a MILF-led transitional period led with a new entity called Bangsamoro that would have more extensive powers and territory than the ARMM. However, Congress must pass a law that specifies the content of the peace agreement and regulates the new Bangsamoro autonomous entity in order for the peace process to remain on track and for the peace agreement to be implemented. This law would later be ratified in a referendum in the affected parts of Mindanao. The draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), a kind of constitution of statute of autonomy for Bangsamoro, was finalised in early 2014. After several months during which the government reviewed the constitutionality and political viability of its content, it was sent to Congress to be urgently processed and approved. However, Congress has not passed the BBL since then and voices firmly opposed to the peace agreement are multiplying, generating great unease within the MILF and much uncertainty about the future of the peace process and even about the possible resumption of violence in Mindanao.

Congress must pass a law that specifies the content of the peace agreement and regulates the new autonomous entity of Bangsamoro in order for the peace process in the Philippines to remain on track and for the peace agreement to be implemented

Pressure against the president, the government and Congress to slow down or even halt approval of the BBL rose substantially in early January, when around 70 people, including 44 members of a special police corps were killed in the town of Mamasapano (Maguindanao province) in a clash involving the MILF, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF, a MILF splinter group opposed to the peace talks) and others. The battle led to one of the worst crises of confidence between the government and the MILF in recent years and caused the indefinite suspension of congressional proceedings regarding the aforementioned law. Although the House of Representatives resumed its deliberations in April, a significant proportion of the MPs and many media outlets openly expressed their opposition to the BBL on the grounds that it is unconstitutional and because they doubt that the MILF intends to disarm. In this regard, in June the Philippine Constitution Association and a political party filed a request with the Supreme Court to declare both the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro as unconstitutional because they violated various provisions of the Constitution and included concessions that exceeded the powers of the government. It bears reminding that in 2008, the Supreme Court's decision to declare as unconstitutional the peace agreement signed between the government and the MILF, known as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain, caused an internal split within the MILF, the emergence of the BIFF and the most significant spiral of violence experienced by the region in recent years.

Meanwhile, the Senate and the House of Representatives approved two draft bills very far removed from the original proposals agreed between the government and the MILF. The chair of the Senate committee in charge of the legislative proceedings of the BBL declared that 80% of the content of the original version of the law had been changed. In fact, the MILF's leaders complained that the previous versions of the BBL envisaged even lower levels of self-government than in the current ARMM. In addition to the disagreements over the content of the BBL, the MILF's confidence in the peace process was also eroded by the constant delays in the legislative proceedings since September 2014. Following the pressure exerted throughout the year by President Benigno Aquino and the government on Congress, the speakers of both chambers promised to pass the BBL around mid-December. However, many analysts warned that the urgency and importance of the debate over budgets in 2016 and the start of the election campaign in early 2016 ahead of the elections in May leave little time and room for the approval of the BBL. In December, Aquino met directly with over one hundred MPs to convince Congress of the virtues of the peace agreement, but at the end of the year some MPs openly declared there was no way that the BBL would be passed.

Faced with these difficulties and delays, on various occasions throughout the year, the MILF warned of the risks if the BBL is not approved in the end and clearly stated its opposition to the approval of any law that deviated substantially from the letter and spirit of the peace agreement. Specifically, the MILF declared that it would stop surrendering weapons and demobilising its fighters, processes that began symbolically in June, admitted that it is under pressure to abandon the peace talks and to write off approval of the BBL as impossible, asserted that it could not guarantee control over the

internal factions opposed to the peace process and warned of the chances that the collapse of the peace process may cause ideological radicalisation in Mindanao, provide greater legitimacy to voices and groups committed to continuing the armed struggle and clearly increase calls for independence in the region. In this regard, the MILF leadership indicated that the international community would hold the Philippine government responsible if war broke out again in Mindanao.

Whether the Supreme Court declares the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro as unconstitutional or Congress refuses to pass a draft of the BBL that the MILF deems acceptable, there is a risk that the most intransigent and militaristic MILF factions will end up imposing themselves and dragging the MILF back to the armed conflict, or that some of the armed groups operating in Mindanao will view their military strategy as legitimised and boost their numbers through the influx of former MILF combatants. Concerning the first point, on more than one occasion both the MILF and the government recalled that any step forward in the MILF's disarmament and demobilisation process is linked to any progress that might occur in implementing the peace agreement. According to this agreement, in addition to the symbolic ceremony that started the process carried out in June, 30% of the MILF's combatants would demobilise following approval of the BBL, another 35% after the creation of a police force in the new Bangsamoro region and the remaining 30% when implementation of the peace agreement is finalised. According to most estimates, the MILF has between 10,000 and 12,000 combatants, making it quite a considerable force.

Moreover, some armed groups that also operate in Mindanao and claim to fight for goals similar to those of the MILF and represent the same group (the Moro people) could clearly be strengthened if the current peace process fails. For example, in the second half of the 1990s, the problems in implementing the 1996 peace accord between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) strengthened the MILF, which opposed the deal. In 2008, the collapse of the peace agreement between the government and the MILF led to the emergence of the BIFF, a group clearly opposed to dialogue with the government that was behind some of the main acts of violence in the region until mid-2015. Even though the intensity of the counterinsurgency operations of the Philippine government and the death of its leader and founder Ameril Umbra Kato weakened the group, it cannot be ruled out that the sudden sinking of the peace process could bolster the BIFF's position. Likewise, some MNLF factions have expressed their opposition to the peace process between the MILF and the government because they think that the peace accord reached by both parties in 2014 invalidates and replaces much of the content of the peace agreement signed between the MNLF and the government in 1996. Some MNLF leaders, like its founder, Nur Misuari, were more belligerent about it and declared their willingness to welcome combatants disillusioned or dissatisfied with the MILF's official line into their ranks and continue fighting for the establishment of a Bangsamoro republic in Mindanao. Other MNLF leaders have been more conciliatory towards the MILF, but they have all stressed the difficulties that the BBL faces in recapturing the aspirations of the MNLF and including substantial aspects of the 1996 peace agreement. It beards reminding that the MILF split off from the MNLF in the late 1970s and that some of its strongholds are close to those of the MNLF.

So far, both the MILF and the government have publicly demonstrated their commitment to the dialogue and have expressed hope that a BBL respectful of the peace agreement is approved before Benigno Aquino's term of office ends in late June. Furthermore, the international community has been significantly involved in both the negotiations and implementation of the agreement and major demonstrations in favour of the peace process in Mindanao were reported in 2015. Also of note, the MILF and the government have maintained an active ceasefire agreement since 2003 and in recent years the levels of violence between the parties have been practically non-existent. Nevertheless, the peace process is currently in an enormously complex situation. Even the best-case scenario (early adoption of the BBL) would entail a significant delay with regard to the road map originally outlined and would leave implementation of the most substantive aspects of the peace agreement to the next administration. In fact, some presidential candidates have already expressed scepticism about a peace process not designed by their own government, but inherited from the previous one. Nor can the worst-case scenario, the sudden end of the peace process, be ruled out. On previous occasions, such an event has led to dramatic new cycles of violence.

6.8. The conflict between Turkey and the PKK: the risks of further deterioration

In 2015 the conflict between Turkey and the PKK Kurdish guerrillas, which has caused tens of thousands of fatalities, displacements, disappearances and high levels of trauma since to the 1980s, returned to serious violence after the collapse of the dialogue, involving various disturbing aspects. These included increasingly penetrating questions about the government's vision of a solution to the conflict, the urbanisation of the war and increase of indiscriminate impacts, greater "Syrianisation" of the Kurdish issue in Turkey and the emergence of ISIS as a destabilising force on Turkish soil and the deterioration of the social climate in the streets. In addition, the return to open warfare between Turkey and the PKK is taking place in a context of democratic rollback across Turkey, accentuated by a key election year. If the situation is not corrected in the short term, it could drift into greater complexity with more impacts on the civilian population.

Worrisome aspects in the short and medium term include the fact that 2015 was the year that the Imrali dialogue collapsed. The process had begun in early 2013 and was preceded by the Oslo talks (2009-2011). Furthermore, open warfare between Turkey and the PKK resumed in June 2015. Several factors led to this transition from dialogue to war, such as the cumulative fragility of the dialogue process, including the lack of adequate mechanisms for its own development, the lack of a framework or a clear and acceptable joint road map and unrealistic expectations (for example, government expectations that the PKK would automatically abandon its armed struggle after the Dolmabahçe declaration in February). Finally, looming in the background is the basic question of whether the government truly desires a negotiated solution, even though Erdogan was the one driving the dialogue, or if it was the process itself that failed. The rather indiscriminate military campaign that followed leads one to think that it was more a lack of clear will.

The collapse of the dialogue between Ankara and the PKK, the urbanisation of the war and the "Syrianisation" of the Kurdish issue in Turkey indicate risks of further deterioration in the conflict

Other factors in the transition from dialogue to war have been the influence of the elections on the peace process in a context of maximum rivalry between the AKP and the HDP (and in which the Kurdish movement competed as a party for the first time, challenging the high 10% threshold) and of great political and social polarisation concerning Erdogan's attempts to promote a shift to a presidential regime. After the AKP lost votes in the elections in June, followed by a lack of agreement to form a coalition government, it seems that the military campaign and the emphasis on anti-terrorist discourse helped the AKP to stage a big comeback in the November elections. Still, the HDP managed to surpass the 10% threshold. It remains to be seen whether parliamentary political pluralism and a solid formal dialogue between the government and the PKK really fits within the AKP's project of political hegemony.

Moreover, although the return to violence is not a new dynamic, it has taken on a new aspect: the urbanisation of the war. The escalation of violence since July 2015 has not only included bombardments in remote areas, but also large-scale anti-terrorist operations in urban neighbourhoods in the southeast. The government presented the operations as actions against the PKK, which included curfews and blockades in towns. According to local human rights organisations, these offensives have caused civilian fatalities, including children, as well as other impacts on human security and indiscriminate effects like displacement, power cuts, restrictions on access to water, food and healthcare and some miscarriages due to psychological stress. The restrictions on movement have hindered adequate media coverage and access to observers. These operations and the general military campaign fall within the context of a strengthening of the Turkish Army as an ally of the AKP, despite their previous rivalry. Thus, the doctrine of war is regaining strength and the focus on dialogue is receding.

Meanwhile, the PKK has driven the reinforcement of armed pro-Kurdish militias in the southeast, promoting their organisation and providing weapons, according to some sources. The perspectives of the local population are diverse, ranging from local support for the militias in neighbourhoods affected by the special operations to rejection of the PKK's strategy by the Kurdish population in other neighbourhoods who fear that instability reaches their streets. As such, the daily atmosphere is deteriorating and weapons are increasing in the streets. In any case, analysts indicate that though still autonomous, the militias continue to recognise the ultimate authority of the PKK, ruling out uncontrolled spirals of violence in the short term. The deployment of the urban militias has gone hand in hand with unilateral declarations of autonomy in various locations, rejected by the state through its special operations and demonstrating the gap separating both sides.

A third factor of concern is the "Syrianisation" of the conflict. The advance of Kurdish forces in northern Syria, organised around the PYD party and the PKK-linked YPG/YPJ guerrillas, and the growing international support that they openly or covertly receive as a key allied force on the ground in the fight against ISIS, including by the United States and Russia, has increased concerns in Turkey. Ankara wants to prevent the strengthening of the PKK and the consolidation of Kurdish self-government at all costs, in addition to

its major objective, the overthrow of Assad, and has cautioned that its red line holds that Kurdish forces in Syria cannot expand west of the Euphrates. Thus, Turkey launched some attacks against the Kurds in Syria in late 2015. At the same time, Turkey remains important to the United States, which benefits from approval to use the Turkish military base at Incirlik as part of the international coalition's campaign. Russia's greater involvement in Syria in the last quarter of 2015, with its vast military power, as well as the crisis between Turkey and Russia over Turkey's downing of a Russian plane, represents a tectonic shift whose full range of consequences for Ankara and the Kurdish issue have yet to be seen. Meanwhile, for the first time in the history of the PKK, Syria has taken on crucial strategic, symbolic and survival-related importance for the Kurdish movement in Turkey, exemplified in the response to the siege of Kobane by ISIS between late 2014 and early 2015 and in its project of self-government. The Kurds of Syria and Turkey accuse Ankara of directly or indirectly supporting ISIS, the main enemy of the Syrian Kurds. The presence of PKK forces in Iraq fighting against ISIS must also not be forgotten, as well as questions about the impacts it could have on relations between the PKK and the ruling Kurdish KDP party, an ally or Turkey. These relations have ranged from rivalry to occasional pragmatic cooperation. Neither the KDP nor Turkey want to see a rise of PKK influence in the region, but the KDP may also serve as a pragmatic bridge between the PKK and Turkey. Therefore, despite the differential and particular dynamics, the regional context directly influences the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Whether it does so decisively remains to be seen.

It remains to be seen whether there is any genuine desire in the Erdogan regime's project of political hegemony to find a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Kurdish conflict

Linked to the "Syrianisation" of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey, groups allied with ISIS appeared on Turkish soil. In 2015, this became clear in attacks in Diyarbakir (against an HDP meeting in June, killing around 50 people and injuring hundreds), Suruç (against a Turkish and Kurdish delegation in support of Kobane in July, killing around 30 people and injuring hundreds) and Ankara (against a march in favour of peace talks heavily attended by Kurds in October, killing around 100 people and injuring over 400). The Kurdish movement blamed the Turkish government, claiming that it supports ISIS. Analysts highlighted government negligence in terms of security and the consequences of its insufficient control of the border with Syria. People with links to ISIS were arrested for the attacks. Media outlets indicated that there were ISIS cells in Turkey largely inspiring youth of Kurdish origin influenced by a complex context of victimisation and exposed to radicalisation. According to these reports, there are still no foundations for ISIS to become a social movement in Turkey, countered in part by the space occupied by the Islamist Hüda Par party, which does not support ISIS, but there is a risk that ISIS cells exploit lines of division and that the climate surrounding the Kurdish issue in Turkey deteriorates.

Another noteworthy factor is the profusion of violent incidents in the streets, clearly made visible during the June election campaign, in which many HDP offices were attacked in many parts of the country. There have also been messages of incitement to hatred in media outlets and social networks and acts of violence and intimidation against the media and people that do not follow government policy lines. In football fields, this straining of the social atmosphere has been seen in booing and insults during the minutes of silence for the victims of attacks like in Suruç and Ankara. Some journalists point to the base of followers of the AKP. Whether these actions were directed or not, there is a risk of further unravelling of the social climate in the streets, expressed along ethnic and political lines.

Finally, 2015 was also a year of increased democratic regression. The rollback of the freedom of the press and freedom of expression, the violent crackdowns on demonstrations and the arrests of civilians accused of having links to the PKK are some examples of this toughening of the civil sphere. Faced with all this, there are elements of risk in the immediate future that could make it difficult to resume a solid process to seek a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Kurdish issue anytime soon. At the same time, there are windows of opportunity for dialogue based on previous approaches and the pressing need to avoid any further deterioration in the situation. As such, efforts must be redoubled inside and outside Turkey to establish new foundations for peace.

6.9. Armed violence in Yemen: a new and invisible Syria?

Yemen has been the scene of chronic armed conflicts in the last decade, with a series of dynamics of violence linked to the war that has pitted the Houthis against security forces in the northern part of the country since 2004, the constant and growing activity of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and, most recently, the crisis that led to the departure of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011 as part of the wave of popular revolts against authoritarian regimes across the region. Yemen then began a bumpy transition that initially raised some expectations, although it was punctuated by periodic episodes of armed violence. The situation worsened markedly in late March 2015 when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia decided to intervene to halt the progress of the Houthi militias, which had ousted the Yemeni transitional government at the start of the year. By late 2015, the toll of this new escalation was devastating: nearly 6,000 people had lost their lives due to the violence, half of them civilians, over one million people were displaced and the humanitarian situation was dramatic, with 80% of the population in need of assistance. Looking ahead to 2016, the situation in the country threatens to worsen due to the growing complexity of the armed conflict, the severe impact of the violence on the Yemeni population and the obstacles to finding a political solution to it. In late December 2015, a new effort to engage the warring sides in dialogue gave room for cautious hope amidst a crisis that looks increasingly similar to the war in Syria, but has received little international attention.

The background of this most recent escalation of violence in the country dates back to 2014, amidst a context of frustration with the progress of the transition process. The agreement sponsored by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 2011 managed to avoid a civil war at the time, but it did not lay down the foundations for tackling the underlying problems in Yemen, including the deterioration of the economic situation, corruption and rivalries between the country's elites.[21] The work of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was applauded in some ways, but it also failed to provide an agreed solution on key issues, including the future structure of the state. In mid-2014, the government of President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi (Saleh's former vice president) faced growing popular discontent due in part to the decision to suspend fuel subsidies, on which the Houthis capitalised to further expand their influence from the north. With the implicit collaboration of parts of the Yemeni security forces loyal to Saleh (in an alliance of convenience, since in previous years they had faced off in the context of the war), the Houthis took control of Sana'a in September. Shortly thereafter, in early 2015, they forced the fall of Hadi's government amidst disagreements over the federal divisions that were going to be enshrined the new Constitution. Despite the UN's attempts at mediation, the crisis worsened. The Houthis seized power and Hadi, who had been put under house arrest, fled to the southern city of Aden, denounced their actions as a coup d'état and went into exile in Saudi Arabia. In this context and faced with the southward advance of the Houthis, in late March Riyadh decided to intervene militarily in Yemen at the head of a coalition composed of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and Egypt and backed by countries like the United States and the United Kingdom.

Thereafter, the levels of violence intensified and the conflict became more complex resulting from the proliferation of armed groups, the influence of regional interests and the increasingly sectarian nature of the fighting. While the anti-Houthi coalition centred its strategy on an air campaign at first, the conflict later witnessed the growing participation of land forces from the countries of the alliance. During the summer, various coalition countries, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Sudan, deployed troops to reinforce the Yemeni soldiers loyal to Hadi, sent armoured vehicles imported from the West (both the United States and the United Kingdom have approved new transfers of weapons to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi) and managed to push back the Houthis from Aden.[22] Information revealed during the second half of 2015 indicates that hundreds of mercenaries were entering the country to reinforce the anti-Houthi front. At least 450 combatants of Latin American origin (most of them Colombian soldiers, given priority because of their experience in fighting against the FARC) were allegedly transported to Yemen by the UAE, introducing another volatile element to an already highly complex situation. In addition, Yemen is increasingly being considered a theatre of indirect confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran in their dispute for regional hegemony. Although the stated intent of its intervention is to restore Hadi to power, Riyadh also considers the Houthis a threat and accuses them of being allies and pawns of Tehran. However, observers and analysts stress that the ties between Iran and the Houthis are neither tight nor operational (and not comparable to the links between Tehran and Hezbollah, for example), although they have gotten more intense during the conflict. The Houthis have approached Iran, but according to some analysts, the support is limited and focused especially on their potential as spoilers for the Saudis.[23]

The conflict and influence of the regional situation have also helped to intensify sectarian interpretations of the fighting between the different armed groups, an aspect not prevalent in armed violence in Yemen previously. As some analysts have emphasised, the differences between

21. International Crisis Group, *Yemen at War,* Crisis Group Middle East Briefing no. 45, ICG, 27 March 2015.
22. Emily Hager and Mark Mazetti, "Emirates Secretly Sends Colombian Mercenaries to Yemen Fight", *The New York Times,* 25 November 2015.
23. Iba Abdo and Nick Grinstead, *Yemen: under fire, desperate for peace, Open Democracy*, 16 June 2015.

the Zaidis (Shia, predominantly in the north of the country) and Shafi'is (Sunnis, mostly in the centre, south and west) of Yemen are less pronounced than between Sunnis and Shia, but their history of co-existence is being seen as threatened by the conflict.[24] AQAP is taking advantage of the turmoil to gain ground and consolidate its influence in the southwestern parts of the country and has been involved in battles against the Houthis. The ISIS branch in Yemen is trying to do the same. Created in late 2014, ISIS has tried to capitalise on the narrative of sectarianism. Throughout 2015, it claimed responsibility for unprecedentedly bloody attacks on mosques frequented by Houthis and the Zaidi community in Sana'a, in addition to other far-reaching actions like the murder of the governor of Aden.

The conflict has had a dire impact on the civilian population. Half of the 5,800 people killed in the escalation of violence from late March to early December were civilians, including hundreds of children, an outcome of the indiscriminate use of violence in populated areas. Dozens of people have been killed by mines and other explosive devices. Both sides have been denounced by human rights organisations for committing acts that constitute war crimes. More than 27,000 people have been injured and the healthcare infrastructure that remains standing is completely overwhelmed to meet the needs of the population. The conflict has even helped diseases like dengue fever and malaria to spread. NGOs and UN agencies warn that over 21 million people (80% of the Yemeni population) are in need of assistance and have complained that aid has been hampered by the naval and aerial blockade imposed on the country. The conflict has also forced 2.3 million people to abandon their homes, 120,000 of which have fled the country. As such, the intensification of the violence has helped to aggravate the already precarious situation of the population in the poorest country in the Arab World, with serious long-term consequences. In late 2015, UN estimates indicated that 1.8 million children had not attended school since March, 19 million people lacked access to safe water and sanitation and 7.6 million people were in a situation of severe food insecurity. The swift deterioration of the situation led the Red Cross to warn in September that after five months of conflict, Yemen presented a scenario similar to Syria after five years of war. Despite the seriousness of the situation, the emergency appeal launched half at mid-year had collected less than half the funds required.

The Red Cross warned in September that after five months of conflict, Yemen presented a scenario similar to Syria after five years of war

The prospects of halting the spiral of violence and redirecting the crisis by political means are complicated, given the precedents of mediation efforts and the constraints arising from the increasingly complex nature of the conflict. The various initiatives promoted by the UN to bring the parties to a political agreement have been unsuccessful so far. The agreement reached by the Houthis and Hadi's government after the capture of Sana'a in September 2014 was not respected by either side. Attempts to facilitate a rapprochement in January and February 2015 also failed. After the resignation of the UN special envoy for Yemen at the time, Jamal Benomar, his successor, Mauritanian diplomat Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, tried unsuccessfully to commit both sides to a ceasefire. The truces reached were either not respected, lasted a very short time or were preceded by an intensification of fighting. At a meeting in Geneva in June, the parties were unwilling to sit at the same table to negotiate and in September announcements of a new round of talks were cancelled at the last minute. The new round of negotiations in Switzerland in December seemed like a new opportunity. Amidst the international alarm over ISIS and given the stalemate in the war, Washington and London stepped up pressure on Hadi to adopt a less stringent position regarding implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2216. Approved in April with Russia abstaining, the resolution is considered sympathetic to Hadi and Riyadh's point of view. The text demands that the parties put an end to the violence and requires the Houthis to surrender the weapons seized from state arsenals and withdraw from the territories captured in the last year, including the capital, Sana'a. The Houthis have been willing to retreat, but demand that the negotiations address the political future of the country in a comprehensive manner.

The possibility that the negotiations include a land swap must overcome a series of obstacles, including the expected action of "spoilers" uninvolved in the negotiations, like AQAP and ISIS, and the fragility of the Yemeni alliances involved in the dispute, which may determine support for the talks if they do not address the demands of some groups (cooperation between the Houthis and Saleh's circle has been for convenience, but mistrust persists between both, while the pro-Hadi side includes actors like southern secessionist groups that came together to fight what they perceive to be a common enemy but feel no loyalty to the president). The influence of regional interests (especially Saudi Arabia and Iran), a possible freeze on concessions that may be interpreted as a gain for the other side and a situation in which Yemen becomes a bargaining chip as part of parallel negotiations in Syria must also be taken into account. In this context, various analysts warned that despite the greater diplomatic pressure, the round in December began with very limited expectations due to the deep divisions that persist. Still, some anticipated the possibility of reaching specific agreements like a long-term ceasefire, an exchange of prisoners, the lifting of the blockade and a framework for continuing the dialogue. Given the levels of violence and destruction in the country, any measure conducive to reducing the hostilities, death and suffering of the population would be considered progress.

24. ICG, op.cit.

6.10. The jihadist threat and its destabilising effects worldwide

In recent years, the *Alert!* report has drawn attention to the dynamics of radicalisation in the Middle East and the emergence of Islamic State (ISIS) in particular, first because of the progress made by the armed group in Syria and Iraq amidst a climate of instability in the region and then by its growing control of territories in both countries, which marked a turning point with the declaration of a caliphate in mid-2014. Since then, ISIS has become established as a new model for international jihadism and a competitor to al-Qaeda. It has been profiled as a player with a greater ability to act and a global reach, whether through many local armed groups that have pledged allegiance to ISIS for various reasons, mostly in countries in Africa and Asia, or through its involvement in actions perpetrated beyond these regions, as seen in the attacks in Paris in November 2015. In this context, many factors could influence an intensification of violence linked to the jihadist threat in the future. These include a more open struggle between ISIS and al-Qaeda, which may result in an increase in armed actions between both organisations, tending to raise the profile of their respective projects, a higher incidence of armed actions by ISIS militiamen returning to their countries of origin or acting as "lone wolves" (radicalised individuals with access to weapons and the desire to perpetrate attacks like in San Bernardino in the United States) and possible blowback from the international response to ISIS, which may result in an increase in the dynamics of radicalisation if it continues to favour the military option.

A more open struggle between ISIS and al-Qaeda may result in an increase in armed actions by both organisations aimed at raising the profile of their respective projects

The conflict between al-Qaeda and ISIS has dragged on for years, but has become increasingly explicit. The differences between both organisations date back to the time when what is now ISIS only operated in Iraq as a branch of al-Qaeda under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Led by Osama bin Laden at the time, al-Qaeda reproached the Iraqi branch's strategies, especially its attacks against the Shia population because it placed a higher priority on focusing on the "outside enemy" and avoiding actions that could undermine support for it in the region. These disagreements continued after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed leadership of the Iraqi branch in a decision that was not discussed with the central leaders of the group and were exacerbated amidst the turmoil created by the war in Syria. Al-Baghdadi sent one of his lieutenants to take advantage of the chaos in the neighbouring country and his actions led to the formation of al-Nusra Front, which has taken on an increasingly important role. The Iraqi branch unilaterally declared its merger with al-Nusra Front in 2013, but al-Nusra Front denied any such union and insisted that it should be considered al-Qaeda's branch in Syria. The decision of al-Qaeda's central leadership (headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri after the death of Bin Laden) to support al-Nusra Front's position and reject the merger marked their break with al-Baghdadi's group in early 2014. This break was confirmed by subsequent armed clashes between al-Nusra Front and ISIS militiamen and, according to some sources, by ISIS' murder of the emissary sent by al-Zawahiri to mediate in the dispute.[25]

ISIS has been eclipsing al-Qaeda thanks to its conquests in Iraq and Syria, its greater financial resources (it is currently the richest armed group in the world) and its ability to attract recruits, partly by the use of propaganda and new technologies to co-opt and promote its actions, which receive high levels of media coverage. Some analysts have also stated that a generational difference playing against al-Qaeda's leadership and al-Zawahiri's lack of charisma and authority (compared to Bin Laden) may have favoured the split, described by some as a "coup d'état" from within al-Qaeda.[26] In its media statements, ISIS has not been shy to accuse some jihadist ideologues that inspired al-Qaeda and now criticise ISIS for murdering Muslims and "corrupting" jihad of conspiracy against the caliphate.[27]

In this context, various shows of loyalty to ISIS have been made by armed groups in recent years, some of them former supporters of al-Qaeda, in countries like Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Afghanistan and Nigeria. The diverse motives for this alignment would merit particular analysis in each case,[28] although a combination of ideological affinity, the search for funding, logistics support, media exposure and simply getting closer to what seems like the most powerful jihadist movement in the world are common to them. Some of these organisations have adopted aspects of the modus operandi that has brought fame to ISIS and have declared their areas of influence to be the new "provinces" of the caliphate. This is the case with Ansar Beit al-Maqdis in Egypt, which changed its name to Sinai Province in late 2014. The group has maintained its attacks against the Egyptian security forces, but has also claimed responsibility for actions like the attack on a Russian plane that killed over 200 people in October 2015. In Libya, the main factions of Ansar al-Sharia, initially related to al-Qaeda, decided to join ISIS and announced the establishment of Barqa (Cyrenaica). During 2015, ISIS in Libya claimed responsibility for bomb attacks, beheaded around 20 Egyptian Copts

25. Shiv Malik et al., "How ISIS crippled al-Qaida", *The Guardian*, 10 June 2015.
26. Ibid.
27. Al-Qaeda also aspires to establish a caliphate in the long term, but does not yet believe that conditions are suitable for doing so.
28. See "Mali: jihadist group activities threaten stability" in this chapter.

and led growing activity in Sirte and Derna, where it has conducted crucifixions. Due to its geographical proximity, jihadist activity in Libya generates special concern in Europe. One of the most recent additions to the allies of ISIS is Boko Haram (BH), which received aid from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the past. Considered by some analysts as the most lethal armed group in the world, BH proclaimed West Africa Province. In turn, ISIS is urging its African supporters who cannot reach Iraq or Syria to join the ranks of BH.[29]

Amidst these movements in global jihadism, groups like AQIM, which operates in Algeria and the Sahel, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), active in Yemen, and al-Shabaab, which fights in Somalia, have demonstrated loyalty to al-Qaeda's central leadership. However, they have had to deal with dissident factions and new armed actors supportive of ISIS in their areas of influence, like Jund al-Khilafa in Algeria and the new branch of ISIS in Yemen, which have carried out unprecedented attacks on Shia mosques. Supporters of AQIM and AQAP have also claimed responsibility for high-profile actions like the attacks in Paris against Charlie Hebdo in early 2015 (two of the perpetrators had ties to al-Qaeda in Yemen[30]) and the attack on a hotel in Bamako in late November. Amidst the commotion caused by successive ISIS attacks in Sinai, Lebanon and Paris in a span of just 15 days, the attack in Mali was interpreted as a call for attention by supporters of al-Qaeda to emphasise that the group remained relevant and encouraged discussions in jihadist circles about which of the two groups was doing greater service to the cause.[31] It also heightened concern about the foreseeable lethal effects of greater competition between al-Qaeda and ISIS worldwide, since their dispute over influence and visibility could lead groups loyal to either project to escalate their actions while pursuing their own local agendas.

Moreover, as seen in 2015, attacks perpetrated by jihadists radicalised in their countries of origin may continue, whether or not they receive help from militia fighters who have returned from places like Syria and Iraq. Evidence of this is provided by the attacks in Paris in November (some of the assailants had returned from Syria) and the attacks in Tunisia against the Bardo Museum in March, in Sousse in June and against the presidential guard in November. Given its experience, Tunisia fears the arrival of militiamen trained in neighbouring Libya and the return of over 3,000 Tunisians that have left the country to join jihadist activities in the Middle East. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS have called for "lone wolf" jihadist attacks against targets in the West. The easy access of weapons in many countries could encourage attacks similar to the one in San Bernardino (California), claimed by a couple that had pledged loyalty to ISIS through Facebook.

The dynamics of radicalisation may also be favoured by the effects of the global response to this phenomenon, and to ISIS in particular, which so far has had a strong emphasis on the military and security dimension. Especially since the attacks in Paris, but also before, various analysts[32] have underscored the risks of a hasty response and over-reaction, which ISIS would welcome, and have warned of the consequences of an armed approach that reflects a lack of learning from earlier experiences (a new war against terrorism could be as big a failure as the first) and helps to feed ISIS' narrative and prophecies of a final battle between the forces of the caliphate and the infidels. In this respect, the priority should be to halt the polarisation, which is a challenge considering the rise of right-wing and xenophobic speech in Europe and the United States, taken to the limit of caricature by Republican candidate Donald Trump.

The international response requires greater coordination and a political strategy to assume a challenge that transcends borders and to which an approach focused on weapons cannot be an effective response. As has been demonstrated, arms trading has even helped to grow ISIS' stockpiles.[33] There must be greater agreement that the main problem lies in the conflicts and the power vacuum that have given rise to these types of armed groups, and that legitimate new governments must be set up in the areas most affected by the scourge, along with a determined commitment to support inclusive peace agreements. In this regard, alliances with repressive regimes that present themselves as guarantors against terrorism should be avoided, since they entail repeating the same mistakes as in the past. Likewise, non-violent responses to the phenomenon must intensify, such as controlling arms flows, blocking channels of financing, sanctions and embargoes, etc., and attention must be paid to the conditions that have favoured the radicalisation of thousands and thousands of people and to marginalisation that in may contexts could make any project that provides an opportunity for social advancement look attractive, including jihadism. In short, the problem requires a thoughtful, concerted and long-term perspective that has not yet characterised the international response to a phenomenon as complex as jihadism.

29. Jakkie Cilliers, *Violent Islamist extremism and terror in Africa*, ISS Paper 286, October 2015.
30. A third assailant in the attacks in Paris in January 2015 declared he was a follower of ISIS and showed support for the other two perpetrators, but there was no logistic coordination between both groups.
31. Anne Barnard and Neil MacFarquhar, "Paris and Mali Attacks Expose Lethal Qaeda-ISIS Rivalry", *The New York Times,* 20 November 2015.
32. For example, see Virginie Collombier, *Fighting the Islamic State in Libya: by political means first,* NOREF, March 2015, Joseph Bahout, *ISIS and Syria: What to Do – And Not Do – About It,* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 November 2015; David Rothkopf, "Our Reaction Is More Dangerous Than the Terrorists", *Foreign Policy,* 25 November 2015; Jean-Marie Guenenno, *The Problem with Coalition Air Strikes in Syria and The Dangers of a European War on Terror,* ICG, 15 September and 24 November 2015; Jane Kinnimot, *Europe Needs to Take an Holistic Approach to Tackling ISIS,* Chatham House, 25 November 2015.
33. Amnesty International, *Iraq: 'Islamic State' atrocities fuelled by decades of reckless arms trading*, AI, 8 December 2015.

Glossary

ABM: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis
ADF-NALU: Allied Defence Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
ADSC: All Darfur Stakeholders Conference
AFISMA: African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AKP: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
AKR: New Kosovo Alliance
ALBA: Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America)
ALP: Arakan Liberation Party
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia
APCLS: Alliance de Patriots pour un Congo Libre et Souverain
APHC: All Parties Hurriyat Conference
APLM: Afar Peoples Liberation Movement
APRD: Armée Populaire pour la Réstauration de la République et de la Démocratie (Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy)
AQAP: Al-Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula
AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ARMM: Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ARS: Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a
ATLF: All Terai Liberation Front
ATMM: Akhil Tarai Mukti Morcha
ATTF: All Tripura Tiger Force
AU: African Union
BDP: Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
BH: Boko Haram
BIFF: Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BIFM: Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement
BINUCA: United Nations Integrated Office in the Central African Republic
BLA: Baluch Liberation Army
BLF: Baluch Liberation Front
BLT: Baloch Liberation Tigers
BNUB: United Nations Office in Burundi
BRA: Balochistan Republican Army
CAP: Consolidated Appeal Process
CARICOM: Caribbean Community
CEMAC: Monetary and Economic Community of Central Africa
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
CHD: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
CNDD-FDD: Congrès National pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy)
CNDP: Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (National Congress for People's Defence)
CNF: Chin National Front
CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPI-M: Communist Party of India-Maoist
CPJP: Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix (Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace)
CPN-UML: Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)
DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DHD: Dima Halim daogah
DHD (J): Dima Halim Daogah, Black Widow faction
DHD (Nunisa): Dima Halim Daogah (Nunisa faction)
DKBA: Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
DMLEK: Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama
DPA: Darfur Peace Agreement
ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMIB: ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
EDA: Eritrean Democratic Alliance
EEBC: Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission
EFDM: Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement
EIC: Eritrean Islamic Congress
EIPJD: Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development
ELF: Eritrean Liberation Front
ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
ENSF: Eritrean National Salvation Front
EPC: Eritrean People's Congress
EPDF: Eritrean People's Democratic Front
EPP: Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo (Paraguayan Popular Army)
EPPF: Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front
EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETIM: East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETLO: East Turkestan Liberation Organization
EU: European Union
EUAVSEC SOUTH SUDAN: EU Aviation Security Mission in South Sudan
EUBAM: EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
EUBAM LIBYA: EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya
EUBAM Rafah: European Union Border Assistance Mission in Rafah
EUCAP NESTOR: EU Mission on Regional Maritime Capacity-Building in the Horn of Africa
EUCAP SAHEL NIGER: EU CSDP Mission in Niger
EU NAVFOR SOMALIA: European Union Naval Force in Somalia – Operation Atalanta
EUFOR ALTHEA: European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
EUJUST LEX: EU Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq
EULEX KOSOVO: EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUMM: EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia
EUPOL AFGHANISTAN: EU Police Mission in Afghanistan
EUPOL COPPS: EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories
EUPOL RD CONGO: EU Police Mission in DR Congo

EUSEC RD CONGO: EU Security Sector Reform Mission in DR Congo
EUTM Mali: EU Training Mission in Mali
EUTM SOMALIA: EU Somalia Training Mission
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FDLR: Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
FDPC: Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain (Central African People's Democratic Front)
FEWS NET: USAID Net of Famine Early Warning System
FFR: Front des Forces de Redressement (Front of Forces for Recovery)
FIS: Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front)
FJL: Freedom and Justice Party
FLEC-FAC: Frente de Liberação do Enclave de Cabinda (Cabinda Enclave's Liberation Front)
FNL: Forces Nationales de Libération (National Liberation Forces)
FOMUC: Force Multinationale en Centrafrique (CEMAC Multinational Forces in Central African Republic)
FPI: Front Populaire Ivorien (Ivorian Popular Front)
FPR: Front Populaire pour le Rédréssement (Popular Front for Recovery)
FRF: Forces Republicaines et Federalistas (Republican and Federalist Forces)
FRODEBU: Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (Burundi Democratic Front)
FRUD : Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et la Démocratie (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy)
FSA: Free Syrian Army
FTG: Federal Transition Government
FUC: Front Uni pour le Changement Démocratique (United Front for Democratic Change)
FUDD: Frente Unido para la Democracia y Contra la Dictadura (United Front for Democracy and Against Dictatorship)
FURCA: Force de l'Union en République Centrafricaine (Union Force in the Central African Republic)
GAM: Gerakin Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
GEI: Gender Equity Index
GIA: Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group)
GIE: Gender Inequality Index
GSPC: Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat)
HAK: Armenian National Congress
HDZ: Croatian Democratic Union
HDZ 1990: Croatian Democratic Union - 1990
HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HPG: Humanitarian Policy Group
HRC: Human Rights Council
HRW: Human Rights Watch
HUM: Harkat-ul-Mujahideen
IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
IBC: Iraq Body Count
ICC: International Criminal Court
ICG: International Crisis Group
ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
ICR/LRA: Regional Cooperation Initiative against the LRA
ICTR: International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia
ICU: Islamic Courts Union
IDMC: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP: Internally Displaced Person
IFLO: Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia
IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IHL: International Humanitarian Law
IISS: International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMU: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INLA: Irish National Liberation Army
IOM: International Organization for Migrations
IRA: Irish Republican Army
ISAF: International Security Assistance Force
ISF: International Stabilisation Force
ISIS: Islamic State
JEM: Justice and Equality Movement
JKLF: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JTMM: Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (People's Terai Liberation Front)
KANU: Kenya African National Union
KCK: Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Communities Union)
KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party
KFOR: NATO Mission in Kosovo
KIA: Kachin Independence Army
KIO: Kachin Independence Organization
KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army
KLNLF: Karbi Longri National Liberation Front
KNA: Kuki Liberation Army
KNF: Kuki National Front
KNPP: Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU: Kayin National Union
KNU/KNLA: Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army
KPF: Karen Peace Force
KPLT: Karbi People's Liberation Tiger
KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government
KYKL: Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (Organization to Save the Revolutionary Movement in Manipur)
LeT: Lashkar-e-Toiba
LJM: Liberation and Justice Movement
LRA: Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M23: March 23 Movement
MAP-OAS: OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia
MB: Muslim Brotherhood
MDC: Movement for Democratic Change
MEND: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MFDC: Mouvement de las Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance)
MIB OAS: Good Offices Mission in Ecuador and Colombia

MICOPAX: Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en République Centrafricaine (CEEAC Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic)
MILF: Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINURCA: United Nations Mission in Central African Republic
MINURCAT: United Nations Mission in Central African Republic and Chad
MINURSO: United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH: United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti.
MISCA: African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic
MISMA: International Mission of Support in Mali
MIT: Turkish National Intelligence Organisation
MJLC: Mouvement des Jeunes Libérateurs Centrafricains (Central African Young Liberators Movement)
MLC: Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (Movement for the Liberation of Congo)
MMT: Madhesi Mukti Tigers
MNLA: Mouvement National pour la Libération de L'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)
MNLF: Moro National Liberation Front
MONUC: United Nations Mission in DR Congo
MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
MOVADEF: Movimiento por Amnistía y Derechos Fundamentales (Amnesty and Fundamental Rights Movement)
MPRF: Madhesi People's Rights Forum
MQM: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement)
MRC: Mombasa Republican Council
MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctor's Without Borders)
MUJAO: Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
MVK: Madhesi Virus Killers
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC: Nepali Congress Party
NCP: National Congress Party
NDF: National Democratic Front
NDFB: National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NDPVF: Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDV: Niger Delta Vigilante
NGO: Non Governmental Organization
NLD: National League for Democracy
NLFT: National Liberation Front of Tripura
NMSP: New Mon State Party
NNC: Naga National Council
NNSC: Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
NPA: New People's Army
NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isaac Muivah
NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang
NTC: National Transitional Council of Lybia
OAS: Organization of American States
OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDM: Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
OIC: Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OLF: Oromo Liberation Front
OMIK: OSCE Mission in Kosovo
ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPC: Oromo People's Congress
OPM: Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Organization)
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OXFAM: Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PALU: Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (Unified Lumumbist Party)
PARECO : Patriotes Résistants Congolais (Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance)
PCP : Partido Comunista de Perú (Comunist Party of Peru)
PDLF: Palestinian Democratic Liberation Front
PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PJAK: Party of Free Life of Kurdistan
PKK: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Worker's Party)
PLA: People's Liberation Army
PNA: Palestinian National Authority
POLISARIO Front: Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro
PPP: Pakistan People's Party
PPRD: Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy)
PREPAK: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
PREPAK Pro: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak Progressive
PYD: Democratic Union Party
RAMSI: Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RENAMO: Mozambican National Resistance
RFC: Rassemblement des Forces pour le Changement (Coalition of Forces for Change)
RPF: Revolutionary Patriotic Front
RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front
RSADO: Red See Afar Democratic Organization
RTF: Regional Task Force
SADC: Southern Africa Development Community
SADR: Saharan Arab Democratic Republic
SAF: Sudanese Armed Forces
SCUD: Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité Nationale et la Démocratie (Platform for Change, National Unity and Democracy)
SSA-S: Shan State Army-South
SSC: Sool, Saanag and Cayn
SFOR: NATO Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLA: Sudan Liberation Army

SLA-Nur: Sudan Liberation Army-Nur
SLDF: Sabaot Land Defence Forces
SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region
SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM: Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-N: Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North
SSA-S: Shan State Army-South
SSDM/A: South Sudan Democratic Movement/ Army
SSLA: South Sudan Liberation Army
SSNPLO: Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization
TAK: Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons)
TFG: Transitional Federal Government
TIPH: Temporary International Presence in Hebron
TMLP: Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party
TPLF: Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TTP: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAD: Union pour l'Alternance Démocratique (Union for Democratic Changeover)
UCPN-M: Unified Communist Party of Nepal
UFDD: Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (Union of Forces for Democracy and Development)
UFDG: Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (Democratic Forces Union of Guinea)
UFDR: Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (Union of Democratic Forces Coalition)
UFF: Ulster Freedom Fighters
UFR: Union des Forces de la Résistance (United Resistance Forces)
ULFA: United Liberation Front of Assam
UN: United Nations
UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI: United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq
UNAMID: United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur
UNDOF: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNEF: United Nations Emergency Force
UNFICYP: United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Fund
UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNIOGBIS: United Nations Integrated Peace-Building Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNIPSIL: United Nations Peace-building Office in Sierra Leone
UNISFA: United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNITAF: Unified Task Force
UNLF: United National Liberation Front
UNMIK: United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS: United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMIT: United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNMOGIP: United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOCA: United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
UNOCI: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOGBIS: United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNOWA: United Nations Office in West Africa
UNPOS: United Nations Political Office in Somalia
UNRCCA: United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO: United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East
UNSCOL: Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNSMIL: United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNMIT: United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNSOM: United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNTSO: United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation
UPDS: United People's Democratic Solidarity
UPPK: United People's Party of Kangleipak
UPRONA: Union pour le Progrès National (Union for National Progress)
USA: United States of America
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USAID: United States Agency for International Development
UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force
UWSA: United Wa State Army
VRAE: Valley between Rivers Apurimac and Ene
WB: World Bank
WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WFP: World Food Programme
WPNLC: West Papua National Coalition for Liberation
WTO: World Trade Organisation
YPG: People's Protection Units
ZANU-PF: Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZUF: Zeliangrong United Front

Escola de Cultura de Pau

The Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace, hereinafter ECP) is an academic peace research institution located at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The ECP was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through research, Track II diplomacy, training and awareness generating activities. Its main scope of action includes analysing conflicts, peace processes, gender, human rights and transnational justice, and education for peace.

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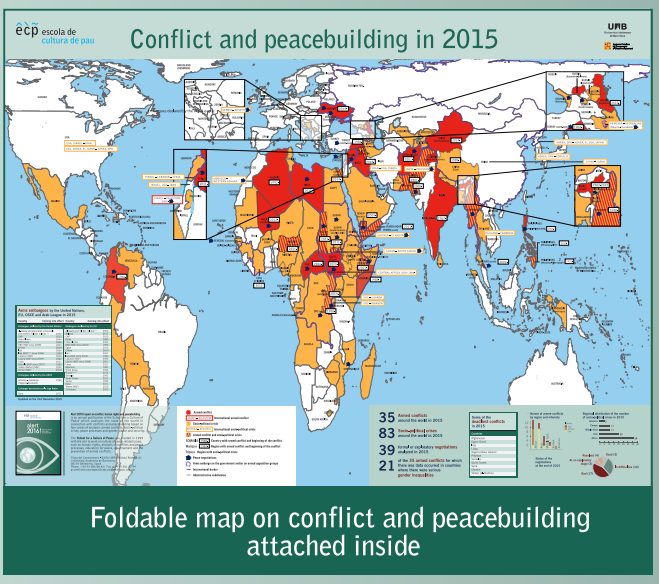
Alert 2016! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding is a yearbook providing an analysis of the state of the world in terms of conflict and peacebuilding from four perspectives: armed conflicts, socio-political crises, peace processes and gender, peace and security. The analysis of the most important events in 2015 and of the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main armed conflicts and socio-political crises that currently exist in the world makes it possible to provide a comparative regional overview and to identify global trends, as well as risk and early warning elements for the future. Similarly, the report also identifies opportunities for peacebuilding and for reducing, preventing and resolving conflicts. In both cases, one of the main aims of this report is to place data, analyses and the identified warning signs and opportunities for peace in the hands of those actors responsible for making policy decisions or those who participate in peacefully resolving conflicts or in raising political, media and academic awareness of the many situations of political and social violence taking place around the world.

Foreword by Martin Griffiths
Executive Director of the European Institute of Peace



Foldable map on conflict and peacebuilding attached inside

Alert 2016! sheds new light on some of the most pertinent peace and security questions of our times. In particular, it provides a valuable overview of conflict and peacebuilding trends throughout the world in recent times. For scholars interested in peace and conflict, as well as for policy-makers working in this field, *Alert 2016!* provides an important source of reference.

Isak Svensson,
Professor in the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University

Alert 2016! offers a concise and multi-faceted overview on the state of peace and conflicts worldwide. In addition to providing a repository of key information for researchers, *Alert 2016!* takes the extra step of making projections for peace in the short and medium-term, identifying warning signs and windows of opportunities for policymakers and practitioners to consider. It thus ranks among the few publications taking a strong stand in support of effective research-policy transfer in the field of peace-building.

Thania Paffenholz,
Director of the Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

The Alert yearbook is a window on the world; a panoramic one. It allows observing the present, learning from the past and anticipating the future. This, in a convulsive world where socio-political crises produce conflicts and peace processes are often too weak, is an invaluable contribution. *Alert 2016!* portrays the world as it is, reminding us of how it has been and providing key elements to face up to the new processes with the advantage brought by experience. It is not a report on wars, socio-political crises and conflicts. It is really a yearbook on prevention, rehabilitation and peace.

Xavier Aldekoa,
Africa Correspondent, La Vanguardia

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