

alert 2019!

Report on conflicts,
human rights
and peacebuilding



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Executive Summary

Alert 2019! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding is an annual report analyzing the state of the world in terms of conflict and peacebuilding based on three main axes: armed conflict, tensions, gender and peace and security. The analysis of the most relevant events in 2018 and the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main scenarios of armed conflict and social and political tension around the world allows for a regional comparative vision and also allows identifying global trends and elements of risk and preventive warnings for the future. Furthermore, the report also identifies peacebuilding opportunities or opportunities to scale down, prevent or resolve conflicts. In both cases, one of the main objectives in this report is to make available all of the information, analyses and identification of warning factors and peace opportunities for decision-makers, those intervening for the peaceful resolution to conflicts, or those giving a greater political, media or academic visibility to the many situations of political and social violence in the world.

As for the methodology, the contents of this report mainly draw on a qualitative analysis of studies and information made available by many sources –the United Nations, international organizations, research centres, communication media or NGOs, among others– as well as on field research in conflict-affected countries.

Some of the most relevant conclusions and information in the *Alert 2019!* report are listed below:

- During 2018, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, of which 33 were still active by the end of the year. Most of these were in Africa (14), and Asia (9), followed by the Middle East (6), Europe (3), and the Americas (1). The total number of armed conflicts has remained fairly stable and without significant fluctuations in the last five years.
- In 2018 the situation in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia was no longer considered an armed conflict after a historic peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF. On the other hand, two new cases –Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) and the Western Sahel Region– were analyzed as armed conflicts because of the drastic increase of violence.
- Regarding the intensity of violence, 38% of the conflicts were low (13 cases), 35% medium (12 cases) and another 27% high (nine cases).
- The most serious conflicts in 2018 were Libya, Mali, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).
- The number of fatalities in some conflicts greatly exceeded 1,000 in one year, such as Afghanistan, with a death toll that could surpass 43,000; Yemen, with some estimates that 28,000 were killed in 2018, out of a total of more than 60,200 since January 2016; and Syria, with body counts indicating that 20,000 people lost their lives in 2018, including close to 6,500 civilians, out of a death toll of over half a million since the war began in 2011.
- 30% of armed conflicts experienced an escalation of violence: Cameroon, Mali, the Western Sahel Region, RCA, Colombia, Afghanistan, the Philippines (NPA), India (Jammu and Kashmir) –where the highest number of fatalities since 2009 was registered–, Israel-Palestine –also with the worst figures since 2014– and Yemen (Houthis).
- More than one-third of the conflicts experienced a decline in hostilities and levels of violence over the previous year, while 32% of the cases did not face significant changes
- Beyond the multi-cause nature of armed conflict, 71% of conflicts (24 of the 34 cases) were mainly driven by opposition to domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State. Also, claims based on identity or calls for self-government were one of the main causes in 59% of cases (20 conflicts).
- 82% of armed conflicts were internalised international conflicts, in which some of the parties were foreign, the armed actors of the conflict had bases or launched attacks from abroad and/or the conflict spread to neighbouring countries.
- 12% of the armed conflicts (four cases) were internal, meaning that they were between armed actors of the same country, operating exclusively in and from its borders. Only two cases were considered international: the conflict in the Western Sahel region and the conflict between Israel and Palestine.
- Armed conflicts continued to provoke and/or exacerbate situations of humanitarian crisis. Cases like Yemen –the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than 24 million people in need of assistance–, Iraq –where 6.7 million people continued to need help–, Syria – increased from 520,000 to 4.2 million the number of people in need of humanitarian aid in the areas of Idlib and Aleppo–, Burundi –where 3.6 million people needed humanitarian aid– or RCA –where 2.9 of the 4.5 million people in the country needed humanitarian aid.
- One of the impacts of armed conflicts continued to be the phenomenon of sexual violence. The use of sexual violence in contexts such as Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, RCA, DRC, Somalia and Sudan of the South was denounced during 2018.
- Forced displacement was, one year more, one of the most serious consequences of armed conflicts globally. Figures published in 2018 highlighted that, until the end of 2017, a total of 68.5 million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of situations of conflict, persecution, violence and/or human rights violations, 2.9 million more than at the end of the previous year.
- During 2018 83 scenarios of tension were identified around the world. These cases were mainly concentrated in Africa (33), and Asia (18), whereas the remaining cases were spread around Europe (12), Middle East (11) and the Americas (nine).
- Half of the crises were of low intensity (50%, a

percentage higher than the 47% reported in 2017), one third were of average intensity (similar to the figure in the previous year) and only 15% had high levels of tension (13). Compared with previous years, the number of serious tensions followed the downward trend in recent years (representing 15% in 2018, 20% in 2017 and 24% in 2016).

- Slightly more than half of the crises in the world were internal in nature (45 crises, or 54%), almost one third of the crises around the world were internalised (24 crises, or almost 29%), and one sixth of the crises were international (14, or almost 17%).
- As for the evolution of tensions, many (40%) of the crises did not experience significant changes, 30% saw some improvement and the remaining 30% deteriorated compared to 2017.
- Practically 70% of the crises in the world were mainly caused by opposition to internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments, and the main causes of nearly half the crises (45%) included demands for self-government and/or identity. Disputes over the control of territory and/or resources were particularly relevant in around one third of the crises (31%), although this is a factor that fuels many situations of tension to varying degrees.
- 13 of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination.
- The UN Secretary-General expressed concern at the lack of progress regarding the basic commitments on peace and security, human rights and gender equality.
- With regard to the inclusion of gender equality in peace agreements, only three of 11 agreements (27%) signed in 2017 included provisions in this regard. This data is especially worrying, since it consolidates and aggravates the trend started in 2016, when gender issues were included in 50% of the agreements, compared to 70% of 2015.
- The *Alert 2019!* report identifies five opportunities for peace: the window of opportunity for peace in the Horn of Africa opened after the historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the process of implementing the agreement between the Government and the MILF in the south of the Philippines; the advances in the dialogue process on Transnistria; the networks of women mediators developed in the framework of the implementation of the gender, peace and security agenda; and the possibilities of recognition and inclusion of the young population as a peace agent after the approval of resolution 2250 of the United Nations Security Council and the implementation of the youth agenda, peace and security.
- The report highlights five warning scenarios: the escalation of violence in the Western Sahel region,

the effects of the political and economic crisis on the instability scenarios in Sudan, the increase of violence in the Indonesian region of Western Papua 50 years after the failed self-determination referendum, the risks derived from the absence of dialogue in the conflict between Turkey and the PKK, and the serious human security impacts of the hunger-conflict binomial.

Structure

The report has five chapters. The first two look at conflicts globally –causes, types, dynamics, evolution and actors in situations of armed conflict or tension. The third chapter looks at the gender impacts in conflicts and tensions, as well as the initiatives being carried out within the United Nations and other local and international organizations and movements with regards to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. Chapter four identifies peace opportunities, scenarios where there is a context that is favourable to resolution of conflicts or to progress towards or consolidate peace initiatives. The final chapter studies risk scenarios in the future. Besides these five chapters, the report also includes a foldable map identifying the scenarios of armed conflict and social-political tension.

Armed conflicts

The first chapter (**Armed conflicts**)¹ describes the evolution, type, causes and dynamics in active conflicts during the year; global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2018 are analyzed, as well as the impacts of such conflicts on the civilian population.

During 2018, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, a figure that follows the trend observed in previous years (33 cases in 2016 and 2017, 35 conflicts in 2015, 36 in 2014, 35 in 2013). Of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018, 33 were still active by the end of the year, given that the situation in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia was no longer considered an armed conflict after a historic peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF and the hostilities subsided. On the other hand, there were two new armed conflicts in 2018: Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) –where the situation of violence affecting the English-speaking majority regions of Cameroon since 2016 worsened significantly in 2018– and Western Sahel Region –where increasing attacks by jihadist groups in northern Burkina Faso and northern Niger were registered.

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.

Armed conflicts in 2018*

AFRICA (16)	ASIA (9)	MIDDLE EAST (6)
Algeria (AQMI) -1992- Burundi -2015- Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) -2018- CAR -2006- DRC (east) -1998- DRC (east-ADF) -2014- DRC (Kasai) -2017- <i>Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-</i> Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011- Libya -2011- Mali (north) -2012- Somalia -1988- Sudan (Darfur) -2003- Sudan (South Kordofan & Blue Nile) -2011- South Sudan -2009- Western Sahel Region -2018-	Afghanistan -2001- India (CPI-M) -1967- India (Jammu & Kashmir) -1989- Myanmar -1948- Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005- Pakistan -2001- Philippines (NPA) -1969- Philippines (Mindanao) -1991- Thailand (south) -2004-	Egypt (Sinai) -2014- Iraq -2003- Israel-Palestine -2000- Syria -2011- Yemen (Houthis) -2004- Yemen (AQPA) - 2011-
		EUROPE (2)
		Turkey (south-east) -1984- Ukraine -2014-
		AMERICAS (1)
		Colombia -1964-

*Between hyphens is the date on which the conflict started. In Italics are the conflicts that ended during 2018

Regarding to the geographical distribution of armed conflicts around the world, the data from 2018 provide a picture similar to that of previous years. The vast majority of the conflicts were concentrated in Africa (16) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (two) and the Americas (one). For the remaining conflicts, six were in the Middle East, three in Europe and one in the Americas. Twelve per cent (12%) of the armed conflicts (four) were internal, meaning that they were between armed actors of the same country, operating exclusively in and from its borders: the DRC (Kasai), the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). Six per cent (6%) were considered international: the conflict in the Western Sahel region and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The remaining 82% were internalised international conflicts, in which some of the parties were foreign, the armed actors of the conflict had bases or launched attacks from abroad and/or the conflict spread to neighbouring countries. In many conflicts, this factor of internationalisation resulted in the involvement of third parties, including international missions, regional and international ad-hoc military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders and others.

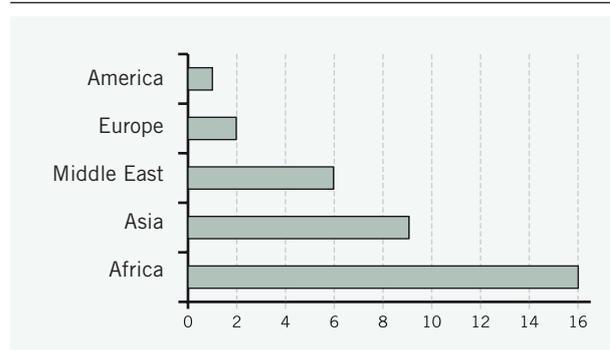
Regarding armed conflict causes, the vast majority of the conflicts had among its main causes opposition to the domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a certain state, which resulted in struggles to gain power or weaken the government's power. At least one of these factors was present in 71% of the conflicts in 2018 (24 of the 34 cases), in line with the previous year (73% of the conflicts in 2017). Eighteen (18) of these 24 cases featured armed actors that aspired to change the system, mostly organisations with a jihadist agenda trying to impose their particular

During 2018, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, 33 of which were still active by the end of the year

interpretation of Islamic law. These groups included the self-styled Islamic State (ISIS) and its affiliates and related organisations in different continents, which were present in Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries; the various branches of al-Qaeda operating in North Africa and the Middle East, including AQIM (Algeria and Sahel) and AQAP (Yemen); the Taliban militias active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia. Another prominent major cause included disputes about identity-related demands and self-government, present in 59% of the conflicts (20), a slightly higher number than in 2017 (55%). Finally, struggles over the control of resources and territory were a main cause of almost one third of the conflicts (10), though it was indirectly present in many others, perpetuating the violence through wartime economies.

With regards to the evolution of armed conflicts in 2018, the hostilities and levels of violence subsided in over one third of the conflicts compared to the previous year (13 cases). There were no significant changes in

Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2018



32% of the conflicts (11), while the violence escalated in 30%. The conflicts that witnessed rising levels of violence in 2018 took place in Cameroon, Mali, the Western Sahel region, the CAR, Colombia, Afghanistan, the Philippines (NPA), India (Jammu and Kashmir), Israel-Palestine and Yemen (Houthis). The conflicts in Israel-Palestine and India (Jammu and Kashmir) reported the highest number of casualties since 2009 and 2014, respectively.

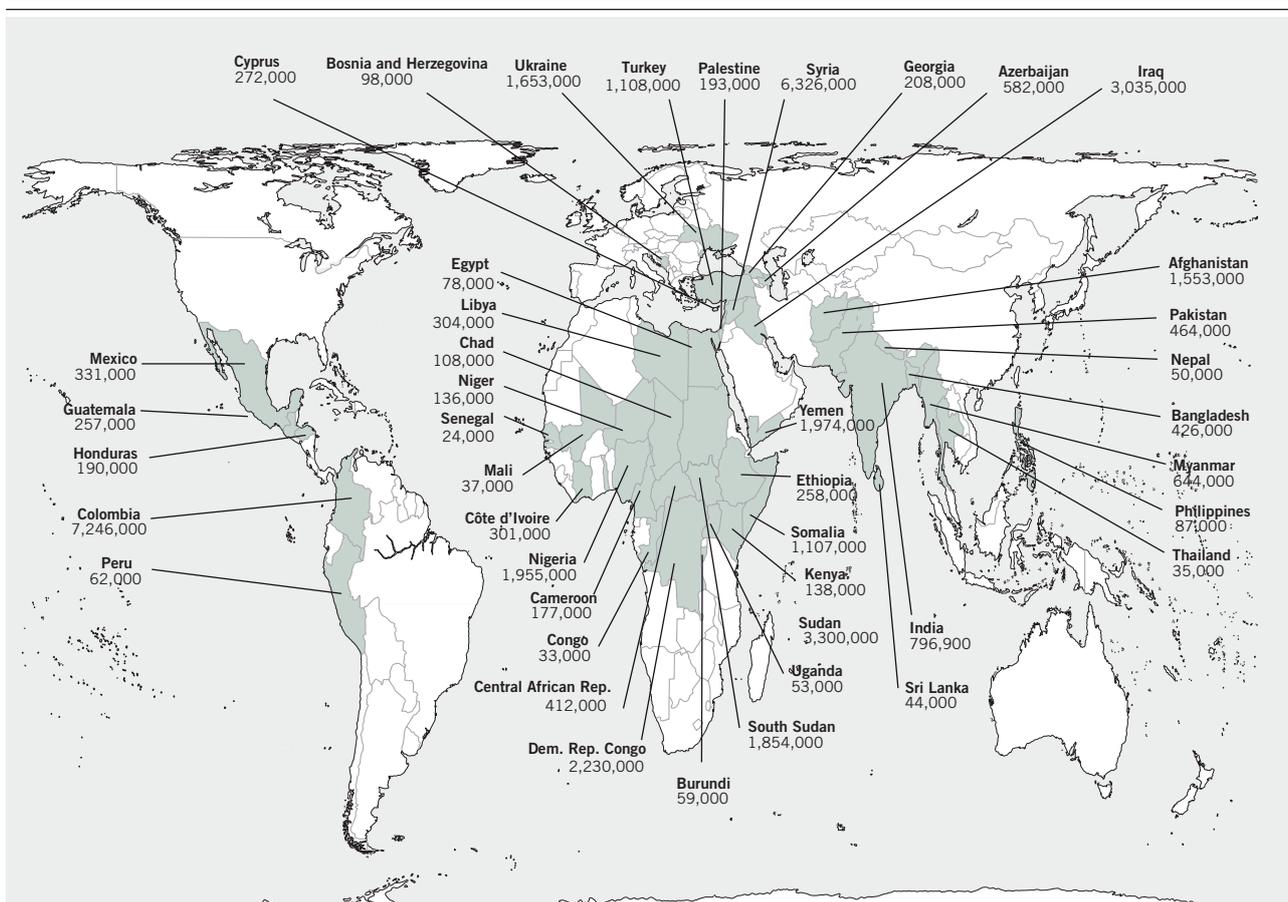
With regards to intensity, the violence was low in 38% of the conflicts (13), medium in 35% (12) and high in 27% (nine). **In 2018 there was a drop in high-intensity conflicts with respect to 2017 (40%, equivalent to 13 of the 33 conflicts that year).** The nine most serious conflicts in 2018 took place in Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). The fatalities in some of these conflicts greatly exceeded 1,000 in one year, such as Afghanistan, with a death toll that could surpass 43,000; Yemen, with some estimates that 28,000 were killed in 2018, out of a total of more than 60,200 since January 2016; and Syria, with body counts indicating that 20,000 people lost their lives in 2018, including close to 6,500 civilians, out of a death toll of over half a million since the war began in 2011.

The nine most serious conflicts in 2018 were Libya, Mali, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)

Once again, armed conflicts had serious impacts on the civilian population and on the places where they occurred in 2018. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, which was published in 2018 and covered the period from January to December 2017, described the situation as grim, with impacts such as death, mutilation, forced displacement, restrictions on access to humanitarian aid and others. The report states that civilians continued to be the main victims of armed conflicts, with tens of thousands killed or seriously injured in attacks conducted specifically against civilian targets or as a result of indiscriminate attacks. The impacts multiplied in densely populated areas, such as in parts of Syria and Iraq. The report also warned of the use of improvised explosive devices by armed opposition groups (in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Syria and Somalia) and noted allegations of the use of cluster munitions in Yemen and Syria and chemical weapons in Syria, among other aspects.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or exacerbate humanitarian crises. One prominent case of this was provided by Yemen, the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than 24 million people in need of

Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2017



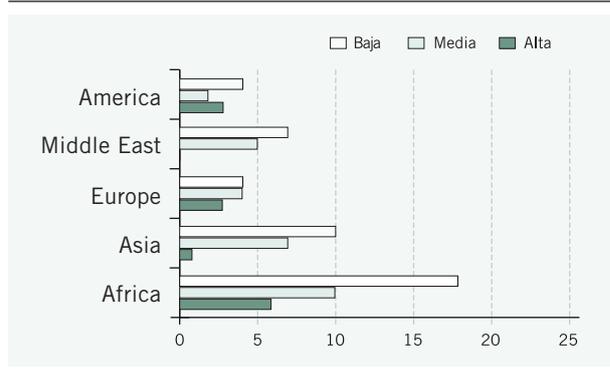
Source: IDMC, *GRID 2018: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2018.

assistance, including 11.3 million children. Another was Iraq, where 6.7 million people, of which 3.3 million were minors, remained in need of help. The humanitarian crisis in the northwestern region of Syria also worsened, with the number of people in need of humanitarian aid in the governorates of Idlib and Aleppo soaring from 520,000 to 4.2 million. Many other alarming cases were reported, including Burundi, where 3.6 million people required humanitarian aid by the end of 2018, according to the OCHA, and the CAR, where 2.9 million of the country's 4.5 million people, including 1.5 million children, were in need of humanitarian assistance.

Armed conflicts continued to cause very high levels of forced population displacement. According to the UNHCR's annual report published in mid-2018, which provides an assessment of the situation until the end of 2017, the forcibly displaced population in the world at the end of 2017 stood at 68.5 million. This was 2.9 million more than the previous year (in 2016 it increased by 300,000 over 2015). Of the total of 68.5, the refugee population accounted for 25.4 million (19.9 million under UNHCR's mandate and 5.4 million Palestinians under UNRWA's mandate), while 40 million people had moved within the borders of their countries. Another 3.1 million were asylum seekers. UNHCR estimates that there were 16.2 million new displaced persons in 2017 (11.8 with their home country's borders and 4.4 million new refugees and asylum seekers). According to figures released by the International Displacement Monitoring Centre in late 2017, the countries with the highest levels of internal displacement were Syria (6.7 million), the DRC (4.4 m), Iraq (2.6 m), South Sudan (1.8 m) and Ethiopia (1 m). According to UNHCR data, more than two thirds of the global refugee population came from five countries: Syria (6.3 million people), Afghanistan (2.6 m), South Sudan (2.4 m), Myanmar (1.2 m) and Somalia (986,400). Lebanon was once again the country with the largest refugee population compared to its total population (one refugee for every six inhabitants), followed by Jordan (one out of 14) and Turkey (one out of 28), though not including the refugee population under UNRWA's mandate, which is also prominent in Lebanon and Jordan. In total numbers, the main host countries were Turkey (3.5 million), Pakistan (1.4 m), Uganda (1.4 m), Lebanon (998,900), Iran (979,400), Germany (970,400), Bangladesh (932,200) and Sudan (906,600).

UNHCR estimates that there were 16.2 million new displaced persons in 2017, 11.8 within their home country's borders and 4.4 million new refugees and asylum seekers

Intensity of the socio-political crises by region



Tensions

The second chapter (**Tensions**)² looks at the most relevant events regarding social and political tensions recorded during the year and compares global and regional trends. During 2018 83 scenarios of tension were recorded globally. As in previous years, the largest number of socio-political tensions took place in Africa, with 33 cases, followed by Asia, where 18 cases were recorded. Europe and the Middle East experienced 12 and 11 such scenarios respectively, while in the Americas there were eight contexts of this type.

The situations of tension had multiple causes, with more than one main factor in the large majority of cases. Similarly to previous years, 70% of cases included among the main causes **opposition to domestic or international policies implemented by the respective governments** or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the states, leading to struggles to erode or gain power. In Latin America, for instance, all of the identified tensions were linked to some of these variables. In turn, **almost half of the tensions (45%) found one of their main causes in claims for self-government or identity causes, but this percentage was clearly higher in regions like Europe (around 66%) or Asia (more than 55%)**. For around one third of the tensions (34%), disputes over the control of territories and/or resources were a highly relevant element, even if this is a factor that fuels many situations of tension to varying degrees.

Following the trend of previous years, **slightly more than half of the tensions in the world were domestic (45 cases or 54%)**, with the case of Latin America being especially paradigmatic, where practically all cases (except Haiti) were of this type. Conversely,

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 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

almost one third of the tensions worldwide were internationalized domestic tensions (24 cases or 29%), but this percentage was clearly higher in regions like Europe (around half of the cases) or the Middle East (45%) or significantly lower in Africa (15%) and Latin America (11%). One sixth of tensions were international (14 cases or 16%), although in regions like Latin America no such tensions were identified. Regarding the evolution of tensions, most contexts (40%) did not experience significant changes, in 30% of cases there was a certain improvement and in the remaining 30% of the crises there was a deterioration with respect to 2017. Except in Asia, where there were more cases of improvement than deterioration of the situation, in aggregate terms the number of tensions whose situation worsened was equal to those in which there was an improvement in the situation. Regarding the intensity of sociopolitical crises, half of them in 2018 showed a low intensity, one third recorded a mean intensity and only 15% of cases had high voltage levels (13 cases).

Africa and Asia were the continents with the largest number of social and political crisis in 2018 (33 and 18, respectively)

well as the different initiatives launched by the United Nations and other local and international organizations and movements with regards to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. This perspective brings to light the differential impacts that armed conflicts have on women and men, but also to what extent and how

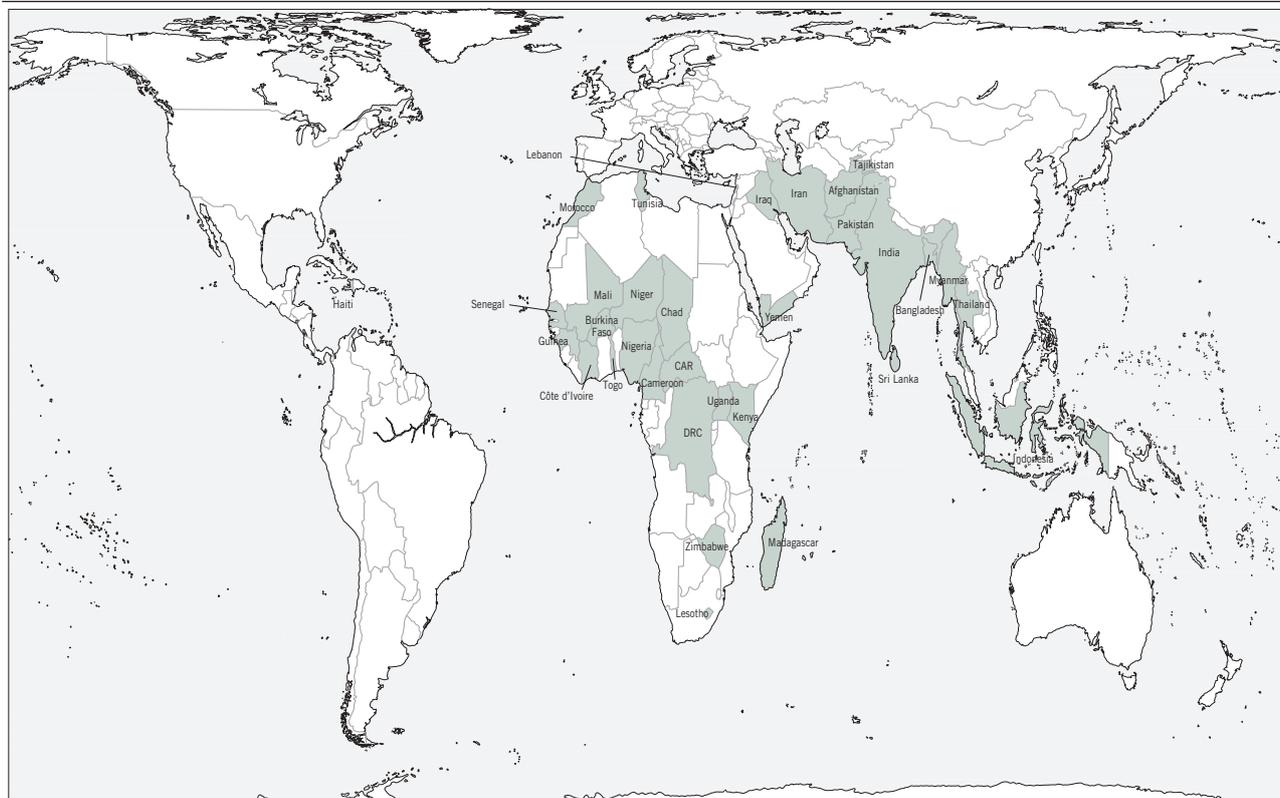
one and other participate in peacebuilding and what are the contributions made by women in this process. The chapter is structured into three main parts: the first looks at the global situation with regards to gender inequalities by taking a look at the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI); the second part studies the gender dimension in terms of the impact of armed conflicts and social-political crises; and the last part is on peacebuilding from a gender perspective. At the start of the chapter there is a map showing the countries with severe gender inequalities based on the Social Institutions and Gender Index. The chapter monitors the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, which was established following the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in the year 2000.

The gender dimension in peacebuilding

Chapter three (Gender, peace and security)³ studies the gender-based impacts in conflicts and tensions, as

According to the SIGI, the levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 29 countries, concentrated mainly in Africa, Asia and the Middle

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



3. 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/or socio-political crisis with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

	Medium levels of discrimination	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination	No data
Armed conflicts	Burkina Faso DRC (3) India (2) Thailand	CAR Chad Mali Myanmar Nigeria ⁷	Afghanistan Cameroon Iraq Niger Pakistan (2) Yemen (2)	Algeria Burundi Egypt Israel Libya Niger Palestine Somalia South Sudan Sudan (2) Syria
Socio-political crises	DRC (4) Haiti India (4) Kenya Lesotho Senegal Tajikistan Thailand Zimbabwe	Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia Iraq Madagascar Morocco Nigeria (2) Sri Lanka Togo Tunisia Uganda	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Lebanon (2) Pakistan (2)	Angola Bahrain China Djibouti Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Gambia Guinea Bissau Israel (2) Palestine Republic of the Congo Saudi Arabia Somalia South Sudan (2) Sudan (2) Uzbekistan Venezuela Syria

* The number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in the country appears between parentheses.

Table created based on levels of gender discrimination found in the SIGI (OECD), as indicated in the latest available report (2019), and on Escola de Cultura de Pau's classifications for armed conflicts and socio-political crises (see chapter 1, Armed conflicts, and chapter 2, Socio-political crises). The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

East. Crossing the data from this index with that of countries living an armed conflict reveals that **13 of the 34 armed conflicts that were active in 2018 took place in countries with serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination, seven in countries with medium levels of discrimination, and that 11 armed conflicts were taking place in countries with no available data on this topic –Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan–**. So, more than 54% of the armed conflicts for which data is available on gender equity took place in contexts with serious or very serious gender inequalities. This figure amounts to 79% if the contexts with medium levels of discrimination are included. Also, in four other countries with one or more ongoing armed conflicts, the level of discrimination was lower, in some cases low (Ethiopia, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low (Colombia), according to SIGI. With regards to social and political crises, at least 26 of the 83 active tensions in 2018 were in countries that experienced serious gender inequalities (high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 41% of tensions for which data was available. This figure amounts to 56% if countries with average levels of discrimination are included. 18 tensions were in countries with no available data (Angola, Bahrain, China, Congo, Djibouti,

13 of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018 were in countries with severe gender inequalities

Egypt, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Gaza and West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan).

As in previous years, during 2018 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts. Its use, which in some cases was part of the deliberate war strategies of the armed actors, was documented in different reports, as well as by local and international media. In April, the UN Security Council held an open discussion on sexual violence in armed conflicts. The Secretary-General presented his annual monitoring and evaluation report on the issue. The Secretary-General's report covered the year 2017 and analysed the situation in 19 countries, 13 of which experienced armed conflict: Afghanistan, the CAR, Colombia, the DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Syria and Yemen, as well as the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which includes Nigeria. The report also identified governmental and non-governmental actors responsible for the use of sexual violence in conflicts, stated that 21 female protection advisors were deployed in seven missions and added that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict conducted activities in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar,

Nigeria, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan in 2017. The report noted the deteriorating conditions for civil society organisations around the world and how violence has been used to assault human rights advocates and intimidate witnesses in trials for crimes of sexual violence and war crimes. The Secretary-General's report noted that most of the victims are economically and politically marginalised women and girls, often in remote rural areas or in situations of forced displacement. Sexual violence was also a factor causing displacement and an obstacle to the return of refugees or internally displaced persons. Nine of the 19 armed conflicts that were analysed in the UN Secretary-General's report experienced high levels of intensity in 2018 –Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), South Sudan Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)–, topping 1,000 fatalities during the year and producing serious impacts on people and the territory, including conflict-related sexual violence.

Throughout the year there were different initiatives to respond to sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts. Concerning the activity of the UN Security Council, two resolutions were approved imposing sanctions on Libya and Somalia in 2018 that included aspects related to sexual violence and gender violence. The United Nations continued to deploy its strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel. Unveiled by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017, the strategy focuses on four areas of action: the rights and dignity of the victims, the end of impunity, the participation of civil society and external partners and the improvement of strategic communication. As part of the deployment, 34 United Nations agencies facilitated country strategies and action plans. Regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by military and civilian personnel deployed in United Nations missions, the UN Secretary-General's report found a decrease in the number of complaints reported in 2017 compared to 2016. 62 complaints were filed in 2017, 20 of which referred to sexual abuse and 42 to sexual exploitation (compared with 145 complaints in 2016, 99 in 2015 and 80 in 2014). In addition, the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the CEDAW Committee signed in 2018 a cooperation framework agreement to promote and protect the rights of women and girls affected by sexual violence related to conflicts. It is the first cooperation framework between a body with a mandate established by the Security Council and a human rights mechanism. Finally, it must be highlighted that the International Criminal Court opened a preliminary investigation into the crimes committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar, which could lead to a formal investigation. The ICC prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced the start of this investigation that will include acts of sexual violence and other human rights violations.

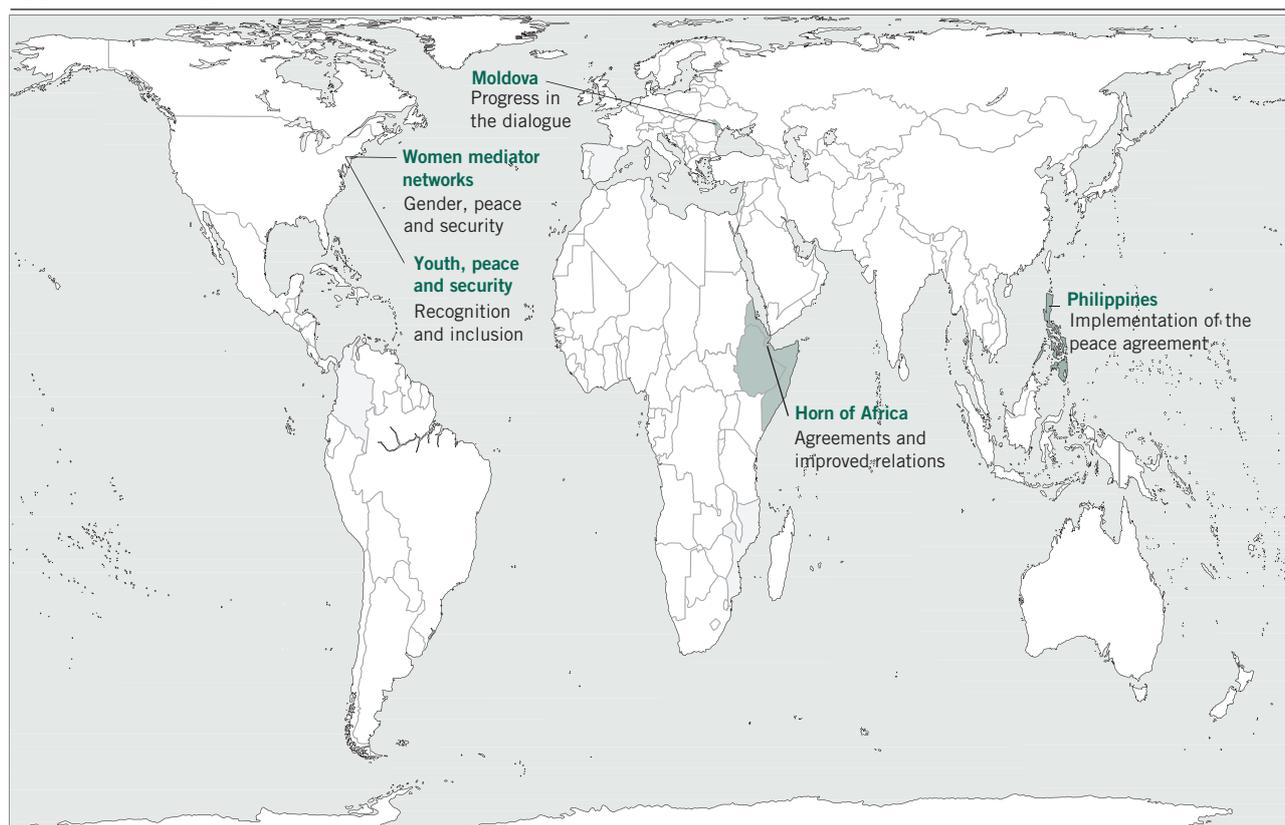
In recent years, there has been a decline in the inclusion of gender equality-related aspects in peace agreements: they were included in 70% of the agreements in 2015, but in 50% in 2016 and in only 27% in 2017

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and crises had other serious gender impacts. In the report *Situation of Human Rights Defenders*, published in early 2019, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the situation of women human rights defenders warned of the serious risks that they run, including the lack of recognition of their role and work as human rights advocates, their marginalisation and systematic exclusion; their social discrediting, stigmatisation and attacks on their honour and reputation; risks, threats and attacks in the private sphere and against family members and people close to them; physical aggression, sexual violence, torture, murder and forced disappearance; harassment, violence and attacks over the Internet; judicial harassment and criminalisation; denial of participation, restrictions and reprisals for collaborating with international and regional human rights systems; threats to legal status; physical imprisonment; and attacks against female human rights defence groups and movements. The report

also indicated the specific risks faced by groups of female human rights advocates, such as girls; women who do not conform to hegemonic gender norms; indigenous female advocates and defenders of minority groups; human rights defenders with disabilities; female journalists and lawyers; female advocates in leadership positions; female activists in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations; female refugees defenders, female migrants and victims of human trafficking; female activists deprived of their freedom; environmental activists; female defenders of women's human rights; and female activists who defend the rights of sex workers.

In relation to resolution 1325 and the international agenda for women, peace and security, the Secretary-General expressed concern at the lack of progress with respect to the basic commitments in the area of peace and security, human rights and gender equality within the framework of the annual debate on women, peace and security at the UN Security Council. Regarding the participation of women in peace processes, only three of 11 peace agreements (27%) signed in 2017 included provisions on gender equality. This figure is particularly worrying, as it consolidates and aggravates the trend that began in 2016, when gender issues were included in only 50% of the agreements, compared to 70% in 2015. Regarding national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, in 2018 six countries presented their plans for the first time: Luxembourg, Albania, Poland, Tunisia, Moldova and Mozambique. Thus, according to the data compiled by WILPF, a total of 79 countries had an action plan at the end of 2018. However, WILPF points out that only 43% of these plans have a specific budget associated with implementing the plan, which it describes as a severe obstacle to achieving the objectives of the gender, peace and security agenda and reveals a notable lack of governments' commitment to it.

Opportunities for peace in 2019



Sexual violence was present in a large number of armed conflicts that remained active during the year 2018.

One of the armed conflicts where sexual violence had a largest impact in 2017 was Myanmar, where many international and local human rights organizations denounced sexual violence carried out by Myanmar's armed forces on the Rohingya population, especially women and girls. Another serious case was South Sudan, where armed actors continued to perpetrate sexual violence on a mass level targeting people from ethnic groups considered rivals. As in previous years, the UN Secretary-General's report on the impact of sexual violence in armed conflicts, released in April 2017 and covering the period from January to December 2016, identified armed actors responsible for committing systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also documents trends and patterns regarding the use of sexual violence in the framework of the conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur (Sudan), Syria, Yemen. Also in the post-conflict cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal and Sri Lanka, as well as in Burundi and Nigeria. It is important to note that from the 17 armed conflicts that, according to the UN Secretary-General's report, registered sexual violence in 2016, ten of these conflicts were high intensity in 2017 –Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Also, in ten of these there was also an escalation of violence during 2017 compared to the previous year

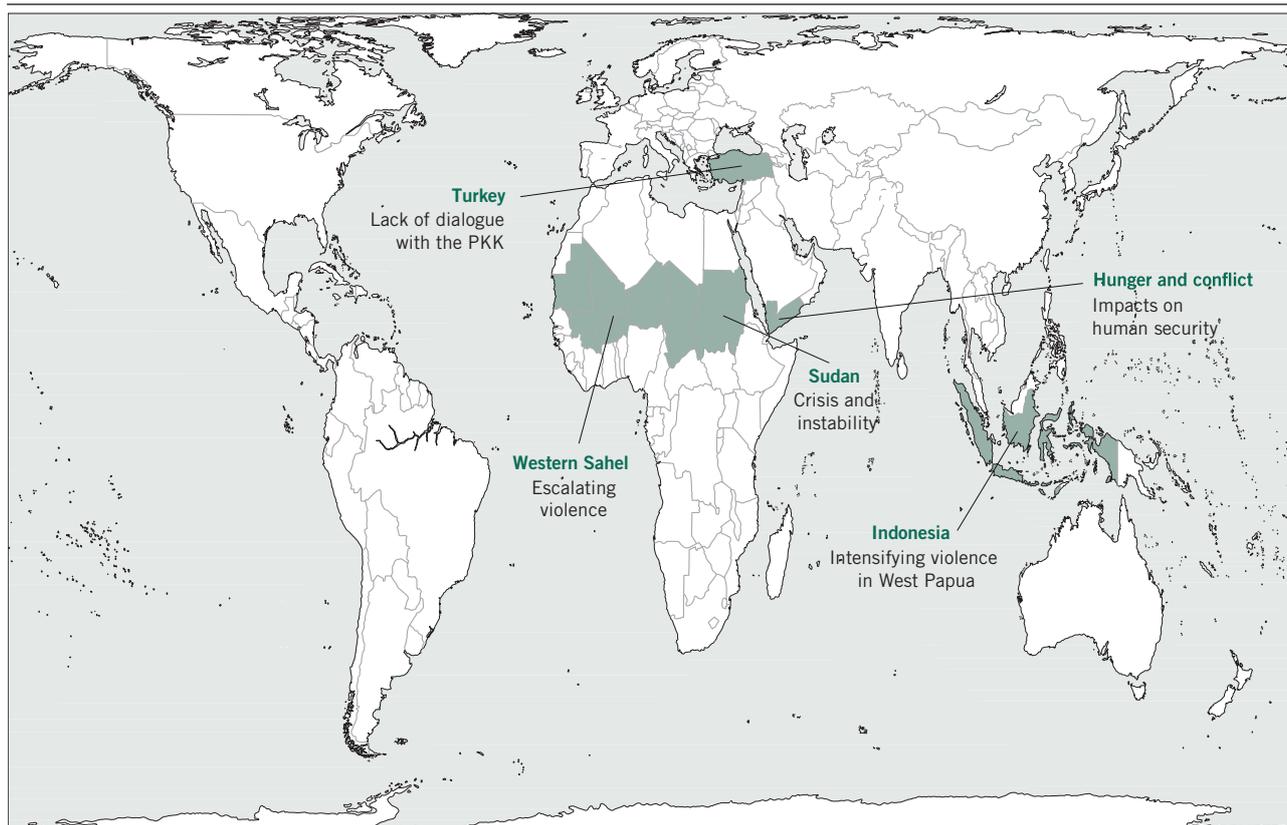
The use of sexual violence and other gender-based violence was denounced in countries with armed conflicts and/or social-political tension during 2018

–Libya, Mali (north), CAR, DRC (east), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

Also, during the year there were several initiatives to respond to sexual violence within the framework of armed conflicts. Among these, in the DRC 11 members of the Djeshi ya Yesu militia were sentenced to life imprisonment for using sexual violence against 40 girls, in a process that was supported by civil society and the United Nations. This ruling was considered to be highly relevant in the fight against impunity. Also, the UN Secretary-General presented the four pillars of the new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse: putting the rights and dignity of victims first; ending impunity; collaborating with civil society, external experts and other organizations; and addressing communication to raise awareness. As part of the new strategy, in

2017 a new position was created, that of the Victims' Rights Advocate. According to the UN report presented in 2017, during the year 2016 145 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN missions were reported (65 cases perpetrated by civilian staff and 80 by uniformed staff), compared to 99 cases in 2015 and 80 in 2014.

Besides sexual violence, countries with armed conflicts and/or social-political tension continued to face other gender-based violence. A case worth mentioning is that of El Salvador, with high rates of femicide (468 women killed in 2017), to which we should add the serious violation of women's human rights due to the



total prohibition of abortion and the high number of sexual crimes (3,947 sexual crimes reported in 2016, according to figures provided by the National Police, out of which 47% were cases of girls younger than 15 being raped, and 26% of girls aged 15 to 18). The attempts at restricting the freedom of movement for women by armed actors in Libya, or the reports on the kidnapping of homosexual men –or anyone suspected of being a homosexual– in Chechnya by non-State actors and security forces were some of the other cases of gender-based violence in contexts of conflict and tension in 2017.

After several years with a positive trend in the participation of women in peace processes, some setbacks were observed, showing that the progress achieved was not sustainable

Peace Opportunities for 2019

Chapter four of the report (**Peace Opportunities for 2019**) identifies and analyzes five scenarios that are favourable for positive steps to be taken in terms of peacebuilding in 2019. The opportunities identified in 2018 refer to different regions and topics.

- **Horn of Africa:** The historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia in September 2018 has been the result of numerous complications on both sides of the Red Sea and important changes in Ethiopia that have generated an extraordinary scenario in which several peace initiatives have been launched and new agreements between its neighbours have been reached. The new scenario derived from this

process has created a momentum for peace in the Horn of Africa, not risk-free, as it focuses on endogenous fragility elements and a complex network of relationships between the countries of the region and their neighbours in the Arabian Peninsula, which compete to expand their areas of influence.

- **Philippines:** After several years of delays and numerous difficulties, the approval of the so-called Organic Law of Bangsamoro opens the door to the replacement of the current Autonomous Region of the Muslim Mindanao by another entity with expanded competencies and territory on the southern island of Mindanao. The approval of the aforementioned law also facilitates the full implementation of the peace agreement, including the demobilization of tens of thousands of MILF combatants.
- **Moldova (Transdnistria):** The renewal of the negotiations since 2016, the significant steps between 2017 and 2018 and factors such as the pragmatic approach of the current negotiations, the impetus of third parties and the support of Russia to the process, can lead to new advances in the future for the resolution of this prolonged conflict, despite the obstacles, including the divergences surrounding the future status of Transdnistria.
- **Women mediators:** Since 2015, various networks of women mediators have emerged with the aim of

promoting the significant participation of women in peace processes. Those networks reinforce innovative experiences that promote the inclusiveness of processes and the overcoming of traditional barriers to women in the peace negotiations.

- **Peace and youth:** In recent years more attention has been devoted to the role of the young population as a peace actor and agent for the transformation of conflicts, especially after the approval of resolution 2250 (2015) by the UN Security Council. The first balance of the implementation of the youth peace and security agenda offers a panoramic view of the contribution of youth in this field and outlines a series of recommendations for their further inclusion in peace initiatives in the future.

The Alert! report identifies five contexts that are favourable in terms of peacebuilding in 2019

Risk Scenarios for 2019

Chapter six of the report (**Risk Scenarios for 2019**), identifies and analyzes five scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen and become sources of more severe instability and violence in 2018.

- **Indonesia:** The end of 2018 saw the most serious episodes of violence in Papua in recent times. The fact that in 2019 presidential elections are being held and the 50th anniversary of the referendum that sanctioned the annexation of Papua to Indonesia is commemorated can be a good opportunity for the Papua pro-independence movement to

The report identifies and analyzes five scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen in 2019

advance its demands and increase its armed activity.

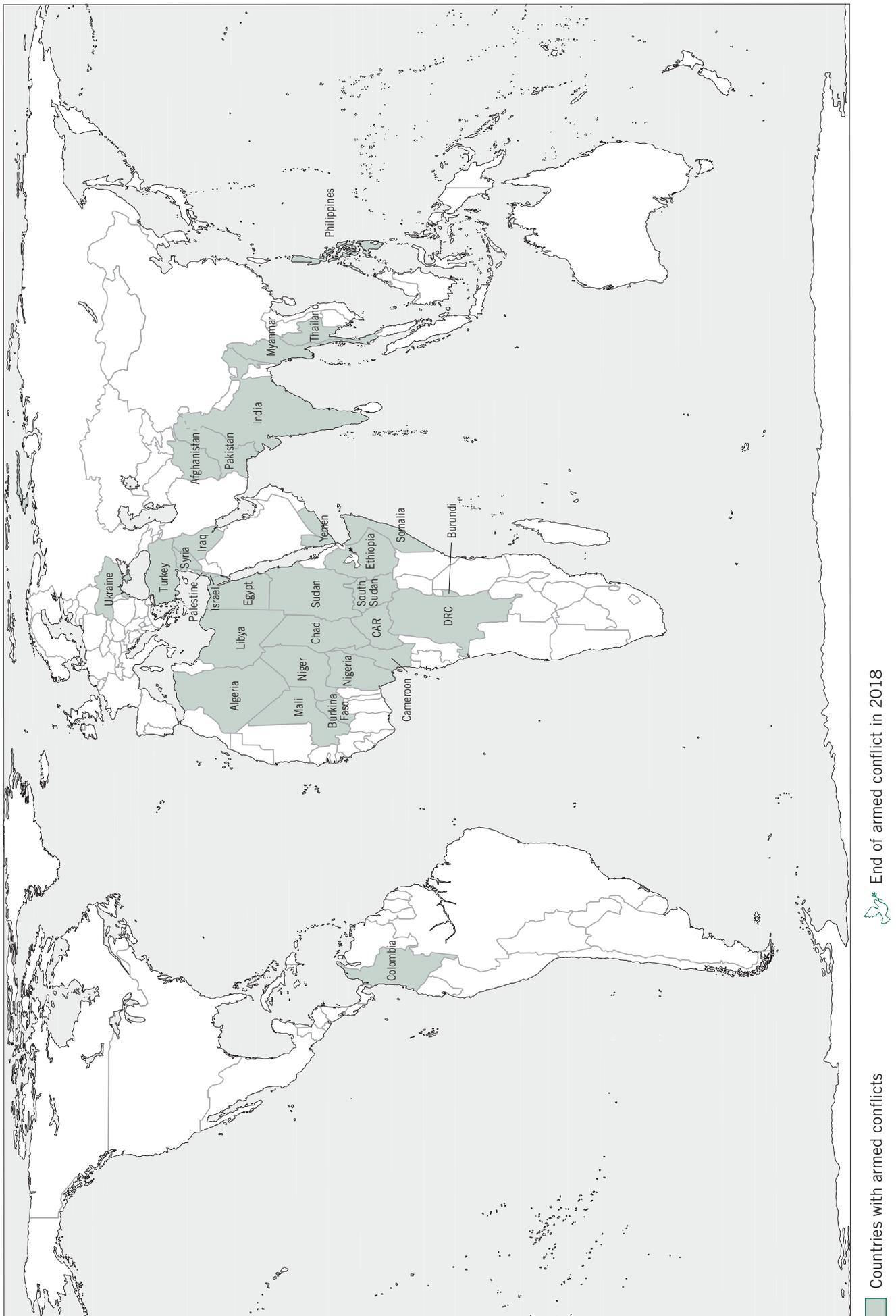
- **Sudan:** Despite the reduction in 2018 in the intensity of violence in the regions of Darfur (west) and Kordofan del Sur and Blue Nile (south), massive popular protests throughout the year, reaching their highest point in December and the beginning of 2019, mainly caused by the worsening economic and political crisis at the national level, may augur greater instability in 2019 and open questions about the permanence of Omar al-Bashir in power.
- **Western Sahel:** The region faces in recent years and especially in 2018 an increase in political violence with multiple expressions of inter-communal and criminal violence that can have a serious regional impact. The militarization of the region, with the deployment of regional and international initiatives, can have serious consequences for the civilian population and not solve those root issues of the conflict in the area.
- **Turkey:** The deterioration of the general situation in Turkey in recent years, with allegations of human rights violations; the military fortification of the armed actors faced; and the conflict regional dynamics of are some of the elements that create risks of destabilizing the conflict between Ankara and the PKK, despite the opportunities to redirect the dispute through negotiations.
- **Hunger and conflicts:** Recent reports points to an increase in the population that is hungry worldwide and stress that most of them live in areas affected by conflicts. Given this tendency, numerous voices warn about the relationship between conflict, violence and food insecurity and the deliberate blockade of humanitarian aid and the use of hunger as a weapon of war in various contexts.

Conflict overview 2018

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	
Africa	<i>Libya</i> <i>Mali</i> <i>Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)</i> <i>Somalia</i> <i>South Sudan</i>	Cameroon (Ambazonia / North West and South West) CAR DRC (east) DRC (Kasai) <i>Sudan (Darfur)</i>	Algeria <i>Burundi</i> DRC (east-ADF) <i>Ethiopia (Ogaden)*</i> <i>Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)</i> Western Sahel Region	Chad <i>DRC</i> Ethiopia <i>Ethiopia (Oromiya)</i> Kenya Nigeria	Angola (Cabinda) Côte d'Ivoire Eritrea Lesotho <i>Mozambique</i> <i>Nigeria (Delta Niger)</i> Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland) <i>Sudan</i> <i>Togo</i> Tunisia	Central Africa (LRA) <i>Congo, Rep. of</i> Djibouti Equatorial Guinea <i>Eritrea – Ethiopia</i> Gambia Guinea Guinea-Bissau Madagascar <i>Morocco - Western Sahara</i> DRC – Rwanda DRC – Uganda Rwanda <i>Senegal (Casamance)</i> <i>Sudan - South Sudan</i> Uganda Zimbabwe	
SUBTOTAL	5	5	6	6	10	17	49
America			<i>Colombia</i>	Mexico <i>Nicaragua</i> <i>Venezuela</i>	El Salvador Honduras	Bolivia Guatemala Haiti Perú	
SUBTOTAL			1	3	2	4	10
Asia and Pacific	<i>Afghanistan</i>	Philippines (Mindanao) India (Jammu and Kashmir) Pakistan	India (CPI-M) <i>Myanmar</i> Pakistan (Balochistan) <i>Philippines (NPA)</i> <i>Thailand (south)</i>	India - Pakistan	Bangladesh China (Xinjiang) <i>India (Assam)</i> India (Manipur) Indonesia (West Papua) Pakistan Tajikistan	<i>China (Tibet)</i> China - Japan <i>India (Nagaland)</i> <i>Korea, RPD - USA,</i> <i>Japan, Rep. Of Korea</i> <i>Korea, RPD - Rep. of Korea</i> Kyrgyzstan Lao, RPD Sri Lanka Thailand Uzbekistan	
SUBTOTAL	1	3	5	1	7	10	27
Europe		Turkey (southeast) <i>Ukraine (east)</i>			<i>Armenia - Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)</i> Russia (Chechnya) Russia (Dagestan) <i>Serbia – Kosovo</i> Turkey	Armenia Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina Cyprus <i>Georgia (Abkhazia)</i> <i>Georgia (South Ossetia)</i> <i>Moldova, Rep. of (Transnistria)</i>	
SUBTOTAL		2			5	7	14
Middle East	Iraq <i>Syria</i> <i>Yemen (Houthis)</i>	Egypt (Sinai) <i>Israel - Palestine</i>	Yemen (AQPA)	Egypt Iran (northwest) Israel - Syria - Lebanon	Iran (Sistan Baluchistan) <i>Iran - USA, Israel</i> Lebanon Saudi Arabia	Bahrain Iran Iraq (Kurdistan) <i>Palestine</i>	
SUBTOTAL	3	2	1	3	4	4	17
TOTAL	9	12	13	13	28	42	117

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics. With asterisk, armed conflicts ended during 2018. For more information on negotiations and peace processes, see School of Culture of Peace, *Peace Talks in Focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

Map 1.1. Armed conflicts



1. Armed conflicts

- 34 armed conflicts were reported in 2018, 33 of them remained active at end of the year. Most of the conflicts occurred in Africa (16), followed by Asia (nine), the Middle East (six), Europe (two) and America (one).
- The violence affecting Cameroon's English-speaking majority regions since 2016 escalated during the year, becoming a war scenario with serious consequences for the civilian population.
- In an atmosphere characterised by systematic ceasefire violations and the imposition of international sanctions, South Sudan reached a new peace agreement, though there was scepticism about its viability.
- The increase and spread of violence in the CAR plunged it into the third most serious humanitarian crisis in the world, according to the United Nations.
- The situation in Colombia deteriorated as a result of the fragility of the peace process and the finalisation of the ceasefire agreement between the government and the ELN guerrilla group.
- High-intensity violence persisted in Afghanistan, but significant progress was made in the exploratory peace process.
- The levels of violence in southern Thailand were the lowest since the conflict began in 2004.
- There were less deaths linked to the conflict with the PKK in Turkey, but repression continued against Kurdish civilians and the risk of destabilisation grew due to the repercussions of the conflict in Syria.
- The armed conflict in Yemen intensified during 2018, although late in the year the main dissenting parties reached an agreement that could lead to a reduction in hostilities.
- The Syrian regime's troops advanced and regional and international actors' great influence in the dynamics of the conflict was verified, with 20,000 fatalities in 2018.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2018. 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 2018, including global and regional trends and other issues related to international conflicts. 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 in 2018.

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 2018

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), ISIS, governments of North Africa and the Sahel	1
	System		↓
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, factions of former armed groups	1
	Government		=
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) -2018-	Internationalised internal	Government of Cameroon, self-proclaimed Interim Government of Ambazonia, the armed groups ADF, SCACUF, SOCADEF and SCDF and dozens of smaller militias	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, MPC, UPC), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, France (Operation Sangaris), MINUSCA, EUFOR, groups linked to the former government of François Bozizé, other residual forces from armed groups (former Armed Forces), LRA armed Ugandan group	2
	Government, Resources		↑
DRC (east) -1998-	Internationalised internal	Government, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, 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	1
	System, Resources		=
DRC (Kasai) -2017-	Internal	Government, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)	2
	Government, Identity		↓
Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-	Internationalised internal	Government, ONLF, OLF, pro-government militias (“Liyu Police”)	1
	Self-government, Identity		End
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Boko Haram (BH), MNJTF regional force (Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)	3
	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 2018 with those that of 2017. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2018 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			
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, armed factions linked to Operation Dignity (Libyan National Army, LNA), armed groups linked to Operation Dawn, militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades(BDB), ISIS, AQIM, among other armed groups; USA, France, UK, Egypt, UAE, and other countries	3
	Government, Resources, System		=
Mali ⁶ -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force	3
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Operation Ocean Shield, al-Shabaab	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 SPLA-IO led by Peter Gatdet and Gathoth Gatkuoth, SPLM-FD, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM, REMNESA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSDA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwelek), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		↓
Sudan (Darfur) -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, pro-government militias <i>janjaweed</i> , Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, UNAMID	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	1
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		↓
Western Sahel Region -2018-	International	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), Joint Task Force for Liptako-Gourma Region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), USA, Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Macina Liberation Front, Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups	1
	System, Resources, Identity		↑
America			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, ELN, FARC (dissidents), EPL, paramilitary groups	1
	System		↑
Asia			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban militias, warlords, ISIS	3
	System		↑
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 Con-ference	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Myanmar -1948-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups (Ceasefire signatories: ABSDF, ALP, CNF, DKBA, KNU, KNU/KNLA-PC, PNLO, RCSS, NMSP, LDU; Non-signatories: KIA, NDAA, MNDAA, SSPP/SSA, TNLA, AA, UWSA, ARSA, KNPP)	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, international militias, USA	2
	System		↓
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura)	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↓
Philippines (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF	2
	Self-government, System, Identity		↓

6. In past editions of *Alert!*, this case was identified as “Mali (north)”, but the name has changed due to the spread of the dynamics of violence to other parts of the country.

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			
Turkey (southeast) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	2
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Ukraine (east) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups in the eastern provinces, Russia	2
	Government, Identity, Self-government		=
Middle East			
Egypt (Sinai) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), other armed groups (Ajnad Misr, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis, Katibat al-Rabat al-Jihadiya, Popular Resistance Movement, Liwaa al-Thawra Hassam), Israel	2
	System		↓
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi and Kurdish (peshmerga) military and security forces, Shia militias (Popular Mobilization Units, PMU), Sunni armed groups, Islamic State (ISIS), international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Iran, Turkey, PKK	3
	System, Government, Identity		↓
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (AI Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, Ahfad al-Sahaba knaf Bayt al-Maqdis (branch of ISIS)	2
	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), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Turkey, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, among other armed parties	3
	System, Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Yemen (AQAP) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias	1
	System		=
Yemen (Houthis) -2004-	Internationalised internal	Armed forces loyal to Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), armed factions loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, 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 2018

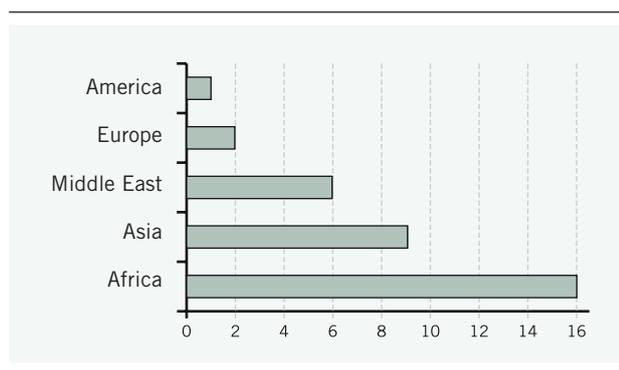
This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2018. This includes an overview of conflicts as compared to that of previous years, the geographical distribution of conflicts and the main trends by region, the relationship between the actors involved and the scenario of the dispute, the main causes of the current armed conflicts, the general evolution of the contexts and the intensity of the conflicts according to their levels of violence and their impact. Likewise, this section analyses some of the main consequences of armed conflicts in the civilian population, including the impact of hostilities

on children, the aggravation of humanitarian crises as a result of conflicts, the impact of sexual violence in war-affected countries and forced displacement due to situations of conflict and violence.

1.2.1 Global and regional trends

The trend observed in previous years regarding the number of armed conflicts held steady in 2018, **with a total of 34, one more than in 2017 and in 2016 and similar to the number in previous years** (35 in 2015, 36 in 2014 and 35 in 2013). Of the 34 cases accounted for in 2018, only 33 remained active at the end of the year. This is because the situation in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia was no longer considered an armed

Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2018



conflict after a historic peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF and the hostilities subsided. Compared to 2017, there were two new armed conflicts in 2018. First was the situation of violence affecting the English-speaking majority regions of Cameroon since 2016, which worsened significantly in 2018 and pitted the Cameroonian Armed Forces against separatist militias and armed groups demanding new political status. The escalation of violence forced the internal displacement of 436,000 people and claimed over 800 lives (or as many as 1,500, according to some sources). Second was the situation in the Western Sahel region, which deteriorated into an armed conflict due to increasing attacks by jihadist groups in northern Burkina Faso and northern Niger. Regarding to the geographical distribution of armed conflicts around the world, the data from 2018 provide a picture similar to that of previous years. The vast majority of the conflicts were concentrated in Africa (16) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (two) and the Americas (one). Compared to 2017, there were two more conflicts in Africa (Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) and the Western Sahel region) in 2018. Another conflict in Africa ended, in Ethiopia (Ogaden). There was one less armed conflict in Europe, since the situation in the Republic of Dagestan in the Russian Federation ceased to be considered an armed conflict at the end of 2017 and was studied as a socio-political crisis in 2018.⁷ Africa rose from representing 44% of the total conflicts in 2017 to 47% in 2018.

Regarding their scope and the relationships between the actors involved, the conflicts were identified as being of an internal, international and, mainly, internalised internal nature. Twelve per cent (12%) of the armed conflicts (four) were internal, meaning that they were between armed actors of the same country, operating exclusively in and from its borders: the DRC (Kasai), the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). Six per cent (6%) were considered international: the

conflict in the Western Sahel region and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The remaining 82% were internalised international conflicts, in which some of the parties were foreign, the armed actors of the conflict had bases or launched attacks from abroad and/or the conflict spread to neighbouring countries. **In many conflicts, this factor of internationalisation resulted in the involvement of third parties, including international missions, regional and international ad-hoc military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders and others.**

UN missions were involved in various conflicts, particularly in Africa, including MINUSCA in the CAR, MONUSCO in the DRC, UNAMID in Sudan, UNMISS in South Sudan and MINUSMA in Mali. The process to reconfigure UNAMID continued in 2018, cutting 44% of its troops and 30% of the police force as part of a road map to replace the peacekeeping mission with another dedicated to peacebuilding and development, although some authors warned of the risks of reducing the size of the mission. Regional organisations continued to be involved in various conflicts through missions or operations, such as the African Union (AMISOM in Somalia), the European Union (EUNAVFOR in Somalia, renewed in 2018 until 2020) and NATO (Mission Resolute Support in Afghanistan). Regional and international military coalitions continued to be involved in armed conflicts, including the G5 Sahel Joint Force (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania); the regional Multinational Joint Task Force, MNJTF (Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon), which launched several large-scale offensives against Boko Haram in 2018; the conglomerate of forces led by Saudi Arabia fighting in Yemen, which is composed of nine countries (the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan) and intensified its siege of the port of Al Hudaydah during the year; and the US-led international coalition against the Islamic State (ISIS), the Global Coalition Against Daesh, which was established in 2014 and consists of 71 countries and four institutions (the EU, the Arab League, NATO and Interpol).

Internationalisation was reflected once again in third-state military intervention in armed conflicts. This was true of France, through its military Operation Barkhane in Mali, which launched several air strikes and attacks to execute senior leaders of jihadist groups in 2018. It was also true of the United States, which was involved in various conflicts, such as in Somalia, where it bombed al-Shabaab's positions; in the Western Sahel, where it conducted land and air operations in Niger; in Libya, with air strikes against jihadist groups; in Pakistan, with new drone strikes, like the one that killed the second-in-command of the armed organization TTP; in Yemen, in relation to the conflict with AQAP, though there were

7. See the summary on Russia (Dagestan) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

significantly less US air strikes in 2018; and in Syria. Many foreign countries in Syria continued to be involved, such as Russia, Iran and Turkey, which took control of the Kurdish region of Afrin and threatened to conduct offensives in other areas in 2018. At the end of 2018, the US announced that it would withdraw its 2,000 troops from Syria, raising alarms about the possible consequences of further destabilisation if they leave hastily and in an uncoordinated way.

Regarding armed conflict causes, the vast majority of the conflicts had among its main causes **opposition to the domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a certain state, which resulted in struggles to gain power or weaken the government's power.** At least one of these factors was present in 71% of the conflicts in 2018 (24 of the 34 cases), in line with the previous year (73% of the conflicts in 2017). Eighteen (18) of these 24 cases featured armed actors that aspired to change the system, mostly organisations with a jihadist agenda trying to impose their particular interpretation of Islamic law. These groups included the self-styled Islamic State (ISIS) and its affiliates and related organisations in different continents, which were present in Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries; the various branches of al-Qaeda operating in North Africa and the Middle East, including AQIM (Algeria and Sahel) and AQAP (Yemen); the Taliban militias active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia. This factor was accentuated in some conflicts in 2018, such as in Mali, where Fulani fighters close to ISIS gained influence and where members of the Fulani community from all over West Africa called on others to take up arms and join the jihadist cause.

Another prominent major cause included disputes about identity-related demands and self-government, present in 59% of the conflicts (20), a slightly higher number than in 2017 (55%). The conflict in Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) stands out in this regard, as it is rooted in the English-speaking regions' demands for status in a context of historical political and economic marginalisation. In 2018, the violence escalated to the point that it was reclassified as an armed conflict. Finally, struggles over the control of resources and territory were a main cause of almost one third of the conflicts (10), though it was indirectly present in many others, perpetuating the violence through wartime economies.

The hostilities and levels of violence subsided in over one third of the conflicts compared to the previous year, when there were 13. Notably, Ethiopia (Ogaden) ceased to be considered an armed conflict at the end of the year due to the reduction

33 of the 34 active armed conflicts during 2018 remained active at the end of the year after a historic agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the insurgents of the Ogaden region

82% of the armed conflicts in 2018 were internalised internal in nature

in violence and the signing of a peace agreement between the parties. The peace agreement in South Sudan and the renewal of the ceasefire in Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) also led to a decrease in hostilities during the year in both countries, though violent incidents continued. There were no significant changes in 32% of the conflicts (11), while the violence escalated in 30%. This is a change compared to 2017, when the trend of escalating violence prevailed (present in 39% of the 33 conflicts). The conflicts that witnessed rising levels of violence in 2018 took place in Cameroon, Mali, the Western Sahel region, the CAR, Colombia, Afghanistan, the Philippines (NPA), India (Jammu and Kashmir), Israel-Palestine and Yemen (Houthis). The conflicts in India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Israel-Palestine reported the highest number of casualties since 2009 and 2014, respectively.

The intensity of the violence was low in 38% of the conflicts (13), medium in 35% (12) and high in 27% (nine). The high-intensity conflicts were defined as having over 1,000 deaths per year, as well as serious impacts on the population and the territory. In 2018 there was a drop in high-intensity conflicts with respect to 2017 (40%, equivalent to 13 of the 33 conflicts that year). The nine most serious conflicts in 2018 took place in Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). The fatalities in some of these conflicts greatly exceeded 1,000 in one year, such as Afghanistan, with a death toll that could surpass 43,000; Yemen, with some estimates that 28,000 were killed in 2018, out of a total of more than 60,200 since January 2016; and Syria, with body counts indicating that 20,000 people lost their lives in 2018, including close to 6,500 civilians, out of a death toll of over half a million since the armed conflict began in 2011.

1.2.2. Impacts of the conflicts on civilians

Once again, armed conflicts had serious impacts on the civilian population and on the places where they occurred in 2018. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, which was published in 2018 and covered the period from January to December 2017, described the situation as grim, with impacts such as death, mutilation, forced displacement, restrictions on access to humanitarian aid and others. The report states that civilians continued to be the main victims of armed conflicts, with tens of thousands killed or seriously injured in attacks conducted specifically against civilian targets or as a result of indiscriminate attacks. The impacts multiplied in densely populated areas, such as in parts of Syria and Iraq. The report also warned of the use of improvised explosive devices by armed opposition groups (in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali,

Nigeria, Syria and Somalia) and noted allegations of the use of cluster munitions in Yemen and Syria and chemical weapons in Syria, among other aspects.

The analysis of the conflicts in 2018 shows a continuation of the trends reported by the UN Secretary-General. Thus, there were serious attacks against civilian targets in many conflicts during the year, such as camps for displaced people, mosques, houses, hotels, and markets, election events, commercial establishments and means of transport in Nigeria, Somalia, the CAR, Libya, Afghanistan, India (Balochistan), the Philippines (Mindanao), Yemen and Egypt (Sinai). On several occasions, the Malian Armed Forces were accused of summarily executing and abusing civilians. In Burundi, many human rights violations were reported between 2017 and 2018, including but not limited to cases of forced disappearance, arbitrary arrest, torture and sexual violence. In Libya, the escalation of violence in the capital, Tripoli, involved the use of heavy weapons in various parts of the city, including residential areas, and the armed conflict as a whole led to many human rights violations, including cases of arbitrary arrest, kidnapping, extortion, forced labour, slavery and others in an atmosphere of impunity and a situation making migrants and refugees specifically vulnerable.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or exacerbate humanitarian crises. One prominent case of this was provided by Yemen, the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than 24 million people in need of assistance, including 11.3 million children. Another was Iraq, where 6.7 million people, of which 3.3 million were minors, remained in need of help. The humanitarian crisis in the northwestern region of Syria also worsened, with the number of people in need of humanitarian aid in the governorates of Idlib and Aleppo soaring from 520,000 to 4.2 million. Many other alarming cases were reported, including Burundi, where 3.6 million people required humanitarian aid by the end of 2018, according to the OCHA, and the CAR, where 2.9 million of the country's 4.5 million people, including 1.5 million children, were in need of humanitarian assistance.

Seventy-one per cent (71%) of the armed conflicts had among its main causes an attempt to change the government or the system

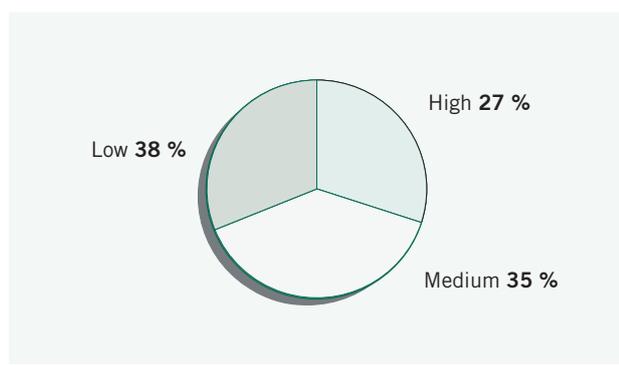
Twenty-seven per cent (27%) of the armed conflicts in 2018 were high-intensity: Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)

The intensification of violence in the eastern part of the DRC also blocked emergency efforts to contain the Ebola outbreak there. Humanitarian access to the Two Areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile in Sudan remained blocked, although at the end of the year the government accepted a UN proposal to open access. The siege of Derna, in Libya, had serious humanitarian consequences. In Ukraine, 3.5 million people required humanitarian assistance and protection, according to OCHA data at the end of the year. The Egyptian security forces' Comprehensive Operation – Sinai

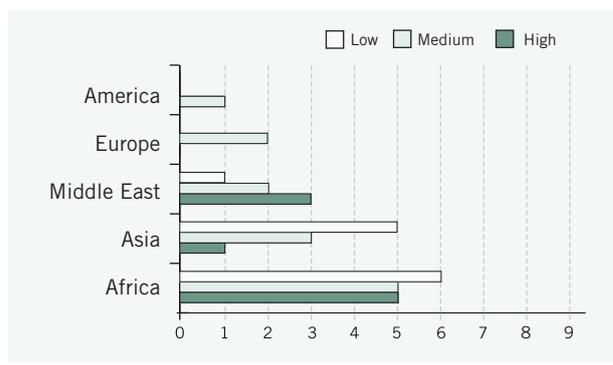
2018 against ISIS had serious humanitarian effects on the population. Aid workers were also targets of violence during 2018, such as in Nigeria, where Boko Haram killed and kidnapped various humanitarian workers, and in Afghanistan, where ISIS attacked the NGO Save the Children, causing several deaths. There was also an increase in attacks against humanitarian facilities and personnel in the CAR, forcing some to interrupt their activities.

At the same time, armed conflicts throughout the world continued to have an **especially serious impact on children**. In his report on children and conflicts, published in 2018 and covering the year 2017, the UN Secretary-General identified a new rise in serious human rights violations against children. Observed trends included the intensified recruitment of children in conflicts such as the CAR, where it quadrupled, and in the DRC, where it doubled, while it remained at serious levels in other cases, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Other impacts on minors included the consequences of attacks on schools and hospitals, kidnappings and denied access to humanitarian aid. Our analysis of the armed conflicts in 2018 showed further impacts. In Nigeria, Boko Haram kidnapped 110 student girls in February 2018, most of whom were released a month later after negotiations. In the conflict between the Cameroonian security forces and secessionist militias, at least 70 schools had been burned down since the beginning of the crisis in 2016, with new attacks against schools in 2018. In Burkina Faso, at least 250 schools have been closed in the last two years.

Graph 1.2. Intensity of the armed conflicts



Graph 1.3. Intensity of the armed conflicts by region



Box 1.1. Regional trends in armed conflict

AFRICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The continent hosted the largest number (16) of the 34 armed conflicts worldwide (equivalent to 47%). This includes the two additional conflicts compared to 2017, given that the rise in the levels of violence in Cameroon and in the Western Sahel region in 2018 caused both to be reclassified as armed conflicts. Nearly one third of the conflicts in Africa were high-intensity (five of 16): Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia and South Sudan. A quarter of the armed conflicts in Africa deteriorated in 2018 compared to the previous year, the hostilities subsided in about one third (five) and there were no significant changes in 44% (seven). African armed conflicts were characterised by their high level of internationalisation. Eighty-eight per cent (88%) of the conflicts were internationalised internal, with the involvement of external actors and/or the spread of the war dynamics to neighbouring countries. The armed conflicts in Africa had many simultaneous causes, including the aspiration to a change of government or system, which was present in 75%. Demands for identity and/or self-government were found in 56% and factors related to controlling resources were observed in 50%.
AMERICAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was only one armed conflict in the Americas, in Colombia. As such, only 3% of the armed conflicts in 2018 took place in America. The sole armed conflict in the Americas (Colombia) worsened in 2018 as a result of the fragile peace process and due to the end of the ceasefire between the government and the ELN.
ASIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The largest continent had the second most armed conflicts after Africa, with 26% (nine). The number of high-intensity conflicts dropped from four in 2017 to one in 2018: Afghanistan. The violence escalated in 33% of the conflicts –in Afghanistan, the Philippines (NPA) and India (Jammu and Kashmir)–, while it experienced no significant changes in 56% and fell in 11%. Asia was the scene of 75% of the internal armed conflicts in the world, in the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). Five conflicts were mainly caused in part by demands related to identity and self-government, the same number as those caused by struggles for control of the government and attempts to change the political, economic or social system.
EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were two conflicts in Europe, Turkey (southeast) and Ukraine (east), which accounted for 6% of the armed conflicts worldwide. Conflicts in Europe were of medium intensity, with a drop in fatalities in Turkey in 2018. Europe continued to be characterised by armed conflicts motivated by identity and self-government issues. Both conflicts in Europe were internationalised internal in nature.
MIDDLE EAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eighteen per cent (18%) of the conflicts in the world took place in the Middle East (six), making it the region with the third-highest number. Proportionally, the region continued to have the greatest number of serious conflicts worldwide. Fifty per cent (50%) of the conflicts in the Middle East were of high intensity: Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Given the predominance of patterns of escalating violence in 2017 (50% of all cases), one third of the conflicts got worse in 2018, namely in Israel-Palestine and Yemen (Houthis), while another third showed levels of violence similar to those in 2017 and the remaining third experienced some reduction in violence compared to the previous year, in Egypt (Sinai) and Iraq. The prevailing causes include struggles to control of the government and attempts to change the system, present in 83% of the conflicts. In 67%, demands related to identity/self-government demands were also a main factor.

Moreover, armed actors in many conflicts continued to commit significant levels of sexual and gender violence against civilians, women and girls. As the UN reported in 2018, sexual violence continued to be used as a tactic of war, terrorism, torture, repression and wartime economies in 2017. In many conflicts, it continued to be used as a strategy of violence to punish people of a certain ethnic origin, political affiliation, religious belief or other category. Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia and South Sudan were observed as participating in this trend at an alarming rate, as stated in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence. According to the UN, most of the victims were politically and economically marginalised women and girls in rural areas. The results of these assaults on the victims include trauma, stigma, poverty, serious impacts on health and unwanted pregnancies. Sexual violence continued to be a factor forcibly displacing the population and producing effects that limited the freedom of movement. There was an increase in the number of rapes and other forms of sexual

violence against minors in 2017, according to the UN's 2018 report. Our analysis of the dynamics of conflicts in 2018 again showed the use of sexual violence by armed actors in conflict. Among other cases, Nigerian soldiers and members of the government-allied militia Civilian Task Force committed sexual and gender-based violence against women in displacement camps, according to Amnesty International in May. In the CAR, sexual violence continued to be used as a weapon of war. South Sudan was another scenario with reports of serious levels of sexual and gender-based violence, despite the signing of the peace agreement. The rape of 300 women and children was documented in 17 locations in Rakhine State. Linked to the massive displacement of the Rohingya community by the Burmese Armed Forces, the crimes were treated with total impunity. Sexual violence and exploitation were reported again in Libya. In 2018, the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen indicated that the parties to the conflict had committed sexual violence. In these and other contexts, impunity around sexual and gender-based violence was prevalent.⁸

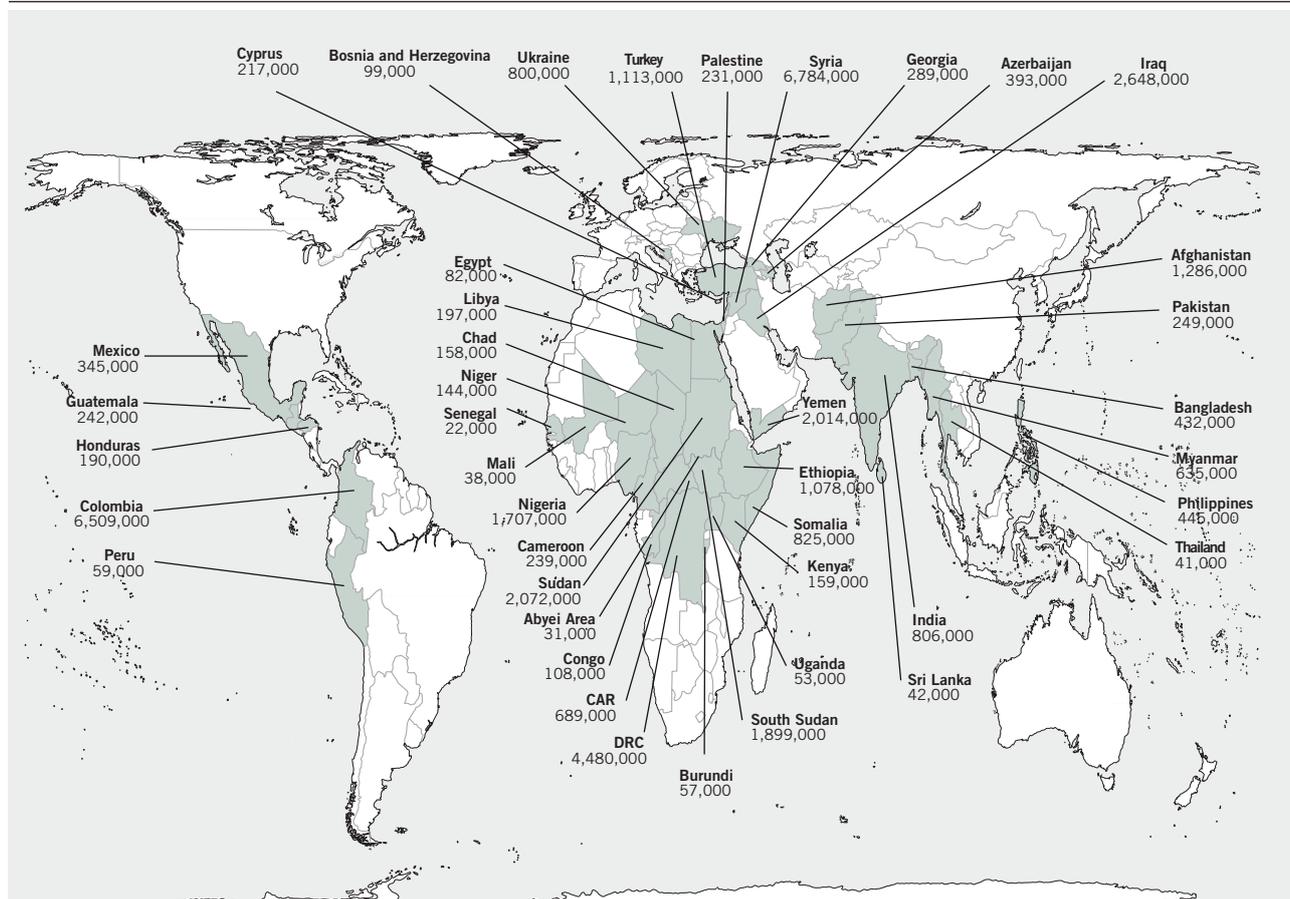
8. See chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security).

Armed conflicts continued to cause very high levels of forced population displacement. According to the UNHCR's annual report published in mid-2018, which provides an assessment of the situation until the end of 2017, the forcibly displaced population in the world at the end of 2017 stood at 68.5 million. This was 2.9 million more than the previous year (in 2016 it increased by 300,000 over 2015). Of the total of 68.5, the refugee population accounted for 25.4 million (19.9 million under UNHCR's mandate and 5.4 million Palestinians under UNRWA's mandate), while 40 million people had moved within the borders of their countries. Another 3.1 million were asylum seekers. UNHCR estimates that there were 16.2 million new displaced persons in 2017 (11.8 million with their home country's borders and 4.4 million new refugees and asylum seekers). According to figures released by the International Displacement Monitoring Centre in late 2017, the countries with the highest levels of internal displacement were Syria (6.7 million), the DRC (4.4 m), Iraq (2.6 m), South Sudan (1.8 m) and Ethiopia (1 m). According to UNHCR data, more than two thirds of the global refugee population came from five countries: Syria (6.3 million people), Afghanistan (2.6 m), South Sudan (2.4 m), Myanmar (1.2 m) and Somalia (986,400). In addition, 52% were under 18 years of age, a one-point increase over 2016. Furthermore, 85% of the refugee population was hosted by countries considered to be developing by the UN. Lebanon was once again the

country with the largest refugee population compared to its total population (one refugee for every six inhabitants), followed by Jordan (one out of 14) and Turkey (one out of 28), though not including the refugee population under UNRWA's mandate, which is also prominent in Lebanon and Jordan. In total numbers, the main host countries were Turkey (3.5 million), Pakistan (1.4 m), Uganda (1.4 m), Lebanon (998,900), Iran (979,400), Germany (970,400), Bangladesh (932,200) and Sudan (906,600).

Armed conflicts continued to cause displacement throughout 2018. Most notable in this regard was Syria, which in 2018 reached the highest figures of forced displacement since the beginning of the war, with more than one million people forced to flee their homes. The escalation of violence in Cameroon, the scene of a new armed conflict in 2018, led to the forced internal displacement of 436,000 people, according to figures released by OHCHR in November. While there were calls for dialogue, future prospects were not encouraging. In the CAR, 642,000 people remained internally displaced by the end of 2018, more than half of them children, and another 574,000 people had fled the country and obtained refugee status. Other issues of concern in 2018 regarded the forced return of the population, such as in Cameroon or Angola, which expelled 362,000 Congolese refugees in the country after an outbreak of violence in the Kasai region. In many conflicts, the

Map 1.2. Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2017



Source: IDMC, *GRID 2018: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2018.

violence made it impossible for people to willingly return to their places of origin. This was true of Rakhine State in Myanmar, the scene of a serious escalation of violence in 2017. Even though levels of violence fell in 2018, the ongoing insecurity made it impossible for 750,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to return. Moreover, armed clashes at the end of the year caused new displacement in Myanmar. Finally, two million people remained displaced in Iraq, despite the fact that four million had returned to their places of origin.

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:	1
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 deteriorating situation in the country is revealed by the institutional deterioration and reduction of the political space for the opposition, the controversial candidacy of Pierre 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.

Following the government's announcement in December 2017 that it would hold a referendum in May on the constitutional reforms necessary for President Pierre Nkurunziza to remain in power until 2034, **political polarisation increased and both the United Nations and human rights organisations condemned serious and continuing violations of human rights committed mainly by the government and by Imbonerakure**, the youth branch of the ruling party (CNDD-FDD). In September,

the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi reported that many rights violations had been committed during 2017 and 2018, including cases of summary execution, forced disappearance, arbitrary detention, torture and sexual violence, and pointed out that some could constitute crimes against humanity. The report presented by the Commission to the UN Human Rights Council also implicated the president in the crime of hate speech for the first time. It should be recalled that the government withdrew from the International Criminal Court shortly after it ordered the start of investigations into massive violations of human rights in October 2017. Since the beginning of the crisis caused by Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term in 2015, it is estimated that more than 1,200 people have died and over 430,000 have left the country. OCHA stated that 3.6 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance during the year. In February, the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons reported that more than 500 people had been killed in Burundi, mostly by Imbonerakure and state security forces. Human Rights Watch reported that, 15 people lost their lives, six were raped and eight were abducted during the campaign for the referendum in May. Other local human rights groups reported many cases of violence and harassment against the opposition by Imbonerakure. Seventy-three per cent (73%) of the people who voted in the referendum on 17 May did so in support of the government's proposal, although the opposition platform Amizero y'Abarundi asked the Constitutional Court to invalidate the results. A few days later, however, **Pierre Nkurunziza announced his decision not to run in the election scheduled for 2020.**

In addition to the repression and human rights violations linked to the political and social crisis gripping the country since 2015, **there were also some significant episodes of violence in border regions during the year that led to the deterioration of diplomatic relations between the government of Burundi and some of its neighbours.** Special mention should be made of the attack that occurred in the northeastern part of the country a few days before the referendum in which 26 civilians were killed and seven were injured. The government said that those responsible for the massacre came from the DRC. Previously, the government had redoubled its military presence in certain border regions after claiming that some of the armed opposition groups based in neighbouring countries intended to influence election day with several episodes of violence. In early November, for example, the Burundian Army carried out an offensive in the DRC against the armed group RED-TABARA, which had previously been accused of carrying out several attacks against the Burundian Armed Forces in eastern parts of the country. Subsequently, the Congolese Armed Forces arrested a Burundian soldier in the province of South Kivu and detained three Burundian soldiers for attempting to enter a refugee camp in Lusenda. Tension between the governments of Burundi and Rwanda increased during the year following the various attacks that occurred in southern Rwanda, allegedly by armed groups based in Burundi

In its annual report on the state of human rights in the world, Human Rights Watch noted that there continued to be reports of police and Imbonerakure members committing rape and other forms of sexual assault against women belonging to families considered to be government opponents in 2017. According to the cases reported, UNICEF said that 23% of the women and 6% of the men in the country have suffered sexual violence at some point in their lives.

Violence increased and spread to new provinces in the CAR, aggravating the humanitarian crisis gripping the country, considered the third most serious in the world

new provinces, aggravating the humanitarian crisis that the country has suffered from for years, the third most serious in the world according to OCHA (behind Syria and Yemen). In October, OCHA warned that 2.9 of the country's 4.5 million people, including 1.5 million children, were in need of humanitarian assistance. Also according to OCHA, by the end of 2018 there were more than 642,000 internally displaced persons, more than half of whom were

children, according to UNICEF, and more than 574,000 registered refugees from the CAR. Although there are no official death counts linked to the armed conflict, there were hundreds of episodes of violence between armed groups during the year (mainly between former Séléka and antibalaka militias), as well as clashes between these groups and MINUSCA contingents or state security forces and agencies and, finally, many attacks carried out by various militias against humanitarian organisations and even journalists. According to some sources, armed groups control somewhere between two thirds and 80% of the country. During the year, several analysts (and even the government of France) warned of the growing influence of Russia in the country, which sent military advisors and weapons alongside the growing presence of Russian military security companies, especially Wagner (also present in Syria, Ukraine and other places). Although Moscow maintains that its troops in the CAR are aimed at supporting the government, some reports indicate that Russian mercenaries are deployed in territories controlled by armed opposition groups to guarantee and supervise the extraction of gold, diamonds or uranium. France also warned of the growing number of contracts between the CAR and Russia for prospecting for mining concessions. In this vein, three Russian journalists who were investigating Wagner's activities in the country were murdered there in July.

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, MPC, UPC), antibalaka militias, 3R militia, France (Operation Sangaris), 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 ("antibalaka"). 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, the AU and the UN intervened militarily to reduce the clashes and facilitate the process of dialogue that would lead to a negotiated transition.

Despite the agreement reached in Rome in June 2017 to disarm 13 of the 14 armed groups active in the Central African Republic, **the violence increased and spread to**

Regarding the dynamics of the armed conflict, there were high levels of violence in the provinces of Ouaka, Haute and Basse-Kotto, and also in the capital, Bangui. In the capital, dozens of people died in April and May as part of a joint MINUSCA and Central African Army operation in the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood PK5 to disarm the militia known as the "General Force". Reactions to this operation led to the deaths of more than 30 people and began a cycle of violence (clashes between armed groups and between them and MINUSCA and the Central African Army, as well as attacks against civilians) in early May in which around 40 people perished, a church and two mosques were burned and destroyed and a market was attacked with explosive devices. In the town of Alindao (Basse-Kotto prefecture), which was the scene of many episodes of violence during the year, especially in February and March, **at least 60 people died as a result of the clashes that took place in mid-November between the former Séléka group UPC and antibalaka militias during which a church and a camp that housed some 20,000 displaced people were burned down.** A few days earlier, in the northern town of Batangafo (Ouham prefecture), three camps housing around 30,000 internally displaced

people were completely burned down in acts of violence committed by former Séléka groups (such as MPC and FPRC) and some antibalaka militias, which also caused the deaths of many civilians, the destruction of thousands of homes and a market. Humanitarian organisations estimate that approximately 10,000 people had to seek refuge in a hospital facility operated by the NGO Médecins sans Frontières. In September, more than 10 internally displaced people were killed during an attack by the group FPRC in the town of Bria, the capital of Haute-Kotto, prompting several demonstrators to throw grenades at the MINUSCA facilities in protest against their inability to prevent such types of attacks and adequately protect the civilian population. Haute-Kotto is a region rich in diamonds, among other resources, so in recent years groups such as the FPRC, the LRA (originating in Uganda) and other militias have competed to control them. Another scene of violence was the prefecture of Ouaka, and especially its capital, Bambari, and the surrounding area. In April, for example, one MINUSCA soldier was killed and 11 others were injured during an attack by an antibalaka militia against a UN detachment in Tagbara, near Bambari, in which 22 fighters also lost their lives. A few days later, MINUSCA found the bodies of 21 people in Tagbara and freed 23 people who had been kidnapped by the former Séléka group UPC. Near Bambari there were clashes throughout the year between anti-balaka and former Séléka groups over the control of several mines. In the eastern prefecture of Mambéré-Kadéï, on the border with Cameroon, there were clashes between MINUSCA and a newly created group, Siriri, while the northeastern province of Ouham-Pendé saw high-intensity clashes early in the year between several armed groups that forced MINUSCA to deploy additional troops to create a 10-kilometre security perimeter around the town of Paoua to protect the civilian population.

Finally, there was an **increase in attacks against humanitarian organisations' facilities and employees**, forcing some of them to interrupt their activities or even to evacuate their staff. In July, OCHA stated that there had been more than 180 attacks in the first six months of the year alone, many of them near the northern town of Kaga Bandoro. The Special Criminal Court became operational in late October. Created in 2015, it was charged with investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the country since 2003. Since the overthrow of former President François Bozizé in 2012, it is estimated that more than 700,000 people have been displaced from their homes, that thousands of people have died and that around 14,000 children have been forcibly recruited by various armed groups.

Both the United Nations and several NGOs reported that **sexual violence continued to be used as a weapon of war (or even increased) in 2018**. For example, the UN Secretary-General's report released in April 2018 documented 308 cases of sexual violence linked to the armed conflict that affected 155 women, 138 girls, 13

men and two boys. Episodes of sexual violence reported in 2017 and 2018 included 253 rapes (181 of them gang rapes) and 28 forced marriages. The main culprits of these acts were former Séléka militias (179 cases), antiBalaka militias (55 cases) and the LRA (14 cases). The report also notes that in 2017, UNICEF contributed to the release of 3,419 children (2,329 boys and 1,090 girls, most of whom reported sexual abuse) who had been forcibly recruited by armed groups. In March, a bishop reported many cases of sexual abuse against economically vulnerable women and girls by members of MINUSCA. In 2016, the United Nations conducted an internal investigation into allegations of sexual abuse by 139 women and concluded that 41 soldiers of the mission were guilty of the crimes with which they were charged. In July, the All Survivors Project deplored the increase in sexual violence against men and boys in a report documenting sexual violence against at least 162 men and boys by insurgent groups.⁹

DRC (east)	
Start:	1998
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, M23 (formerly CNDP), Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, 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 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. In spite of this, the climate of instability and violence persists.

The DRC once again suffered a year marked by political and social instability and humanitarian crises in several regions of the country, aggravated by outbreaks of the

9. See chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security)

Ebola virus.¹⁰ The tense atmosphere was aggravated as a result of the election for a new president at the end of the year due to the end of President Joseph Kabila's term of office. The different sources of armed violence remained active in various parts of the country, including in Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé (northeastern part of the country), linked to the activities of the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA; in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika (eastern part of the country) due to the armed conflict linked to the activities of the different Mai Mai militias, the FDLR and their splinter groups; in the northern part of North Kivu province due to the armed conflict with the Ugandan ADF group; in Mai-Ndombe (west), where community clashes between members of the Banunu and Batende groups left around 900 people dead at the end of the year; and in Kasai (centre-south), linked to the confrontation between multiple militias and government forces. All these sources of instability caused the displaced population to double in the country in 2017, reaching 4.1 million people in the whole of the DRC, making it the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons in Africa. The violence caused the security situation in the country to deteriorate, which led the UN to declare the situation a level 3 emergency in late 2017. Considered the highest category of crisis, level 3 is only shared by Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

The humanitarian crisis in the eastern DRC was complicated by the ongoing armed violence, which hampered healthcare operations against a new Ebola outbreak

Violence continued to be concentrated in the provinces of North and South Kivu (eastern region) through the activities of dozens of armed groups and Mai Mai militias periodically responsible for looting, extortion and attacks against the UN mission in the country (MONUSCO) and the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC). In the opening months of the year, different armed actions carried out by Mai Mai militias in South Kivu displaced thousands of people who took refuge in Burundi and Tanzania. Violent incidents continued in the North Kivu region in May, led by different Mai Mai militias (Yakutumba, Mazembe and others), as well as by the NDC-R, APCLS and FDLR. These incidents targeted the civilian population, MONUSCO and foreign workers. In one of these episodes, two British tourists were kidnapped in the park of Virunga, though they were released later. There were multiple incidents during the rest of the year, the most outstanding of which was an attempt to control the town of Kilembwe (Fizi territory, in South Kivu) in September that was repelled by the Congolese Armed Forces. Meanwhile, the region also reported different clashes involving Hema and Lendu groups in the Dunga area, Ituri province. In the first three months of the year, these clashes caused the deaths of about 130 people and according to various sources displaced around 200,000 people, 34,000 of whom took refuge in Uganda, forcing MONUSCO to expand its presence in the area.

Finally, there were other incidents involving neighbouring countries in the eastern part of the DRC. In February there was a clash between Congolese and Rwandan troops that left six FARDC soldiers dead. The Rwandan government accused Congolese troops of entering its territory. In the same month, the Tanzanian government arrested and extradited the self-proclaimed General John Tshibangu to the DRC, who had threatened the DRC government with an armed uprising from within the Congolese Army. In early July, there was an exchange of fire between Ugandan and Congolese troops in Lake Eduardo, bordering both countries, in which a Ugandan soldier lost his life. The DRC government accused Uganda of killing 12 Congolese fishermen and of arresting 100 others. Following a meeting between envoys of both governments in Uganda, the Ugandan government announced three-year prison sentences for 35 fishermen for violating its water rights and for illegal fishing. In a recent incident between bordering countries, in November, troops from Burundi attacked bases of the rebel group RED-TABARA on Congolese soil. Although the Burundian government denied that it had violated the DRC's sovereignty, various soldiers were detained by FARDC troops.

DRC (east - ADF)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militia, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO
Intensity:	1
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 and an escalation of attacks against the civilian population.

10. See the summary on the DRC in the chapter on Socio-political crises.

The ADF, a group of Ugandan origin based in the region of North Kivu in Beni Territory (Grand Nord), engaged in acts of violence throughout the year. The year began with the effects of the attack carried out in December 2017 against UN peacekeepers (MONUSCO) in Semliki, east of Beni (North Kivu). Fifteen soldiers of the Tanzanian contingent were killed and 44 were injured in the attack, while five Congolese soldiers also lost their lives. It was the deadliest attack against a UN peacekeeping mission. Since then, armed clashes raged for control of Beni Territory, pitting the ADF against the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC), supported by MONUSCO and Uganda. The Ugandan Army (UPDF) intervened militarily against eight insurgency camps in Beni, killing 100 ADF fighters. In mid-January, the Congolese Army launched new military operations that killed around 20 insurgents, including a commander. Between February and May, different attacks carried out by the ADF in various parts of Beni Territory killed at least 28 civilians. In May, FARDC military operations against the ADF intensified in the Kamango-Eringeti-Mbau triangle, in North Kivu. Fourteen rebels and five Congolese soldiers were killed in a battle reported on 24 May along the Mbau-Kamango axis. After a few months of less intense violence, it rose again in September. In early September, suspected ADF members conducted different attacks in the towns of Ngadi and Oicha (Beni Territory), reportedly killing 19 people, including at least four FARDC soldiers, and abducting many other individuals. During October, different episodes were reported with death tolls of dozens of civilians and dead soldiers, as well as multiple kidnappings. **The intensification of violence in the region prevented emergency health workers from containing the Ebola outbreak detected in the area in early August.** As a result, in mid-November, MONUSCO and the FARDC began a joint operation against the ADF in which at least seven peacekeepers and 12 Congolese soldiers were killed. In December, violent incidents in the area continued to target the civilian population, the FARDC and MONUSCO forces. The accumulated tension in the country throughout the year due to the general elections at the end of December contributed to a climate of instability in the eastern part of the country. According to statements by MONUSCO in early 2018, around 700 people have lost their lives in Beni since the outbreak of the armed conflict led by the ADF.

The ADF continued to militarily target MONUSCO and FARDC forces in the eastern DRC

DRC (Kasai)	
Start:	2017
Type:	Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	DRC, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

Summary:

The conflict in the Grand Kasai region, which includes five provinces in the south-central part of the country (Kasai-Central, Kasai, Kasai-Oriental, Lomami and Sankuru), pits the Congolese security forces against various militias from the area, organisations that also fight among themselves and against the civilian population. In 2012, Jean-Pierre Pandi was supposed to succeed his late uncle as the sixth “Kamwina Nsapu”, one of the main traditional chiefs in Dibaya territory in Kasai-Central. These chiefs play an important role, exercising control over land and administration in their domains. Supposedly apolitical and selected according to tradition, they must be recognised by the central government. This requirement encourages the chiefs to support the regime so that it will support the candidates. In Grand Kasai, interaction between the traditional authorities and the administration of Congolese President Joseph Kabila has been particularly complex because the region is a bastion of the opposition. Kinshasa refused to officially recognise Pandi, stoking the tension. In August 2016, Pandi was murdered in his home during clashes between his combatants and the security forces in controversial circumstances. This triggered a rebellion by his followers, who adopted the name of Kamwina Nsapu to avenge their leader. The movement became a widespread insurrection that was joined by other groups in the area. The groups have become notorious for their extensive recruitment of children. Though it began in Kasai-Central, the conflict spread towards the provinces of Kasai, Kasai-Oriental, Sankuru and Lomami. The disproportionate response of the FARDC has caused the situation to escalate. The conflict is also taking on an intercommunal aspect as Kamwina Nsapu, which emerged from the Luba community, has stepped up its attacks on the non-Luba population and the government has supported the Bana Mura militia, of the Tchokwe community.

The situation in the region of Kasai (centre-south) remained insecure during the year, although with less intensity than the previous year.

In January, the decrease in violence enabled the reopening of the border between Angola and the DRC bordering the Kasai region, which had been closed after the rise in violence in 2017. The first violent incidents of the year also took place in January, pitting the Kamwina Nsapu militia against the Congolese government, which claimed the lives of four soldiers and nine civilians in the Central Kasai region. These incidents were repeated in the same region in February, leaving another 15 people dead. Different attacks were reported by one of the 14 different armed militias identified in the area during the year. In early November, the Congolese Army’s military operations against the Kamwina Nsapu militia led to the deaths of 17 militiamen. There were also incidents at the end of the year as part of the presidential election.

Between October and November, **the Angolan government forcibly expelled around 362,000 Congolese who had taken refuge in the country after the outbreak of violence in Kasai.** Their forced return to the province of Kasai put additional pressure on the limited resources available for providing humanitarian assistance, aggravating the crisis in the area and potentially triggering new conflicts,

according to several humanitarian agencies. In 2017, the NGO Médecins sans Frontières had warned that the Kasai region had become one of the main humanitarian crises in the world, with 1.4 million people from the five provinces that make up the Grand Kasai region displaced as a result of the violence, including 850,000 minors. Furthermore, the 4.1 million displaced people in the entire DRC made it the country with the highest such number in Africa. In early 2018, agencies such as FAO, UNICEF and WFP reported that 3.2 million people faced severe food insecurity in the region. In March, the UNHCR had requested a budget of 368.7 million USD for the year to help those affected by the different crises in the DRC, having received only 1% of the demand. Earlier this year, a report by the UN Human Rights Office in the country accused government troops and the Bana Mura and Kamwina Nsapu militias of committing war crimes in the central region of Kasai.

The expulsion of 362,000 refugees from Angola to the Congolese region of Kasai at the end of the year complicated the humanitarian situation and threatened to aggravate the crisis there

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.

Armed clashes between the parties persisted throughout the year, systematically violating the ceasefire agreement reached in December 2017, which provoked the imposition of different sanctions by the international community. However, this scenario did not prevent the revitalisation of the peace process, including a new peace agreement signed by the South Sudanese government and the main insurgent groups. Although the year began with the ceasefire agreement between the government and the main armed groups on 24 December 2017, as part of the peace process' High-Level Revitalisation Forum held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, it did not prevent the recurrence of armed clashes between the parties throughout 2018, mainly in the regions of Equatoria,

Upper Nile, Unity and Yei. The systematic violations of the ceasefire prompted reactions from African and international actors that included the gradual imposition of sanctions. The first sanction came in February, when the US announced a unilateral arms embargo on the country. The UN and other regional bodies, like the EU, the AU and the regional IGAD bloc, also threatened punitive sanctions if the violence continued. Different South Sudanese senior military commanders, including Paul Malong Awan, who had been dismissed in 2017 as head of the South Sudanese Armed Forces by President Salva Kiir, were included on the list of people sanctioned by the EU, the US and the UN due to their participation in the atrocities committed during the war. In response, in early April Malong announced the creation of a new rebel group, the South Sudan United Front (SSUF). This new organisation was integrated into the coalition of armed opposition groups created in December 2017, the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA).

The ongoing insecurity did not prevent simultaneous rounds of negotiations as part of the reduction in hostilities and the search for a solution to the conflict. In late June, President Salva Kiir and the leader of the majority faction of the SPLM-IO, Riek Machar, signed a new framework agreement that included a fresh commitment to the ceasefire as of 30 June. The meeting marked the first time that Kiir and Machar met since the hostilities resumed in 2016. However, this progress did not bring an end to the hostilities due to the fact that the armed factions excluded from the negotiations continued to engage in violence in order to gain a seat at the negotiating table. The most significant episodes of violence during the period took place in the state of Boma, Jonglei, in which 86 people were killed, more than 20 were injured and about 42,000 heads of cattle were stolen. In response, on 13 July, the UN Security Council approved a resolution drafted by the United States imposing an arms embargo on the country.

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 SPLA-IO led by Peter Gatdet and Gathoth Gatkuoth, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM- CF, SSNLM, REMNASA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS
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

In this context, on 30 August the South Sudanese government, the SPLA-IO headed by Machar, the SSOA, the SPLM-FD and representatives of small armed factions signed a peace agreement that included aspects such as a general amnesty for all the rebels, including Machar. The armed organisation headed by Paul Malong was excluded from the agreement, posing a significant risk to implementing measures to de-escalate tensions in the affected region, north of Bahr el Ghazal. This peace agreement, called the **Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS)**,¹¹ was subsequently signed on 12 September in the capital of Ethiopia. The various agreed measures stipulated the reinstatement of Machar as vice president; the establishment of an eight-month pre-transitional period, entering into force in May 2019; the implementation of different measures to promote the cessation of hostilities, which included quartering all the armed actors in locations agreed upon within 30 days; an immediate halt to any training and recruitment activity; the release of all prisoners of war; the creation of a hybrid tribunal; and the creation, training, funding and deployment of a military unit, the Regional Protection Force (RPF), which will be supported in its deployment by UNMISS. Once again, the text also provided for the establishment of a new ceasefire verification mechanism, the Revitalised Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (RCTSAMVM) and a Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to replace the previous related bodies created in the 2015 peace agreement before May 2019. However, this agreement did not entail an end to the hostilities. On 18 September, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix condemned the violation of the agreement and the associated cessation of hostilities, reporting clashes between government forces and the armed opposition party in the states of Central Equatoria, Unity and Yei. The international team of observers of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMVM) also reported attacks and arrests of members of their team. Government forces and the SPLM-IO faction headed by Machar traded blame for restarting the violence, while armed incidents continued to be reported that pitted different rebel groups that did not sign the peace agreement, such as the NAS forces, the SSNMC and the SSNDA, against parties that did sign it. At the end of the year, these armed incidents remained active in several regions of the country, again calling the future viability of the signed peace agreement into question.

In another significant event of the year, in May, the various factions of the SPLM, including the ruling party, the opposition in the transitional government

In an atmosphere characterised by systematic ceasefire violations and the imposition of international sanctions, South Sudan signed a new peace agreement amidst scepticism about its future viability

and the armed opposition (SPLM-IO), were summoned to try to unify and resolve the conflict under the mediation of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. While the SPLM-IO faction led by First Vice President Taban Deng announced its reunification with the SPLM, the SPLM-IO faction led by Machar refused if the government did not reinstate Machar as vice president. Reunifying the parties became more plausible after the September peace agreement. In September, a military court convicted 10 South Sudanese soldiers of involvement in the attack on the Terrain Hotel in Juba in June 2016 in which a South Sudanese journalist was killed, five foreign humanitarian workers were raped and several people were tortured and wounded. The trial was an exceptional application of justice to the military in the country since the outbreak of the war in December 2013. Different national observers attributed it to the presence of foreign victims.

Sudan (Darfur)	
Start:	2003
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, pro-government militias <i>janjaweed</i> , Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, UNAMID
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.

11. See the summary on South Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

The unilateral ceasefires announced by some rebel groups and the government were upheld, which did not halt the ongoing episodes of violence concentrated in the Jebel Marra region.

Following the progress made during the previous year, the government once again upheld the unilateral ceasefire in Darfur (also in South Kordofan and Blue Nile), observing it during the first half of the year at first, then extending it until the end of the year on 12 July. In the same vein, at different times the two main Darfuri rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Minnawi (SLA-MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), announced their unilateral extension of the ceasefire that covered the entire year. This ceasefire was later joined by the Sudan Liberation Army-Transitional Council (SLA-TC). However, SLA rebel forces led by Abdel Wahid (SLA-AW), which had been excluded from the peace negotiations, clashed violently throughout the year with government forces and their related militias, mainly the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), in the Jebel Marra region. Between late April and May, the resurgence of violence translated into a deteriorating security situation in the region, increasing the number of those forcibly displaced by the violence. OCHA estimated that 8,900 people were displaced by the fighting, while IOM verified 5,900 new cases of displacement.

In a further upsurge in violence in June, the government announced the mobilisation of around 2,000 RSF and Sudanese Army troops to the region, blocking the passage of UN troops deployed in the area. The UN Security Council unsuccessfully called on all the parties to adhere to the unilateral ceasefire and allow humanitarian access to populations at risk. The joint UN and AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID) strengthened its presence in Jebel Marra. At the end of the year the RSF announced an offensive against the rebels to end the rebellion in February 2019, predicting a resurgence of fighting in early 2019.

The unilateral ceasefires announced by some rebel groups and the government were maintained, which did not halt the ongoing episodes of violence concentrated in the Jebel Marra region.

Following the progress made during the previous year, the government once again upheld the unilateral ceasefire in Darfur (also in South Kordofan and Blue Nile),¹² observing it during the first half of the year at first, then extending it until the end of the year on 12 July. In the same vein, at different times the two main Darfuri rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Minnawi (SLA-MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), announced their unilateral extension of the ceasefire that covered the entire year. This ceasefire was later joined by the Sudan Liberation Army-Transitional Council (SLA-TC). However, SLA rebel forces led by Abdel Wahid (SLA-AW), which had been excluded from the peace negotiations, clashed violently throughout the year with

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Meanwhile, UNAMID continued to cut back and reconfigure the mission as stipulated in the road map agreed in 2017 by UN Security Council Resolution 2363.

In July 2018, the Security Council approved a new resolution (2429) by which UNAMID closed and delivered 10 bases of operations in Darfur to the Sudanese government in late December. The resolutions also implied a 44% reduction in UNAMID troops and 30% in UNAMID police and extended its mandate until 30 June 2019. At the end of the year, the military force of the mission was cut back from 9,735 soldiers to

5,470. The UN Security Council's decision to shrink the peace mission was questioned by various international actors, who demanded a clear exit plan to prevent a resurgence of violence. The plan is to transform the mission from a peacekeeping force into one of peace and development, closing all its bases within two years. In other incidents reported during the year, in late May an attack supposedly launched by the RSF targeted three camps of internally displaced persons located in the Central Darfur region: Khamsa Dagaig, Ardayba and Jedda. In mid-July, there was an armed clash between the Rizeigat and Maaliya armed groups in the East Darfur region that caused multiple deaths. In response, the authorities imprisoned around 95 people, including 22 community leaders. The episode led to peace negotiations in which both groups committed themselves to promoting stability and security in the area, signing a declaration of peaceful coexistence at the end of the year.

The signing of a pre-negotiation agreement to launch a future round of substantive talks in Doha between the government and the rebel groups SLA-MM and JEM was announced in December.¹³ These future negotiations will be based on the Doha Document

Armed clashes in Darfur (Sudan) were concentrated in the Jebel Marra region again

12. See the summary on Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) in this chapter.

13. See the summary on Sudan (Darfur) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) signed in 2006. In relation to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants (DDR) programme, the total number of combatants demobilised in the state of West Darfur had reached 3,700 by October. Another 1,109 were demobilised in Nyala, South Darfur, during the last quarter of the year. According to official data, around 30,000 weapons (out of an estimated 700,000) were collected in the five states of Darfur during the voluntary process that began in August.

The SPLM-N rebels and the Sudanese government upheld their unilateral ceasefires throughout the year

these negotiations, though that did not prevent them from previously declaring a unilateral ceasefire in the area under their control in the Blue Nile region. Even though both SPLM-N factions had declared these ceasefires to contain the violence, they did not prevent armed clashes between them, such as the one that occurred in late February in the Wadaka area, Blue Nile, in

which dozens of people were killed and around 9,000 displaced. Subsequently, in April, the SPLM-N (Malik Agar faction) condemned attacks by the pro-government Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which is under the command structure of the Sudanese Armed Forces, in the Blue Nile region, taking control of the areas of Goya El Jadida, Goya El Gadima, Kabadik and Jiko. These incidents did not break the commitment to the ceasefire, and in mid-July, the Sudanese government extended it again in the Two Areas in Darfur until the end of the year

The peace talks made progress during the year, though no substantive agreement was achieved.¹⁴ In early November, the Sudanese government announced that South Sudanese President Salva Kiir would mediate between the two SPLM-N factions to seek a solution and restore unity to the rebels, which would enable the search for peace in the Two Areas. Finally, humanitarian access to the Two Areas, one of the topics of the peace negotiations, continued to be blocked, although at the end of September the government headed by Omar al-Bashir accepted the UN's proposal to deliver aid to the areas affected by the conflict.

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:	1
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.

Unilateral ceasefires were extended by rebels and the government during the year, though this did not prevent some violent clashes from occurring in the Blue Nile region. At the beginning of the year, both the government and the rebels announced a unilateral extension of the ceasefire in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, known as the Two Areas. The ceasefire had first been issued in 2017. In late January, the SPLM-N faction led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (an insurgent splinter group that broke off from the main group in 2017) announced a four-month extension of the ceasefire. It was later extended until the end of the year in order to facilitate the peace talks. The talks had started in Ethiopia in early February, as had been agreed in late 2017, thawing a negotiating process that had been frozen since October 2016. The other faction of the SPLM-N, led by Malik Agar, was excluded from

Horn of Africa

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

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

14. See the summary on Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

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, confrontations between the Ethiopian Armed Forces and the ONLF increased, especially in 2007 when the ONLF attacked Chinese oil exploration facilities, killing 74 people, though the intensity of the conflict has ebbed in recent years.

Although there were several episodes of violence during the year, important progress was made towards resolving the armed conflict in the Somali region of Ethiopia.

The political events that took place at different times of the year had a cascading effect on the different conflicts and socio-political crises affecting the country. However, progress in the peace process did not bring the conflict to an end. According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), after the inauguration of new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, there were 70 violent events in the Ogaden region. Human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch condemned serious human rights violations by the Liyu Police, which was established by the president of the Somali region, Abdi Iley. Lives were lost when the government paramilitary body clashed with the local population at various times of the year. The situation of Jijiga Prison was also criticised and hundreds of political prisoners were released at different times of the year. One of the tensest moments of the year occurred in August, when troops were deployed in the capital of the Jijiga region, apparently intending to arresting regional leaders. This led to clashes with local security forces and riots in several cities that caused an undetermined number of fatalities. Several Orthodox churches were also burned. The armed group ONLF accused the Ethiopian Armed Forces of seeking to take control of the regional government. President Abdi Iley resigned amidst the tension and clashes. A few days later, after Parliament removed the ONLF from its list of terrorist groups, the insurgent organisation declared a unilateral ceasefire. In October, the federal government and the ONLF signed a framework agreement and created a joint committee to initiate a negotiating process. However, clashes continued between the Oromo and Somali communities, which in December centred in the vicinity of Moyale, causing the deaths of at least 21 people and displacing hundreds

In this regard, in August Human Rights Watch stated that the Ethiopian government should conduct a thorough investigation into the serious human rights abuses and war crimes committed in the Somali region over the past decade, including specific investigations into the political responsibility of the regional authorities, and particularly the former regional president, Abdi Illey, and the commanders of the Liyu Police.¹⁵ The Somali region has been the scene of serious human rights violations by the Ethiopian Army and the Liyu Police since its creation in 2007. Access to journalists and humanitarian and human rights organisations

was restricted. The abuses became especially serious starting in 2007, when the armed conflict between the ONLF and state security forces escalated. The Ethiopian Army has reduced its role in the region in recent years, but the Liyu Police has continued to carry out its counterinsurgency campaign, committing extrajudicial executions, torture, and sexual violence against civilians accused of sympathising with the ONLF and even against other communities outside the Somali region, including the Oromia region, since December 2016.

Somalia	
Start:	1988
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Operation Ocean Shield, al-Shabaab
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

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

The armed conflict remained at high levels of violence, with many clashes throughout the year. The armed group al-Shabaab was involved in most of the violent incidents in 2018, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), which also pointed to its ability to adapt to intensified operations against it. As in previous years, the south-central part of the country was the scene of frequent attacks and clashes, while al-

15. HRW, *Ethiopia: Probe Years of Abuse in Somali Region*, 20 August 2018.

Shabaab continued to extend its attacks to the north. Al-Shabaab claimed major attacks in 2018, though it had much lower death tolls than the October 2017 bombing that caused 512 fatalities, the deadliest in the history of Somalia. These attacks included **a suicide attack with two car bombs and shooting against the presidential palace and a hotel in the capital, Mogadishu in February, which killed 45 people and injured around 30**; a car bomb at a hotel in the capital in March, killing 14; another car bomb that same month at a checkpoint next to Parliament, killing 13; an attack with two car bombs on a hotel in Mogadishu, which claimed around 50 civilians' lives; and an attack on a checkpoint next to the presidential residence in the capital, in December, which killed around 20 civilians. Attacks were also blamed on al-Shabaab, such as one in May against a market in the town of Wanlaweyn (Lower Shabelle region), which caused around 15 fatalities, most of them civilians. The killing of a young businessman in Mogadishu in August, attributed to al-Shabaab, triggered protests in the capital, as well as a social media campaign to condemn violence against Somali youth (#WeAreNotSafe).

Al-Shabaab carried out attacks against Somali Army bases and AMISOM, such as a double car bomb attack on the AMISOM mission base in Bulamarer (Lower Shabelle region) in April. Local authorities said that 46 Ugandan soldiers were killed, while Uganda admitted four casualties and estimated that around 20 al-Shabaab fighters had died. An Ethiopian media outlet reported an Ethiopian air strike against al-Shabaab positions in Somalia that may have killed around 70 fighters. According to the Ethiopian military authorities, the operation was aimed at dismantling the group's plans for an attack against the Ethiopian contingent of AMISOM. Several times during the year, al-Shabaab took control of various towns, only to withdraw shortly after government operations were launched to recover them. The US bombed al-Shabaab positions, killing dozens. In December, **the arrest of the former al-Shabaab leader and presidential candidate of South West State, Mukhtar Robow, in Baidoa (Bay region), triggered clashes** between police and supporters and riots for several days, leading to a dozen deaths and the arrest of 200 people. The events generated tensions between the federal government and the UN, after the UN, AMISOM and several governments questioned the legal framework of the arrest and its consequences. The Somali government declared the UN Secretary-General's special representative in the country, Nicholas Haysom, a persona non grata. Military tension between the regions of Somaliland and Puntland also increased. In the political sphere, relations between the federal government and the federal states deteriorated due to the former's rejection of intensified relations between the United Arab Emirates and the authorities of the federal states of Somaliland and Puntland. Attempts at negotiation and mediation between the federal states and the government were unsuccessful. In September, the authorities of the states of Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Puntland and South West announced that they

had broken off relations with the federal government. There were tensions between political groups supportive of the federal president and his opponents, who tried to promote a motion of censure and finally had to withdraw it. Finally, relations between Somalia and Eritrea improved, facilitated by the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea and between Eritrea and Djibouti in 2018.

Maghreb – North Africa

Algeria	
Start:	1992
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), 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), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS) and ISIS.

Throughout 2018, Algeria continued to be the scene of low-intensity acts of violence linked to the conflict that mainly pits the AQIM armed group against the state security forces. According to partial estimates from media reports, the hostilities caused the deaths of between 40 and 50 people during the year. According to the official death toll kept by the Algerian Army, 32 militants were killed and 25 were arrested in 2018, another 177 people linked to the support networks were arrested and more than 700 weapons were confiscated (including rifles, grenades, submachine guns and rocket launchers). One of the bloodiest incidents of the year occurred in the province of Skikda (northeast), in July, when clashes between the parties caused the death of four ISIS fighters and seven soldiers. During the opening months of the year, the Algerian security forces killed

several senior leaders of AQIM, including Adel Seghiri, its propaganda officer, and Bekkai Boualem, its foreign affairs chief. Additionally, on the border area between Algeria and Tunisia, Tunisian special forces ended the life of Bilel Kobi, one of the lieutenants of Adelmalek Droukdel, the leader of AQIM. Another senior leader of the group, Heddad Fodhil, the head of one of its brigades, surrendered to the authorities. According to official figures, a total of 132 militants surrendered to the military authorities during 2018. According to some sources, the surrenders intensified after the government proposed an agreement with the help of France.

In this context, several analysts highlighted the weakening of AQIM in Algeria. Between 2013 and 2018, Algerian military operations reportedly killed around 600 AQIM fighters, while intelligence services have disrupted their logistical networks. The weakening of the group and its loss of territorial influence, especially in the Kabylie area, are ascribed to various factors, including its extreme methods, the government's repressive policies and government deals for those who decided to leave its ranks. Faced with difficulties in consolidating its ambitions in Algeria and attracting new members, AQIM may have decided to move its operations to the east, to the border area with Tunisia, and even to focus on its bases in that country. In fact, according to media reports, the leader killed by the Tunisian special services had the mission of strengthening the AQIM branch in Tunisia and trying to attract former ISIS fighters in the face of the decline of ISIS' bastions in Libya, Syria and Iraq. The Tunisian branch of AQIM, Okba Ibn Nafaa, is mainly composed of Algerian citizens. However, several analysts agreed that AQIM has not given up on strengthening its presence in Algeria and that it will continue to perpetrate low-intensity attacks in the country.

Libya	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, Resources, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, several armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA), militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades, ISIS, AQIM, among others; USA, France, UK, Egypt, UAE, among 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.

During 2018, the outlook in Libya continued to be characterised by difficulties in implementing the 2015 political agreement, institutional weakness and fragmentation, the persistence of several power centres and ongoing clashes between different kinds of armed organisations. The death toll of the conflict remained difficult to determine. According to the monthly reports of the UN mission in the country (UNSMIL), between January and October at least 175 civilians had died due to hostilities and more than 300 people had been injured. However, the mission recognises that these figures could be higher and clarifies that the body count only includes civilian victims as a direct result of the hostilities, leaving out indirect victims and those who died or were injured as a result of other practices linked to the conflict, such as execution, torture or kidnapping. **Regarding the dynamics of violence, there were several outbreaks of variable intensity throughout 2018, in keeping with the trend of previous years. One of the most active fronts was Tripoli.** The Libyan capital was the scene of incidents throughout the year, but these escalated in August with the use of heavy weapons in various parts of the city, including residential areas. Clashes between several armed groups (militias linked to the Government of National Accord's (GNA) ministry of defence and other groups connected to the ministry of the interior) resulted in the deaths of more than 115 people, half of them civilians, in the span of several weeks. The UN promoted a ceasefire in September and the fighting subsided, but by the end of the year the hostilities persisted mostly on the outskirts of Tripoli in the form of clashes, assassinations and kidnappings

The eastern part of the country was another major flashpoint of violence, with many incidents that mainly pitted Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) against armed jihadist organisations. In addition to assaults on checkpoints, several bomb attacks were reported. For example, a double attack with a car bomb outside a mosque in Benghazi left 35 dead in January, which led to the killing of a dozen people the next day by the LNA. This group also maintained its siege in Derna, which was controlled by a coalition of Islamist groups, with serious humanitarian consequences. There were also several clashes over the control of oil fields

and facilities throughout 2018. In June alone, clashes between the LNA and forces linked to the former commander of the Petroleum Facilities Guard left 28 dead. Another one of the most active fronts was the south, especially Sabha, where there were continuous clashes between Arab tribal militias affiliated with the LNA and Thebu ethnic minority militias linked to the GNA. In one of the incidents, which occurred in May, 30 people lost their lives, including civilians. The branch of the armed group ISIS in Libya also remained active, especially south of its former stronghold, Sirte, and in coastal areas in the centre and western part of the country, claiming responsibility for several actions in the capital. Various sources of information indicated that AQIM was maintaining its presence in Libya. The US carried out periodic air strikes against jihadist groups in the country and claimed responsibility for an attack on a suspected AQIM cell in southern Libya in November that killed 11. However, the group claimed that the victims were Tuareg youth with no ties to al-Qaeda.

The situation in Libya continued to be characterised by multiple focal points of violence and ongoing human rights violations that especially affected the migrant and refugee population

Human rights and international humanitarian law continued to be violated in the country in a climate of impunity, as reported by NGOs and the UN. In addition to the deaths of civilians, these violations included cases of torture, execution and arbitrary detention, both in official centres and in facilities administered by militias, as well as cases of women and girls who were arbitrarily arrested due to family ties or “moral crimes”. The migrant and refugee population continued to be especially vulnerable in Libya and were subjected to arbitrary arrest, violence and sexual exploitation, kidnapping, extortion, forced labour, slavery and assassination. By the end of the year there were 5,300 migrants and refugees detained in Libya, of whom at least 3,700 were in need of international protection, according to the UN. **A report released by UNSMIL and the OHCHR in December warned of the many human rights violations suffered by migrants and refugees in Libya and stressed that the country’s authorities have been unable and/or unwilling to curb abuses.** The atmosphere of chaos and lack of rule of law in the country has encouraged human trafficking and the Libyan law that criminalises irregular entry into the country has put thousands of people in jail without considering their needs for protection. Based on more than 1,300 interviews conducted between January 2017 and August 2018, the report highlights the inhumane conditions in the detention centres and the fact that the overwhelming majority of women and adolescents interviewed confirmed that they were victims of sexual violence.¹⁶

The general climate of insecurity in the country continued to serve as the background for political and power

struggles among various Libyan actors and threatened to continue affecting and conditioning implementation of the 2015 agreement, which experienced new delays in the planned schedule. In this regard, the impasse to making some changes to the 2015 agreement persisted during 2018, as was set out in the plan promoted by the UN special envoy for Libya. This revealed many obstacles to organising a constitutional referendum and both the national conference intended to guide the transition process and the elections were postponed until 2019.¹⁷ Some of the acts of violence during the year aimed to directly sink the political process, such as the suicide attack against the electoral commission in Tripoli that left 14 dead and for which ISIS claimed responsibility. In this context, at the end of the year the GNA reiterated its call to lift the UN arms embargo imposed on the country, though experts warned of the risks of doing so.

West Africa

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	
Start:	2018
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Cameroon, self-proclaimed Interim Government of Ambazonia, the armed groups ADF, SCACUF, SOCADEF and SCDF and dozens of smaller militias
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

After Germany’s defeat in the First World War, Cameroon came under the mandate of the League of Nations and was divided between French Cameroon and British Cameroon. In 1961, the two territories that made up British Cameroon held a referendum limiting their self-determination to union with the already independent Republic of Cameroon (formerly French Cameroon) or union with Nigeria. The southern part of British Cameroon (a region currently corresponding to the provinces of North West and South West) decided to join the Republic of Cameroon, whereas the north preferred to join Nigeria. A poorly conducted re-unification in the 1960s based on centralisation and assimilation has led the English-speaking minority of what was once southern British Cameroon (20% of the country’s population) to feel politically and economically marginalised by state institutions, which are controlled by the French-speaking majority. Their frustrations rose in late 2016, when a series of sector-specific grievances were transformed into political demands, which caused strikes, riots and a growing escalation of tension and government repression. This climate has led a majority of the population in the region demanding a new federal political status without ruling out secession and has prompted the resurgence of identity movements dating back to the 1970s.

16. See chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security)

17. For further information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

These movements demand a return to the federal model that existed between 1961 and 1972. Trust between English-speaking activists and the government was shaken by the arrest of the main figures of the federalist movement in January 2017, which has given a boost to groups supporting armed struggle as the only way to achieve independence. Since then, both English-speaking regions have experienced general strikes, school boycotts and sporadic violence. Insurgent activity has escalated since the secessionist movement's declaration of independence on 1 October and the subsequent government repression to quell it.

The violence affecting the Anglophone-majority regions of the country since 2016, the provinces of North West and South West, continued to escalate during the year, turning both provinces into a war scenario with serious consequences for the civilian population. Attacks and kidnappings by separatist militias proliferated during the year and increased in regularity, as did the security forces' military actions and disproportionate use of force against civilians suspected of sympathising with the rebellion or accused of being militants. The elite units of the Cameroonian Army (trained by the US and Israel) were accused of committing serious human rights violations. Armed groups and separatist militias began to carry out attacks and actions against the civilian population in 2018. The government condemned the mercenaries fighting in the separatists' ranks and the Cameroonian military conducted an incursion into Nigeria in pursuit of separatist groups in January. The period of greatest intensity was in September and October, during the presidential election campaign (the election was on 7 October) and the commemoration of the anniversary of the declaration of independence of Ambazonia (1 October). In May, the self-proclaimed Interim Government of Ambazonia appealed to the French-speaking population to leave the two provinces and called on the Anglophone population living in French-speaking areas to return to English-speaking areas. The separatist militias tried to enforce a boycott of the election, which Paul Biya won again. The boycott in the English-speaking provinces was massive, with only 5.36% turnout in North West and 15.94% in South West. In addition, the political opposition rejected Biya's victory, arguing electoral fraud, and opposition candidate Maurice Kamto claimed victory, triggering a cycle of protests, which intensified the political polarisation and inter-community antagonism (between his followers from the Bamileke community and Biya's followers from the Beti community). The United States, the United Kingdom and the African Union accepted the results but urged reform. On 26 November, Kamto appealed to the French-speaking community to hold weekly general strikes in solidarity with the English-speaking community, threatening to step up strikes if the government did not resolve the crisis in the region by the end of 2018. The conflict

The violence affecting the Anglophone-majority regions of the country in Cameroon escalated during 2018, turning them into a war scenario with serious consequences for the civilian population

has forcibly displaced 436,000 people within the country as highlighted by the OHCHR in November and another 50,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Nigeria, according to the UNHCR in July. As indicated by Amnesty International in September, around 400 civilians have died in the last year, thousands of civilians have been injured and around 100 villages have been razed. Humanitarian and human rights organisations faced serious difficulties in helping the civilian population and were denied access to the area.

According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), there were around 200 acts of war from September 2017 to the end of 2018, claiming the lives of 844 people. Half of these attacks had been carried out since September 2018, on the eve of the election.¹⁷ Other sources raised the death toll of the conflict to 1,500. One of the main attacks of the year was conducted by the security forces in Menchum (North West) in early September, killing 27 separatists. The most significant incidents included the death of a major commander of the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) in clashes with government security forces on 21 December, the attack on the French secretary of state's convoy in the town of Fako, in the province of South West, on 29 June, while on his way to Buea, killing two soldiers and wounding many others, and the attack on the Cameroonian defence minister's convoy during an official trip to South West, in Small Ekombe, on 12 July. At least 70 schools have been burned since the crisis began in 2016. On the eve of the elections in October and during the resumption of the academic year in September, various schools and places of learning were attacked and students and teachers were abducted.

In addition to civil society's demands to open dialogue to resolve the underlying issues that have led to the conflict, such as the initiative promoted by the religious authorities, the Anglophone General Conference (postponed several times and finally held in December after its organisers received threats from separatist groups), various organisations and countries of the international community increased their pressure on the Cameroonian government. On 30 November the government created the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration for the separatist militants and Boko Haram, which received a lukewarm reception. The UN Security Council officially discussed the conflict in December and US and UK ambassadors called for the release of English-speaking prisoners, the beginning of peace talks between the separatist movement and the government and access to the Anglophone regions for UN agencies and NGOs. The OHCHR condemned the insecurity and forced displacement in the country and also called for dialogue. The EU, France and Equatorial Guinea made

17. ACLED, Regional Overview Africa, 8 January 2019.

similar statements. The UN renewed its offer to mediate in the conflict and on the same day President Paul Biya ordered the release of 289 English-speaking prisoners who had committed minor offences.

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Boko Haram (BH), 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. In 2015 the conflict was regionalized, also affecting the countries bordering Lake Chad: Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

The violence mainly affected Nigeria and specifically Borno State, with incidents that included attacks by various Boko Haram factions against civilian targets, such as markets and camps for displaced people, attacks against military bases and clashes that caused fatalities and forced displacement. The death toll due to actions conducted by Boko Haram, as well as to clashes between the group and government security forces was 1,622, according to the database of Nigeria Security Tracker (NST). This figure compares to 1,828 in 2017 and 1,605 in 2016. There were **new episodes of large-scale kidnappings by Boko Haram** in 2018. In February, 110 female students were abducted in Yobe State. They were mostly released in March after negotiations with the group faction led by Abu Mus’ab al-Barnawi. According to some media sources, the government paid ransom and released some prisoners in exchange. Government sources reported that the **federal authorities were exploring the possibility of a permanent cessation of hostilities, including through an amnesty**. However, the violence continued during the rest of the year, also with new kidnappings, such as the abduction of 15 girls in the Diffa region, in Niger, in November. Other incidents of violence against civilians included a suicide attack against a mosque in Gamboru (Borno State) in January, in which 14 worshippers died; attacks against loggers, accused of being informers by Boko Haram,

with 20 killed in a single day in Maiduguri (Borno) in January; a triple suicide attack against a market in the town of Kondunga (Borno), killing around 20 people; the shooting deaths of 18 forest workers in the town of Gamboru (Borno); a double suicide attack on a mosque and a market in the town of Mubi (Adamawa State) in early May, which killed more than 80 people and wounded about 60; and another suicide attack in the vicinity of the local government of Damboa (Borno) that killed around 30 people and caused injuries to close to 50, among many other incidents. Boko Haram also killed three aid workers and kidnapped three others in an attack in March in Rann (Borno), in which it also killed eight soldiers. Two of these kidnapped humanitarian workers from the ICRC were killed in September and October.

The governments of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger continued to confront Boko Haram together, launching large-scale joint offensives and military operations at various times of the year, killing many members of the group and freeing hostages. In May, Amnesty International condemned sexual and gender violence committed by Nigerian soldiers and members of their allied militia, the Civilian Joint Task Force, against women in camps displaced by Boko Haram’s violence, including rape, sometimes in exchange for food, and threats of rape, the separation of women and men and the confinement of women in satellite camps. The UN also warned of Cameroon’s forced repatriation of around 400 refugees and asylum seekers from Nigeria after their asylum requests were rejected by the Cameroonian government. In June, the release of a video showing several men in military uniform killing two women and their children, accusing them of being members of Boko Haram, caused consternation and local and international pressure on Cameroon.

Despite the allegations of significant progress in the fight against the armed group, insurgent attacks increased in the second half of the year and **analysts warned that the group was getting better access to weapons and that its attacks were becoming more sophisticated**. Between July and the end of the year, the group carried out more than 15 attacks on military bases, including an attack on a military base in the town of Matele (Borno) in November, killing around 40 soldiers, though some sources cited 70 and even 100, whereas the Nigerian Army reduced them to around 20. A faction of Boko Haram seized control of the town of Gudumbali (Borno) in September, displacing thousands of people, and withdrew a day later. Also, in December, insurgents tried to take the town of Baga, near the border with Chad, as well as Monguno, which finally fell under Nigerian control. Discontent among parts of the Nigerian Army was evident throughout the year, with protests by Nigerian soldiers demanding more resources. Meanwhile, Mamman Nur, the leader of one of the Boko Haram factions, was killed in September, allegedly by more radical members of the group who were critical of what they considered his more moderate approach.

Mali ¹⁸	
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, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force
Intensity:	1
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 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 Mali intensified significantly throughout 2018, revealing **changes and greater complexity in patterns of violence, the territorial expansion of hostilities and an increase in the use of violence against civilians**. A study by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) concluded that violence in the country had risen by 40% in 2018 compared to the previous year.¹⁹ Another study conducted by Peace Direct highlighted that the conflict was at its worst level since the 1990s, with a broader geographical scope, growing levels of lethality and a worrying increase in the killing of civilians due to their ethnicity or alleged affiliation with political or armed factions.²⁰ **While a record of 949 fatalities due to the conflict was reported in 2017, 750 people were killed in multiple acts of violence in just the first half of 2018**, according to data kept by ACLED. The UN's periodic reports on the situation

The conflict in Mali intensified in 2018, showing greater complexity in patterns of violence, the territorial expansion of hostilities and an increase in violence against civilians

in Mali also warned of the increase in intercommunal violence, citing the large number of local, regional and international armed actors involved in the hostilities and condemning serious human rights abuses in the country, including summary executions, torture, mistreatment and other actions. Violent incidents continued to take place in the north, but also in the centre and east of the country. Some of the most affected regions were Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Ménaka and Ségou, with different armed actors involved in the violence.

Jihadist armed groups like the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), tied to al-Qaeda, and the branch of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, launched different attacks in the northern, central and eastern parts of the country. Some of these attacks, many of them asymmetric and involving explosives, targeted the forces of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA), the Malian Army, French forces deployed in the country as part of Operation Barkhane and barracks of the G5-Sahel, the joint force deployed in the region by Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania. The forces of Operation Barkhane launched several air operations and attacks to kill senior officials of the jihadist groups. The Tuareg armed group GATIA, a member of the Platform, and the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), a division of the CMA composed mainly of members of the Daoussak ethnic community, were increasingly involved in hostilities against alleged jihadist fighters, mainly in the northeastern part of the country, in the area near the border with Niger and Burkina Faso. Various actions by GATIA and the CMA supported by French forces and the Malian Army resulted in the “neutralisation” of dozens of alleged jihadists throughout the year, especially in March and November, according to France. As part of these counterinsurgency operations, GATIA and the CMA were condemned for abusing and murdering people from the Fulani community, accused of supporting the jihadists. These actions led to reprisals against the Daoussak community. As such, in four weeks between April and May, 150 civilians from both communities lost their lives. Other incidents included the deaths of

more than 40 Tuaregs in an attack by the ISIS branch in Mali in late April in Ménaka and 47 Daoussak who were killed by Fulani combatants linked to ISIS in December. In November, the GSIM released a video in which a Fulani leader called on members of this community across West Africa to take up arms and join the jihadist cause. **The Malian Armed Forces were accused of abuse and summary executions of dozens of civilians**, including the Fulani community, on several occasions during the year. The government acknowledged the murders and announced an investigation. Intercommunal clashes between the Dogon and Fulani

18. In past editions of *Alert!*, this case was identified as “Mali (north)”, but the name has changed due to the spread of the dynamics of violence to other parts of the country.

19. Kishi, Roudabeh and Melissa Pavlik. *ACLED 2018, The Year in Review*, 11 January 2019.

20. Reeve, Richard. *Mali on the brink*, Peace Direct, July 2018.

groups intensified throughout the year, with periodic incidents that caused dozens of fatalities and continued at the end of the year, despite attempts at mediation. There were 194 attacks against humanitarian actors until the end of 2018 (compared to 133 in 2017) and more than 700 schools remained closed, mostly in the Mopti region.

This growing insecurity took place amidst a rise in tension and political violence linked to holding the presidential election and the difficulties in implementing the 2015 peace agreement. Attacks by armed groups forced the closure of 664 polling stations (3% of the total) in the first round of the presidential election in July and influenced the low turnout in the second round in August, which confirmed the re-election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. Reluctance and disagreements among the parties that signed the peace agreement persisted throughout the year, influencing continuous delays in the timetable for implementation. After the presidential election, the parties that had signed the agreement renewed their commitment to it by signing a new “Pact for Peace” that facilitated some measures, such as an accelerated process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration for the combatants (DDR). Thus, in November, a total of 1,600 combatants of the CMA, the Platform and several armed groups became part of three new units under the administration of the Malian Army. However, various analysts were critical of the implementation of the peace agreement in Mali.²¹

Western Sahel Region	
Start:	2018
Type:	System, Identity, Resources international
Main parties:	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, G5 Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), Joint Task Force for the Liptako-Gourma region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), the United States, the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Macina Liberation Front, Ansaroul Islam and other jihadist groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The Western Sahara region (northern Mali, northern Burkina Faso and northwestern Niger) is affected by a situation of growing instability caused by several different factors, including but not limited to cross-border criminal networks in the Sahel and the marginalisation and underdevelopment of nomadic Tuareg communities in the region. This marginalisation is rooted in the Tuareg rebellions that took place in the 1960s, in the 1990s and, more recently, between 2007 and 2009, when there were rebellions

against the respective governments of Niger and Mali that sought to attain greater autonomy in both countries and reverse the poverty and underdevelopment of the region. In Mali, there was a resurgence of these demands in 2012, prompted by the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011. Meanwhile, the armed groups of Mali have expanded their activities to the Liptako-Gourma region. This expansion is related to the instability stemming from the spread of the jihadist insurgency of Algerian origin AQIM, its fragmentation and configuration into other similar types of armed groups, some aligned with al-Qaeda and others with ISIS, which currently operate and have expanded throughout the region. This expansion has contributed to further destabilisation in the area and to the creation of different regional and international cross-border military initiatives to try to control the situation, which have also helped to internationalise it. There are also links of the conflict affecting the Lake Chad region as a consequence of the expansion of Boko Haram's activity as a result of the cross-border military intervention.

The growing presence of suspected jihadist armed groups and militants in the Western Sahel area caused an escalation of violence and instability in 2018, especially in northern Burkina Faso and northwestern Niger. At first this situation was interpreted as an expansion and regionalisation of the Malian insurgency and the Nigerian group Boko Haram, although the insurgent activities and other outbreaks of intercommunity violence have gradually taken on their own agency, according to various analysts. Thus, since late 2016, Burkina Faso has faced a growing insurgency in the north and west of the country and has suffered several high-profile attacks, including in the capital, Ouagadougou. Moreover, a new front emerged in eastern Burkina Faso in the closing months of 2018. The eastern region of Burkina Faso and the parts of the country bordering Benin and Ghana are affected by the presence of criminal groups, but since mid-February 2018 the region has witnessed an increase in political violence. Armed militant groups in the region increasingly attacked civilians and Burkinabe security forces, including police personnel, gendarmes and rangers. As such, the militant presence in the east of the country followed the pattern of a lasting and expanding regional insurgency, according to ACLED. Thus, attacks by jihadist groups intensified during the year, causing dozens of fatalities and forcing the closure of numerous schools as a result of the continued intimidation by the insurgency. The government of Burkina Faso imposed a state of emergency in seven regions (Hauts-Bassins, Boucle du Mouhoun, Cascades, Nord, Sahel, Est and Centre-Est) on 31 December 2018. As a result of the violence, there were at least 162 fatalities in 2018.

In Niger, the southern region of Diffa, bordering Nigeria, was the scene of many attacks by the Nigerian insurgent group Boko Haram, which was joined by growing insurgent activity in the western part of the country, in the area bordering Burkina Faso and Mali (Tillabéri and Tahoua regions), conducted by armed movements linked to AQIM and other jihadist groups. The rise in violence caused dozens of fatalities during the year, which led

21. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

to the extension of the state of emergency decreed in 2017 to the three aforementioned Nigerian regions in 2018. Regional military involvement increased with the activities of different armed forces of the countries of the region, as well as international actors. The G5 Sahel Joint Force (composed of Malian, Chadian, Mauritanian and Burkinabe troops), which started operations in 2017, continued to carry out joint military actions in various parts of the Western Sahel region, though in late June it suffered a serious attack in its headquarters in Sévaré (central Mali) that killed six people and wounded dozens. This attack was a serious blow to the force, as it also interrupted the mission's operations and led to the destruction of material and facilities. Its activities are planned to resume in December 2018. Meanwhile, the activities of the French Operation Barkhane and the Joint Task Force for the Liptako-Gourma region (JTF, composed of members from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) continued. Other international actors also intervened in the area, especially in Niger, such as US special forces units, which conducted different violent operations in the region of Diffa. The CIA also operated drones in the Agadez region.²²

1.3.2. America

Colombia	
Start:	1964
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ELN, FARC (dissidents), 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. In 2016, the signing of a peace agreement with the FARC led to its demobilisation and transformation into a political party.

The armed conflict in Colombia deteriorated during the year as a result of the fragility of the peace process and the finalisation of the ceasefire agreement between the government and the ELN guerrilla group. This agreement

ended on 9 January and was not renewed, though the ELN proclaimed three more ceasefires unilaterally during the year, coinciding with different elections that took place. Around 200 people may have died as a result of clashes between various armed actors active in the country, in addition to the murders of 164 social leaders, according to the data of the Ombudsman and 226 according to Indepaz, thereby exceeding the number of murders in previous years (117 in 2016 and 170 in 2017). There were armed clashes between the security forces and the ELN nearly all year round and the armed group persisted in actions such as kidnapping and attacks on infrastructure. The breakdown of the ceasefire led to an escalation of violence, and in January seven policemen were killed in an attack in Barranquilla. The ELN also faced the armed group EPL at different times of the year, displacing thousands of people in Catatumbo. This city in the department of Nariño was one of the flashpoints of the violence during the year, involving a struggle for control of the territory and economic resources linked to drug trafficking and oil and large amounts of different armed actors. The clashes between the ELN and the EPL were also motivated by the desire to take control of areas previously occupied by the FARC. There were also clashes with paramilitary groups and a spate of clashes between security forces and FARC dissidents who have not demobilised or who have returned to their weapons after previously having demobilised. These groups could include between 1,200 and 2,800 combatants and their camps were bombarded by the Colombian Armed Forces at different times of the year. The FARC party also condemned the murder of dozens of its former combatants and relatives after the demobilisation process. Though the year ended with a ceasefire declaration by the ELN, it was not reciprocated by the government. Finally, it should be noted that the National Centre for Historical Memory's Memory and Conflict Observatory revealed that 262,197 people had died as a consequence of the armed conflict between 1958 and July 2018.

1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

South Asia

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

Summary:

The country has lived with almost uninterrupted armed conflict since the invasion by Soviet troops in 1979,

22. See "Escalating violence in the Western Sahel region" in chapter 5 (Risk scenarios for 2019).

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).

The armed conflict in Afghanistan was one of the most serious of the year, not only at the regional level but also internationally, though important progress was made in the exploratory peace process. According to data collected by ACLED, the Afghan conflict was the deadliest in the world, with resulting body counts that may have exceeded 43,000, even surpassing those of Syria and Yemen combined.²³ However, given the enormous difficulties in documenting the numbers of people killed as a result of the violence in the country, these numbers should be taken with caution. The United Nations mission in the country (UNAMA) documented the deaths of 3,804 civilians due to armed violence, 11% more than in 2017 and the highest figure since records began to be kept in 2009. In November, the Afghan president revealed that since the end of US combat operations in the country in late 2014, over 28,500 members of the Afghan security forces have died in clashes with the Taliban insurgency or with ISIS. A report issued by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) revealed that though the Afghan government had control over 56% of the districts of the country in early 2018, by November this had fallen to 55%. The BBC noted in early 2018 that the Taliban insurgency was active in 70% of the territory and had full control of 14% of the districts.

The year began with an intensification of the fighting, despite the winter season, and with two major attacks by the Taliban in Kabul. The first attack, on a hotel, killed 22 people, most of them foreigners, and the second, one of the most serious of the year, was a bomb attack on an ambulance, causing more than 100 deaths. Especially intense were the clashes in the province of Farah, which were repeated throughout the year. The episodes of violence included a Taliban attack in February that killed 22 soldiers. The uptick in fighting led to the

capture of some parts of the capital by the Taliban and their immediate withdrawal after being bombarded by Afghan and US security forces in May. In November, at least 20 policemen were killed in an attack on a convoy. US air strikes in the northern part of the country also increased and the Taliban's expansion in Ghazni province was confirmed. In April, a bombing of Afghan forces in Kunduz province killed more than 50 civilians, including 30 children, and in November a US bombing killed 23 civilians in Helmand province. **In June, the government announced an unprecedented eight-day ceasefire to celebrate the Muslim holiday of Eid al Fitr, which was reciprocated by the Taliban. It was the first ceasefire since the US military invasion in 2001,** and although it did not remain in force throughout the year, it did help to strengthen exploratory meetings leading towards peace negotiations.²⁴ After the ceasefire ended, the fighting returned, leaving thousands of people dead and wounded. Legislative elections were held in October, which took place over three different days due to the logistical difficulties and the intense violence preceding them (10 candidates died as a result of the violence during the election campaign). The results of the elections were still not known at the end of the year, causing the presidential election to be postponed until July 2019 to give the authorities time to clear up the issues encountered in the legislative elections. One of the deadliest attacks of the year took place in December, when 43 people lost their lives in an attack by armed men against an official building in the capital, which triggered serious clashes with the security forces.

ISIS was also active during the year and committed several prominent attacks, though it had much less capacity for action than the Taliban. In January, it carried out an attack against Save the Children, killing three of the NGO's workers and a soldier, which led it to suspend its programmes. In March, coinciding with the Nowruz festival, there was another serious attack near the University of Kabul and a hospital, killing 31 people and wounding 60. According to some media outlets, ISIS killed more than 200 people in Kabul in the first three months of the year alone. In April, about 60 people were killed in an attack in Kabul while waiting to register to vote. In December, the Afghan Armed Forces announced that they had killed the ISIS spokesman in the country in a drone strike.

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

23. ACLED, *ACLED 2018. The year in review*, ACLED, 2019.

24. See the summary on Afghanistan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

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 between the Naxalite insurgency and the Indian security forces remained active throughout the year, with death figures similar to those registered in previous years and slightly higher than in 2017.

A total of 413 people died as a result of the armed conflict according to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, of which 109 were civilians, 73 were members of the security forces and 231 were Naxalite insurgents, reflecting the serious impact that this conflict is having on the civilian population. As in previous years, the states of Chhattisgarh (249), Maharashtra (58), Jharkhand (53), Odisha (32) and Bihar (14) were those most affected by the violence of the conflict. Some of the most serious acts of violence of the year occurred in April, when 34 insurgents, including seven women, were killed in clashes with security forces in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. A day later, in other clashes in this same district, another six suspected insurgents were killed. Previously, in March, 10 Naxalite insurgents and a policeman had lost their lives in clashes in the state of Chhattisgarh. In May, eight insurgents were killed in Odisha as a result of police operations in the districts of Kandhmal and Bolangir. In addition to the armed clashes, several intellectuals and human rights activists were also arrested during the year on charges of being part of a supposed urban branch of the organisation accused of conspiring to assassinate Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The arrests were condemned by several human rights advocates.

India (Jammu and Kashmir)

Start:	1989
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, All Parties Hurriyat Conference, United Jihad Council
Intensity:	2
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.

The armed conflict intensified during the year and the death toll linked to the violence increased again, becoming the highest since 2009, according to various sources.

The South Asia Terrorism Portal documented the deaths of 451 people, of which 86 were civilians, 95 were members of the security forces and 270 were members of the various armed opposition groups operating in the state. The Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society reported that 586 people had died, of which 160 were civilians, 159 were members of the security forces and 267 were insurgents. Although the violence was not as deadly as the levels reached prior to 2007, the escalation that has been going on progressively since 2012 was firmly established. The organisation also reported multiple human rights violations, such as extrajudicial executions, the excessive use of force, restrictions on freedom of expression and the media and sexual violence. Several women reported having suffered sexual assault by members of the Indian security forces and several organisations submitted a petition to the Human Rights Commission to investigate more than 140 cases of sexual violence linked to the conflict in recent years. The use of this violence was also reported in insurgent search operations in areas inhabited by civilians. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights presented the first report on the situation in the region, highlighting the many human rights violations, impunity and escalation of violence since the assassination of insurgent Burhan Wani, a member of Hizbul Mujahidin, in 2016. Clashes between insurgent groups and security forces were repeated throughout the year and especially affected districts such as Shopian and Pulwana. Social protests were repeated at different times of the year due to clashes and civilian deaths during security operations. Strikes were called and the government restricted telecommunications on several occasions. One of the most serious episodes took place in November, when after clashes in the Shopian district that killed six insurgents belonging to a group made up of Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba, fresh fighting broke out between the police and the local population, protesting the deaths, which claimed one teenager's life. Dozens of people were also injured, many

of them by shotgun pellets, a type of ammunition used extensively in Kashmir against the civilian population that has caused hundreds of serious injuries in recent years. A total of 16 insurgents died in similar operations during that time. The security forces' unilateral ceasefire during the Ramadan celebrations also failed to have an effect and at least five civilians, nine members of the security forces and 20 insurgents died as a result of clashes during this period.

Finally, the state suffered a government crisis after the Hindu nationalist party withdrew from the PDP-led government in June. The impossibility of forming a new government led the Indian executive authority to impose central control over the state, assumed by the governor, which increased the tension significantly. In late December, after the governor had served six months of his term, Indian President Ram Nath Kovind imposed a direct mandate while awaiting future elections amidst intensified military operations.

There was a marked drop in violence in Pakistan compared to previous years

Pakistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Pakistani Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, international insurgents, USA
Intensity:	2
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.

There was a noticeable drop in violence throughout the country, consolidating the trend in recent years. The number of people killed as a result of armed violence

in the country as a whole fell below 1,000 for the first time, according to data from the Center for Research and Security Studies, with 754 deaths. In the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab and the Federated Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where Taliban insurgent activity has been concentrated in recent years, 260 people died as a result of the armed conflict between

January and September. Armed clashes and attacks during the year between the security forces and the Taliban insurgency, which as a result of security operations in recent years had shifted to areas where it previously had not been active, raised doubts about the real effectiveness of the military strategy to end the armed conflict. Many of the TTP factions have recently moved to KP districts such as Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, and to FATA areas such as South Waziristan and Kurram, though some groups may have returned to North Waziristan. In February, the TTP acknowledged that the organisation's second-in-command, Khalid Mehsud, had been killed in a US drone strike in North Waziristan. Mullah Fazlullah, who had been the TTP leader since 2013, was killed in Afghanistan in July in another drone strike coordinated between Afghan and US forces. Another serious attack took place in November in the Orakzai district in KP, where bomb exploded in a market, killing at least 35 people. Many attacks taking place around the general elections, held in July, may have caused the deaths of approximately 200 people, including political leaders. One of the most serious attacks happened in Peshawar during an ANP party rally that killed 22 people and injured 66. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack. The FATA were integrated in the province of KP during the year to extend application of the Constitution and to end the colonial legislation in force until then. Relations with the US also deteriorated considerably, which led to the withdrawal of US military economic aid.

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), ISIS
Intensity:	1
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.

Balochistan was the scene of the deadliest armed conflict in Pakistan, with fatalities surpassing those in the armed conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the first time. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 388 people died as a result of the conflict in this province in 2018, although the Center for Research and Security Studies recorded 383 deaths between January and September. Once again, the dynamics of the Balochi conflict overlapped with Taliban insurgent activity in the province and operations by ISIS were also observed. Sectarian attacks against the Hazara community were repeated, with several murders in April that sparked social protests in May. Security forces and insurgents clashed repeatedly throughout the year. In January, five members of the security forces were killed in an ambush in the district of Kech. In February, a suicide attack killed four soldiers in the vicinity of Quetta and in June three soldiers also lost their lives in the provincial capital. These clashes claimed the lives of an unknown number of insurgents. One of the deadliest attacks in recent years took place in August. A suicide blast killed 149 people and injured 189 in the Mastung district during an election rally held by the Balochistan Awami Party. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, though the security forces attributed it to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Several dozen people were killed in other attacks during the election campaign, some of them claimed by the Taliban insurgency. In December, six members of the security forces and four insurgents were killed in a clash in the district of Kech.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups (KNU/KNLA, SSA-S, SSA-N KNPP, UWSA, CNF, ALP, DKBA, KNPLAC, SSNPLO, KIO, ABSDF, AA, TNLA, HaY, MNDA)
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 has been a ceasefire agreements with almost all of the armed groups.

Although the armed conflict in the country continued, the levels of violence fell significantly compared to the previous year. However, tensions persisted in Rakhine State, which was the main scene of the violence during 2017 with very serious human rights violations, making it impossible for the 750,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to return, despite attempts by the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to encourage them. Although it was announced several times during the year that repatriation would begin as a result of the agreement between both governments, it never took place. The humanitarian situation in the refugee camps in Bangladesh was extremely precarious and both the United Nations and humanitarian organisations condemned the repatriation plans. Amnesty International reported that entire villages had been demolished and that military infrastructure was being built in areas formerly inhabited by civilians.²⁵ In addition, International Crisis Group warned that if a forced return does occur, the armed group ARSA, which has a strong presence in the refugee camps of Bangladesh, could carry out armed attacks across the border, further destabilising the situation.²⁶ Although there were no new clashes between the security forces and the armed group ARSA, in December fighting escalated between the security forces and the Arakan Army (AA), forcibly displacing hundreds of people. Clashes with the AA also took place in the neighbouring state of Chin. In addition, Rakhine State was excluded from the unilateral ceasefire decreed by the government in Shan State and Kachin States in late December, raising alarms about the possible negative impact that its exclusion could have. These armed clashes were just some of the different episodes of tension during the year. Police fired on Buddhist protesters in January, killing seven people. In March, several bombs exploded but there were no casualties. Meanwhile, Amnesty International published a report stating that in August 2017, the armed group ARSA had killed dozens of Hindus after attacks against security force positions that resulted in the very serious escalation of violence that led hundreds of thousands of people to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

25. Amnesty International, *Myanmar: Military land grab as security forces build bases on torched Rohingya villages*, 12 March 2018.

26. International Crisis Group, *Bangladesh-Myanmar: The Danger of Forced Rohingya Repatriation*, Asia Briefing 153, 12 November 2018.

Meanwhile, armed clashes continued with other active insurgent groups in the country. Kachin State and Shan State were the main scenes of conflict during the year, with clashes between government forces and the armed groups that make up the northern alliance (the KIA, AA, TNA and MNDA). From the start of the year, security forces began an operation against the KIA that intensified in April, with clashes and air strikes by the security forces. In May, the United Nations special rapporteur for Myanmar warned of the escalation of violence in Kachin State, where security operations carried out by the Burmese Armed Forces were displacing and killing a large civilian population. More than 60,000 people had to flee their homes between January and May. Clashes were also reported in Shan State between the armed groups TNLA (which was supported by the SSPP/SSA) and the RCSS/SSA in a conflict that escalated during the year and involved hundreds of insurgents. However, the year ended with the government's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in Shan State and Kachin State between 21 December and 30 April 2019. There were also clashes in Kayin State between the Burmese Armed Forces and the KNU, the largest rebel group that had signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement, thereby demonstrating the fragility of the peace process.²⁷

Violence decreased against the Rohingya population in Rakhine State in Myanmar, but the substantive issues of the conflict remained unresolved and human rights violations persisted

Philippines (Mindanao)	
Start:	1991
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

Summary:

The current situation of violence in Mindanao, where several armed groups are confronting the Government and, occasionally each other, is closely linked to the long-lasting armed conflict between Manila and the MNFL, and later the MILF, two organizations fighting for the self-determination of the Moro people. The failure to implement the 1996 peace agreement with the MNLF meant that some factions of this group have not fully demobilized and sporadically take part in episodes of violence, while the difficulties that emerged during the negotiation process between the MILF and the Government encouraged the creation of the BIFF, a faction of the group that opposes this process and was created in 2010 by the former commander of the MILF, Ameril Umbra Kato. On another front, since the 90s, the group Abu Sayyaf has been fighting to create an independent Islamic state in the Sulu archipelago and the western regions of Mindanao (south). Initially this group recruited disaffected members of other armed groups like the MILF or the MNLF, but then moved away ideologically from both of these organizations

and resorted more and more systematically to kidnappings, extortion and bomb attacks, which lead the group to be included on the USA and EU lists of terrorist organizations. Finally, it is important to note that the emergence of ISIS on the international scene lead to the emergence of many groups in Mindanao that swore allegiance and obedience to ISIS. In 2016, this group claimed authorship for the first large attack in Mindanao and announced its intentions to strengthen its structure and increase its attacks in the region.

Both the levels of violence in the conflict in Mindanao and the media and political attention they cause fell substantially compared to last year

(in 2017 the five-month siege of the city of Marawi by the Maute group and other armed organisations caused the deaths of more than 1,100 people and forcibly displaced over 600,000 people, 73,000 of whom have still not been able to return home), but the Philippine government repeatedly warned of the national security risk posed by armed organisations that have pledged allegiance to ISIS and fighting continued between the Philippine Armed Forces and groups like Abu Sayyaf and the BIFF. Despite maintaining a low profile and avoiding major confrontations with the Philippine Army, Manila indicated that **the Maute group was reorganising, regrouping and recruiting new members, especially in the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan and Sultan Kudarat**. Manila also warned that the jihadist groups in the Philippines could still take over major cities and attack virtually anywhere in the country. According to the government, the group may have succeeded in recruiting between 200 and 400 new people, mainly with the abundant resources obtained during the time they controlled the city of Marawi, meaning that the organisation's membership may have returned to levels similar to those in early 2017. Manila also said that following the deaths of the leader of ISIS in the Philippines, Isnilon Hapilon, and of the brothers Omar and Abdullah Maute in 2017, the group's new leader may be Abu Dar, who had been Isnilon Hapilon's lieutenant. Manila also warned that foreign fighters were still arriving in the Philippines, a situation owing to the porosity of the country's maritime borders and to ISIS' strategy of focusing its efforts on South-east Asia to alleviate or divert attention from the military defeats it was suffering in Syria and Iraq. Thus, a joint intelligence operation called "Our Eyes" was conducted by the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam at the beginning of the year to face cross-border threats. In this regard, the MILF was fully prepared to cooperate with the government both to combat jihadist groups and to reverse the influence they may have among certain sectors of the population-

The most active armed group in Mindanao in 2018 was the BIFF, a MILF splinter group that went its own way in 2008 due to its opposition to the peace process.

27. See the summary on Myanmar in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

Despite the fact that the Philippine Armed Forces did not provide a death toll of the impact of the conflict, according to media reports, over 100 people were killed in clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and the BIFF, thereby reproducing patterns similar to those the previous year, when 116 episodes of violence caused the deaths of at least 100 people. Forty-four (44) of the group's combatants were killed during an air and land offensive launched by the Philippine Armed Forces in March in Datu Saudi Ampatuan (south of Maguindanao) and at least 15 BIFF combatants lost their lives in mid-June during another government air strike in the provinces of North Cotabato and Maguindanao that forced the flight of around 10,000 people. Manila accused the group of carrying out several attacks during the year, such as one that took place during a festival in the city of Isulan (province of Sultan Kudarat) in late August in which two people died and another 34 were injured, and the one that occurred in the same city a few days later, in which two people died and several dozen were injured. The government also accused the BIFF of carrying out an attack on a shopping centre in Cotabato on 31 December in which two people died and more than 30 were injured, but the BIFF denied responsibility for the attack, lamented it and blamed it on other groups opposed to the peace process.

Meanwhile, Abu Sayyaf continued its armed activity in its traditional strongholds in the Sulu archipelago and the Zamboanga peninsula. Early in the year, according to the government, Abu Sayyaf had 519 combatants and more than 500 weapons and was present in or controlled 66 municipalities (barangays). During 2017, it carried out 17 kidnappings of 37 people, 11 of which were still captives in 2018 (seven of them foreigners). In mid-September, the government stated that around 180 Abu Sayyaf fighters had surrendered or turned themselves in, but it also acknowledged that the group still had several hundred fighters remaining. The main focus of the clashes was the Patikul region, in the northern part of the island of Jolo (Sulu archipelago). For example, six Abu Sayyaf fighters died in late February in clashes with the Philippine Army, another six were killed in mid-March, 10 more lost their lives in late October and another seven were killed at the end of September. These clashes pitted the Philippine Army against around 100 combatants led by the historical leader Radullah Sahiron (and his lieutenants Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan and Idang Susukan), in which around 20 soldiers were also wounded. Also in Patikul, there was an ambush in which five soldiers died and another 23 were injured. In late July, the government accused Abu Sayyaf of killing 10 people after a bomb exploded at a military checkpoint in the city of Lamitan in Basilan. Finally, some sources warned of an increase in kidnappings by Abu Sayyaf, especially in the waters between Tawi-Tawi and the east coast of the Malaysian state of Sabah. According to some sources, warlords and even local politicians opposed to the Bangsamoro Organic Law (which abolishes the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao consisting of the provinces in which Abu Sayyaf usually operates and

others) pay substantial amounts of money to carry out such kidnappings.

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.

Alongside the suspension of the peace talks between the Philippine government and the NDF, **there was an increase in hostilities between the armed forces and the NPA, especially in the second half of the year.** Though there was no body count associated with the conflict, some analysts estimate that it has risen compared to the last two years. According to data from the Political Violence in the Southern Philippines Dataset, 168 soldiers, police and civilians lost their lives as a result of the armed conflict between January 2017 and July 2018, while another 266 people were injured. The conflict caused the deaths of 185 NPA combatants and wounded 109 others. During this same period, the Philippine Armed Forces faced an average of 12 attacks per month by the NPA. According to these data, 74% of the armed group's attacks targeted state security forces and agencies, while the rest were split equally between civilians and the facilities of different kinds of companies, such as mining and plantation businesses. The provinces where the group was most active (with 50% of the deaths and 61% of those who were wounded) were Compostela Valley, Agusan del Norte, Bukidnon, Cotabato and Davao del Sur, though the province in which the largest increase in armed attacks was reported in 2017 and 2018 was Cotabato. Notably, the NPA was involved in over one third (425) of the 1,103 armed incidents that occurred in the southern Philippines. These figures are consistent with the government's estimates, which indicate that approximately 50% of the

NPA's combatants are in Mindanao. According to this same database, between August 2017 and March 2018 there was an average of 10 deaths per month, but this figure rose to 16 between April and July 2018. According to these data, the number of fatalities caused by the conflict throughout 2016 had been surpassed by mid-2018. If the trend continues, the intensity of the conflict in 2018 will be equal to or greater than that in 2017.

In early April, the government stated that during the first quarter of the year, the increase in attacks against the NPA had led to the surrender of 28 leaders and the capture of 51 camps. In late March, there is usually a spike in hostilities due to the commemoration of the founding of the armed group in 1969. However, the most important increase of violence occurred in the second half of the year, shortly after Duterte put off resuming the peace talks scheduled for late June or early July for three months, claiming that the NDF lacked sincerity and political will. This decision had several consequences, including prompting the Communist Party of the Philippines to order its armed wing to step up attacks across the country. In October, the Philippine Armed Forces reported detecting that the NPA had infiltrated 18 university campuses in the capital to increase recruitment. Shortly before, Duterte had warned of an alleged plan to overthrow and assassinate him, claiming that the Communist Party of the Philippines and the opposition Liberal Party would have participated. In the same vein, the head of the Philippine Armed Forces, Carlitos Gálvez, had anticipated a “red October” in which different actions would take place to destabilise the country and facilitate the overthrow of the government.

Though the actions predicted by the government did not come to pass, it continued with its **counterinsurgency plan in order to completely destroy the NPA or render it militarily irrelevant by mid-2019, according to statements made by Duterte**. This counterinsurgency plan had several aspects. The first was the intensification of plans to reintegrate NPA combatants that had surrendered or turned themselves in. According to the Philippine Armed Forces, more than 1,500 NPA fighters had taken advantage of these plans, which coincided with the start of territorialised peace negotiations with NPA commanders and not with the negotiating panel of the NDF. Second was the third extension of martial law in Mindanao, which Congress passed in December at the president's request. Shortly before extending martial law, until December 2019, the government had ordered the deployment of police and military personnel outside of Mindanao, specifically in the provinces of Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental and Bicol. Faced with all the criticism that this provoked, the government denied its intention to decree martial law in those regions and stated that it had only deployed the troops to respond to the growing number of attacks by the NPA. At the end of the year, however, the Communist Party of the Philippines complained that the Philippines

Armed Forces had absolute power in almost half the country and predicted that the Duterte administration intended to enact martial law nationwide. Third was the government's announcement in early December that it would create a new counterinsurgency unit made up of intelligence personnel from various state agencies to deal with the NPA's growing activity. Duterte and the national security advisor will preside over the unit. A few days prior to the announcement, Duterte had declared his intention to create his own death squads to deal with the NPA's Special Partisan Unit (SPARU). However, the group's founder, Jose Maria Sison, said that these units fought against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, but had not been operational since the 1980s. Duterte's statements were criticised by many who thought that they could increase the number of extrajudicial executions exponentially and because death squads are prohibited by international humanitarian Law under any circumstances of war. His words were even received with scepticism by the Philippine Armed Forces, which said that counterinsurgency work cannot be conducted by civilians. Fourth and last was the government's use of the courts so that 600 people considered close to the Communist movement could be considered terrorists, in line with the executive order signed by Duterte in late 2017 that put an end to the peace negotiations with the NDF and described the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines as terrorists.

Finally, breaking with tradition for the first time in many years, the government did not reject the suspension of hostilities issued unilaterally by the NPA for the Christmas holidays, as the NPA uses this type of truce to regroup and replenish. On 26 December, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of its foundation, the Communist Party of the Philippines declared that several administrations before Duterte's had tried to defeat the NPA militarily and that none had succeeded, while also stressing that the Communist movement had become noticeably stronger during 2018.

Both the NPA and human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch said that President Duterte's statements urging the Philippine Armed Forces to shoot female NPA fighters in the vagina could encourage the use of sexual violence by state security forces and agencies. Some of these organisations recalled that Duterte has made statements on several occasions trivialising or satirising rape.

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 Malayasian 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.

Levels of violence in southern Thailand were the lowest since the conflict began in 2004, though the body count was very similar to that of the previous year.

Thus, according to the Deep South Watch research centre, 200 people had died and another 242 had been injured in the four southern provinces with a Muslim majority by November 2018. In 2017, according to the same centre, 235 people died, while in 2016 there were 307 fatalities, in 2015 there were 246 and in 2014, the year when the military junta came to power after a coup d'état, there were 341. In the four years prior to that (since 2010), the death toll always topped 450. According to Deep South Watch, there have been 20,109 violent incidents since 2010 in which 6,903 people have died and another 13,488 have been injured. Along the same lines as the trend of decreasing violence identified by Deep South Watch, the Southern Border Province Administration Centre, a Thai government agency, declared in late October that the number of violent incidents linked to the armed conflict (140) in 2018 had fallen by 70% compared to the number of incidents reported in 2011 (619). In this regard, in mid-November the government extended the state of emergency imposed on the southern part of the country since 2005 for another three months, though for the first time since then, it lifted it in a district of the province of Narathiwat (Sukhirin) and said that it had considered doing the same in other districts due to the substantial improvement in the security situation in 2018. According to some authors, the reasons for the gradual reduction in violence in the southern part of the country in recent years include the strategic decision of the insurgent movement (and particularly the main armed group, the BRN) to conduct less attacks and to choose better military targets due to the negative impact that killing civilians has had on its social base. Others, however, emphasise the government's conflict management strategy, including the greater professionalism of some high-ranking officers of the Thai Armed Forces, leading to less reports of human rights violations, a more restricted or strategic use of force, the Thai Army's increased involvement in implementing

development programs, the growth of the network of informants at the community level, certain concessions in terms of language and religion, and the strenuous continuation of the peace negotiations between the Thai government and MARA Patani, an umbrella organisation that brings together the main insurgent groups in the south of the country, as well as the implementation of reintegration programmes for combatants who surrender or turn themselves in. Regarding this last point, Nasori Saeseng, one of the main leaders of the armed group Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement, surrendered in mid-August. In line with the importance that the Thai Armed Forces attribute to common crime as one of reasons for the violence in the southern part of the country, some analysts pointed out during the year that the levels of violence in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat were not so different from those seen in other Thai provinces bordering Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia.

Whatever the causes of the reduction in levels of violence that both the official figures and those provided by research centres seem to indicate, **the insurgent movement continued to demonstrate high levels of coordination at various times of the year.** In February, for example, six bombs exploded in the Yaring district, followed by three others in the Yarang district (Pattani province). In April, 13 people were injured in Sungai Kolok after three motorcycles loaded with explosives detonated. In late May, a total of 16 bombs exploded simultaneously in 12 locations in the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat that especially targeted banks, ATMs and electrical installations. Between late June and early July, five bombs exploded for several consecutive days in plantations run by Buddhist owners. The months of greatest insurgent activity were June (in recent years there has usually been an increase in the number of violent incidents at the end of Ramadan) and November, with 26 fatalities every month, according to data from Deep South Watch.

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Ukraine (east)	
Start:	2014
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, pro-Russian armed actors in eastern provinces, Russia
Intensity:	2
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 armed conflict in Ukraine witnessed a drop in the number of civilian fatalities, although ceasefire violations were maintained and military tension increased between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov. The conflict continued to be affected by a context of fragile security, with constant ceasefire violations and the presence of heavy weapons. The number of civilian deaths fell to fifty, compared to 100 in 2018 and 2017, according to the OHCHR. (Over 3,000 have died since the beginning of the war.) Another 214 civilians were injured in 2018. A Ukrainian military officer estimated that 567 combatants from the Donbas were killed between January and August and 894 were wounded. In addition, the Ukrainian government estimated that 134 Ukrainian soldiers died in 2018. Thirty-six per cent (36%) of the deaths and civilian casualties were due to shelling and light weapon fire, while another 34% were due to land mine incidents, according to the UNHCHR. According to data from OCHA at the end of the year, **5.2 million people were still affected by the conflict, the most since it began in 2014**, and 3.5 million of them were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. The challenges faced by the civilian population included the risk of violent incidents, the impact of violence on civil infrastructure, including water supply and sanitary facilities, and the large amount of landmines and unexploded ordnance, making the eastern part of the country one of the areas with the highest concentration of land mines in the world, according to OCHA in December. Moreover, 1.5 million people remained forcibly displaced within the country. Regarding the development of the security situation, there were escalations of violence at various times of the year, such as in February, April, May, August and October. The area around Horlivka (Donetsk) was one of the flashpoints of the escalation in April and May. As in previous years, several ceasefire agreements of limited scope were reached through the Trilateral Contact Group and came into effect in March (renewed at the end of the month), July (to facilitate the harvest season), late August (before the beginning of the school year) and December. However, the truces were repeatedly broken. An OSCE mission drone was shot down after detecting a surface-to-air missile system in areas under rebel

Military tension increased between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait

control. Donetsk and Luhansk held general elections in November, though they enjoyed no international recognition. In August, the prime minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, was killed in a bomb attack in Donetsk. The Russian Foreign Ministry blamed Ukraine for the explosion, while Ukrainian authorities pointed to clashes between rebel forces or a Russian special operation.

The regional context deteriorated in the second half of the year due to increased military tension between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait that **escalated in November, with Russia's capture of three Ukrainian ships, arrest of 24 crew members and injury of three of them, preceded by other incidents and accusations in previous months.** The attack sparked international criticism of Russia and the cancellation of a planned meeting between the US and Russian presidents in the G20. In addition, the Ukrainian government responded one day after the attack by establishing martial law for one month in ten provinces bordering Russia, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea and the neighbouring Transdnistria region. Ukraine also imposed a ban on the entry of Russian nationals between the ages of 16 and 60 into the country, a restriction that remained in force for the remainder of the year. Russia strengthened its control over Crimea during the year, building a bridge connecting the peninsula with Russia, which opened in May, and a fence separating Crimea from Ukraine, which was completed in December. At various times of the year, the UN warned of deterioration in the human rights situation in Ukraine. Among other events, starting in April the Roma population in Ukraine was attacked for several months with impunity by extreme right-wing groups, such as the National Druhyna paramilitary organisation, which consists of former combatants of the Azov battalion, an irregular unit at the beginning of the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and the ultranationalist C14. The attacks included assaults on homes in several locations, as well as beatings and destruction. Several Roma people were killed and several were injured.

South-east Europe

Turkey (south-east)	
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 number of deaths caused by the armed conflict continued to decrease, although new incidents of violence did occur and the conflict maintained a high risk of escalation regarding the conflict between Turkey and the Syrian Kurdish YPG forces, linked to the PKK.²⁸ According to the International Crisis Group database, 124 members of the security forces, 404 members of the PKK and 17 civilians lost their lives during 2018, compared to 800 in 2017 (and to 1,900 in 2016). The conflict also had an impact in other areas under the government's strategy to use the military, police and judicial system to combat the armed, political and social actors of the Kurdish movement. There were further mass arrests and criminal investigations against Kurdish activists and members of the pro-Kurdish HDP party during the year, on charges of belonging to or supporting a terrorist group. In early 2019 the HDP denounced that over 5,000 party members were still languishing in prison, including its leaders, eight former MPs and 59 elected mayors. They also complained that more than 2,000 NGOs and 200 media outlets, many of them Kurdish, had been banned since the failed coup d'état in 2016. Thus, the conflict over the Kurdish issue was affected by the general worsening of the human rights situation in Turkey in recent years.

Turkey killed several prominent figures of the PKK in 2018

During the year, the armed conflict took the form of military operations, PKK attacks, clashes between military and Kurdish forces in rural parts of southeastern Turkey and bombardments by the Turkish Army against the PKK in northern Iraq. The PKK carried out several attacks, such as one with an improvised explosive device in the district of Gergüş (Batman province), which killed eight soldiers, and a bomb attack against a tax office in Ankara in January that killed three civilians. Turkey

killed several commanders and prominent members of the PKK in August, including Ibrahim Coban (aka Mahir Atakan), Baris Oner (Tarik the Turk), Yusuf Sungur and Ismail Ozden (Zaki Shingali). In September, the interior minister claimed that the end of the PKK was drawing near. Turkey and Iraq also agreed to intensify their cooperation against the PKK. The conflict also spilled into in Syria, where Turkey carried out a military operation in January in the region of Afrin (northwestern Syria, bordering with Turkey), which was controlled by the YPG, a group linked to the PKK and accused by Turkey of being one and the same. The Turkish Army took control of Afrin in March. Turkey then threatened to fight the Kurdish forces in Manbij (Syria), where US troops (allies of the YPG) are stationed, and in Sinjar (Iraq). In December, Turkey warned of the imminent launch of its operation in Manbij, while the US announced that it would soon withdraw troops from Syria and Syrian regime forces entered Manbij in response to calls from the YPG. The situation in Syria generated uncertainty about the impact that its development may have on the conflict between Turkey and the PKK. In November, the US announced large cash rewards to anyone who provided information on three PKK leaders (Murat Karayilan, Cemil Bayik and Duran Kalkan). In July, Turkey lifted the state of emergency imposed after the failed coup d'état. In its place, the government passed a new anti-terrorism law that same month laying down restrictions, with repercussions for the Kurdish issue. All this happened in a year in which Recep Tayip Erdogan officially became the head of state and the head of the government after the early presidential and legislative elections in June in the new context of the presidential regime, with 52.5% of the votes in the presidential election and 53.66% of the votes for the coalition of his party, the AKP, and the MHP. The pro-Kurdish HDP party overcame the 10% threshold of votes, with 11.70% and 67 seats.

1.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

Egypt (Sinai)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), other armed groups (Ajnad Misr, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis, Katibat al-Rabat al-Jihadiya, Popular Resistance Movement, Liwaa al-Thawra Hassam), Israel
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

28. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.

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 Sinai peninsula continued to be the main scene of the conflict between the armed group ISIS and the Egyptian security forces. As in previous years, the impact of the violence associated with this conflict was difficult to determine due to the lack of access by the media, NGOs and other independent actors, the conflicted area and doubts about the reliability of official figures. Taking these limitations into account, **the available data and partial counts based on media reports indicate that the conflict caused the deaths of at least 500 people in 2018, a figure lower than the estimated body count in the previous year (900).** The year 2018 was marked by a military operation called Comprehensive Operation – Sinai 2018. Deployed in the region starting in February, the operation included 60,000 troops and air operations that occasionally enjoyed cooperation from Israel, according to the Egyptian authorities. There were reports of suspected militants being killed by the security forces during the operation and of a limited number of casualties among the military throughout the year. According to a report released by the Egyptian Army in mid-October, 450 ISIS fighters and around 30 soldiers had died in the first eight months of the operation. However, according to other sources, a single attack by ISIS in April killed at least 20 military personnel. Some information and analysis pointed to a change in ISIS' tactics, opting mainly for attacks with explosive devices, as it was unable to carry out more sophisticated attacks as in previous years. This trend was then interpreted as a possible sign that the group was weakening as part of a more general setback due to its loss of control of territory in Iraq and Syria. However, at the end of the year, ISIS claimed responsibility for some high-profile attacks that struck down hypotheses that the group would soon be

Egyptian security forces launched Comprehensive Operation – Sinai 2018 against ISIS, which involved thousands of troops and had serious humanitarian impacts on the population

defeated in Egypt and would become unable to act in and outside the Sinai. These attacks included an attack on a bus carrying Coptic pilgrims in the area of Minya, which left seven people dead, in November; and another explosive attack in the Giza area, south of Cairo, which killed three Vietnamese tourists and their local guide. In both cases, in less than 48 hours the authorities announced the execution of 19 and 40 people, respectively, who were allegedly militants involved in the attacks.

In this context, some drew attention to how the Egyptian government was waging the operation against ISIS and how the campaign was affecting the civilian population. For example, **in March Amnesty International denounced the use of banned arsenals, specifically US-made cluster bombs, by Egyptian forces in their air operations in northern Sinai.** In April, Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned that the military campaign in Sinai had put over 420,000 people in humanitarian need, due to the severe restrictions imposed and their repercussions on the supply of food, medicines, fuel and other essential goods. In May, HRW also reported that since the start of Comprehensive Operation – Sinai 2018, the Egyptian army had intensified its campaign to demolish homes, businesses and farms in

the Sinai as part of the greatest destruction since the forced expulsions in the area began in 2014. The demolitions, mainly in the areas of Rafah and Arish, are presented as part of efforts to create a buffer zone, but HRW warned that it could also be used as punishment against suspected terrorists and political dissidents. Criticism of the Egyptian regime in 2018 included questions about due process for terrorist suspects. The conflict took place in a political context marked by the intense repression of dissent and the reaffirmation of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's power, as he was re-elected in March with more than 90% of the vote in elections that raised doubts.²⁹ The government systematically renewed the state of emergency imposed in the country since 2017. Finally, some attacks during the year were blamed on the armed group Hassm, which is linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. The largest attack took place in March, targeting the head of security in Alexandria and killing two policemen.

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

29. See the summary on Egypt in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

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.

During 2018 there was a **reduction in hostilities in Iraq compared to previous years, although the country continued to be a scene of high-intensity armed conflict**. The death toll of the conflict continued to be partial, estimated and focused on the number of civilian casualties, but in general terms it indicated a decrease in deaths. According to data from the UN mission in Iraq, UNAMI, at least 939 civilians died in acts of violence in the country in 2018, compared to 3,300 in 2017. Following the trend of previous years, the figures kept by the organisation Iraq Body Count (IBC) were higher and indicated a total of 3,319 civilian deaths in 2018 (13,183 in 2017). Despite these differences in estimates, the data confirm that the levels of mortality due to the conflict dropped to the lowest levels in six years. This came after a period of intense violence in the country due to the rise of ISIS and the military campaign to eradicate it that involved many armed actors, including the Iraqi security forces, Shia militias known as Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs), the US-led international coalition against ISIS and others.

Although the Iraqi government announced the end of the fight against ISIS in late 2017 (after it suffered severe defeats, including expulsion from its main stronghold, Mosul), the armed organisation continued to claim responsibility for acts of violence in 2018, especially in northern and eastern Iraq. Most of the incidents were concentrated in the governorates of Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salah al-Din and many of ISIS' attacks targeted the Iraqi security forces and the PMUs, which continued to carry out operations against it. Iraqi military forces also launched air strikes against ISIS positions in eastern Syria (especially in the border towns of Hajin and Dashishah) during the year, with the approval of the Syrian government. Dozens of ISIS militants may have died in these air strikes. **According to UN data in mid-2018, ISIS still had between 20,000 and 30,000 fighters**

During 2018, Iraq experienced a reduction in hostilities compared to previous years, although the country continued to be the scene of a high-intensity armed conflict

spread between Iraq and Syria. The abuses committed by the armed group, which controlled large parts of Iraq between 2014 and 2017, continued to come to light during the year. According to a report by the UNAMI and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of the date of its publication in November 2018, over 200 mass graves had been identified, most of them in the governorates of Nineveh (95), Kirkuk (37), Salah al-Din (36) and Anbar (24), containing the bodies of between 6,000 and 12,000 victims of ISIS, including women, children, elderly people, members of the Iraqi Army and the police and some foreign workers. More than 1,200 remains had been exhumed, but the Iraqi government faced many challenges in doing so, as well as in investigating and ensuring justice and accountability for the crimes. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch reported that children detained for alleged links to ISIS were being tortured to extract confessions from them. A report issued by the NGO specifically stated the Kurdish security forces in Erbil had engaged in practices including beating and electrical shock.

The political and security situation in Iraq in 2018 was also determined by the challenges related to integrating Shia militias into the institutional framework, by holding elections and subsequently forming a new government and by unrest and intense protests in the southern part of the country. During the year it was confirmed that PMUs (or Hashd al-Shaabi), bodies that bring together some 50 paramilitary groups, took advantage of the ambiguities of their legal status to expand their spheres

of action, going beyond the scope of security to the political and economic spheres. Based on their widespread popularity for their role in the campaign against ISIS, especially among the Shia population, the PMUs, which are considered autonomous units under the authority of the (civilian) National Security Council, were involved in reconstruction work and some of their leaders, perceived as being close to Iran, ran as candidates in the May elections. Their electoral bloc, the Fatah Alliance, led by Hadi al-Ameri, came in second place in the elections. The legislative elections also

affected the situation in the country throughout the year due to pre-election tension, episodes of pre- and post-election violence, accusations of fraud, the vote-counting process in some areas and problems in forming a new government. Turnout for the elections stood at 44.5% (less than the 62% turnout in 2014) and they were won by the bloc led by Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. The negotiations to form a new government ended in October with the swearing in of Adil Abdul-Mahdi as prime minister, following the agreement between al-Sadr's and al-Ameri's Shia groups. However, disagreement persisted at the end of the year over the assignment of key cabinet positions, such as the ministry of the interior and defence. In the middle of the year, popular protests in the south spread from Basra to nine other provinces, criticising the inoperability of the state, the lack of

basic services and high unemployment. The protests were more intense than in other years and included attacks against Iranian interests (a country noted for its dominant role in Iraqi politics). The harsh crackdown by the security forces left more than 50 people dead and hundreds injured. Strain between the federal authorities and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) continued to be evident throughout 2018.³⁰ The northern part of the country continued to be the scene of many Turkish Army attacks against PKK positions.³¹

According to UNOCHA data, 6.7 million people, including 3.3 million children, remained in need of humanitarian assistance. By the end of the year, four million people had returned to their areas of origin, but two million were still displaced. A bit of good news from a gender perspective was **the creation of the Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics in Iraq in October. The group will assist the UNAMI, which has been headed by a woman for the first time since 2018**, the special representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (the Netherlands).³²

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International ³³
Main parties:	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups
Intensity:	2
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 Palestinian-Israeli conflict intensified significantly in 2018 and reported the worst levels of violence since

2014. According to OCHA's body count, a total of 299 Palestinian people lost their lives during the year in acts of direct violence, compared to 77 who died in 2017. The number of Israelis who lost their lives in the context of the conflict remained at similar levels (14 in 2018 compared to 15 in 2019). Gaza was the main scene of the violence in 2018. Hostilities intensified after the Israeli forces' harsh response to the massive Palestinian demonstrations to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, or “Disaster”, referring to the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and villages during the establishment of Israel in 1948. **The protests began in late March, continued after the anniversary on 15 May and went on until the end of the year, resulting in the deaths of over 200 Palestinians and injuring 18,000.** The demonstrations gathered tens of thousands of unarmed people per week along the fence that separates Gaza and Israel and claimed the right of return for the refugee population. At first Hamas limited itself to giving support to the protests, but later it assisted groups of demonstrators who began to launch incendiary devices towards Israel. Faced with Israel's harsh response to the protests, Hamas and Islamic Jihad began to launch missiles. Thus, the hostilities between both parties became more acute and by the middle of the year they were already considered the most serious in the previous four years. In July, Israel decided to toughen the blockade of the Gaza Strip, restricting even humanitarian imports (food and medicine) and reducing the fishing area in the Mediterranean, among other measures.

Violence in this area persisted in the months that followed and it was not until November that attempts to forge a truce paid off, under the auspices of Egypt and the UN special envoy for the Middle East, Nickolay Mladenov.³⁴ The indirect ceasefire agreement threatened to break less than a week later after the discovery of an Israeli undercover operation that resulted in an exchange of fire that killed a senior official and six other militants of the Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, in addition to an Israeli colonel. After two days of escalating violence, the Palestinian group announced that it was returning to the ceasefire and Israel halted its bombardments, though without releasing any statement. Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman resigned from office and announced the withdrawal of his party from the government coalition, blasting what he considered a surrender. The ceasefire between Hamas and Israel was upheld until the end of the year, but in an atmosphere of distrust between the parties. The West Bank was also the scene of several episodes of violence throughout the year in areas such as Ramallah, Jericho, Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarem. By the end of 2018, Israeli forces conducted operations and many arrests in the West Bank following Palestinian

30. See the summary on Iraq (Kurdistan) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

31. See the summary on Turkey (southeast) in this chapter.

32. See chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security).

33. 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.

34. For further information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

attacks on settlers that resulted in the deaths of three Israelis and five Palestinians. According to OCHA data, **attacks by Israeli settlers in 2018 that resulted in harm to the Palestinian population and damage to property reached their worst levels since 2014. The UN agency had reported 217 incidents in the first 10 months of the year**, including damage to agricultural areas, stone throwing and various forms of physical assault, which killed three Palestinians and injured 83 others, including 20 children.

Finally, there were other events that affected the dynamics of the conflict, **including the Israeli Parliament's approval in July of a law defining Israel as the state of the Jewish people, thereby discriminating against the Arab Israeli population.** The law was rejected by many actors, including the Arab League and the European Union. Meanwhile, the US took a series of measures in 2018 that were condemned by the Palestinian authorities as a sign of its alignment with Israel's narrative and interests, including the transfer of its embassy to Jerusalem amidst a harsh crackdown on the protests in Gaza, the cancelling of funding for the UN agency for the Palestinian refugee population (UNRWA), the closure of the PLO office in Washington and others. The US government continued with its efforts to prepare what it has described as the "deal of the century" to resolve the conflict, but by the end of the year it had not disclosed the plan. According to some analysts, the positioning of the US has influenced the hardening of Israeli policies towards Palestine and the decision of the Netanyahu government to lower the tension in the Gaza Strip was mainly intended to prevent risk that could affect its results in the elections scheduled for 2019.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict reported the worst levels of violence since 2014

internally, by its authoritarianism and fierce repression of the opposition. The arrival of 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 civilian population. The militarisation and proliferation of armed actors have added complexities to the Syrian scenario, severely affected by regional and international dynamics.

Following the trend of previous years, the armed conflict in Syria was characterised by high levels of violence in 2018, the involvement of many local, regional and international armed actors (with fluid and changing alliances, in some cases) and fighting on multiple fronts in the country at varying levels of intensity throughout the year, with serious impacts on the civilian population. The death toll continued to be very difficult to determine due to the problems in accessing combat zones and the obstacles to verifying information. Nevertheless, some organisations provided estimates indicating a certain dip in the levels of mortality in the conflict in 2018, although the figures continued to be very high. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), based in the United Kingdom, **20,000 people died as a result of the conflict during the year, of which about 6,500 were civilians, including over 1,400 children.** This figure is lower than the one the SOHR provided for 2017, when 33,400 people died, including 10,000 civilians, making it the lowest since the hostilities began. The SOHR's body count suggests that over half a million people have lost their lives in the armed conflict since its outbreak in 2011 and indicates that the bloodiest year was 2014, when around 76,000 people died. The United Nations stopped offering estimated death tolls for the conflict in 2016 and its last official body count of 400,000 was based on data from 2014. **Meanwhile, the Armed Conflict and Event Data Project (ACLED) concluded that Syria was the country with the most civilian deaths due to acts of violence in 2018,** with around 7,100 people killed. This is virtually equivalent to all the civilians killed in the conflicts in Nigeria, Yemen, Afghanistan and the Philippines, the other four most deadly countries for civilians, according to the ACLED. The conflict in Syria had other diverse impacts on the civilian population. **The UN reported that 2018 was the year with the highest numbers of forced displacement in Syria since the war began, with over one million people forced to flee their homes.** In addition, violations of international humanitarian law continued throughout 2018, with attacks on schools, healthcare infrastructure and medical staff. There were attacks with chemical weapons (in eastern Ghouta in January, Douma in April, and Aleppo in November) attributed to the regime of Bashar Assad.

Syria	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, System, Self-government, Identity 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), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Turkey, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, among other armed parties
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,

Regarding the development of the conflict, in general terms **the Syrian regime's troops gained more control over territory that had been held by opposition groups and regional and international actors were seen to have great influence on the dynamics of the conflict, including direct intervention on Syrian soil in 2018.** The war was waged at varying levels of intensity on several fronts, mainly in eastern Ghouta (Damascus area) and in the northwest (Idlib, Afrin), northeast, east (Dayr-al-Zawr, bordering Iraq) and southwestern areas (close to Jordan and Israel). Various initiatives to promote a ceasefire did not bear fruit or had a very limited impact. In fact, in February the UN Security Council passed a resolution (2401) demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities, but since then violence has only continued and/or intensified in some areas. Early in the year, one of the main sources of violence was eastern Ghouta, a rebel stronghold on the outskirts of the Syrian capital. Government forces launched an intense campaign to expel opposition forces from the area, which ended up divided into three non-contiguous parties, each under the control of a different armed group (Faylaq al-Rahman, Ahrar al-Sham and Jaish al-Islam). In February alone, more than 580 civilians died as a result of the hostilities over a period of 10 days. Over 158,000 people left the area, mainly for Idlib and Aleppo (northwest) after evacuation agreements were reached between the government and armed groups in which the UN was not involved. By May, the Damascus regime had already solidified its control over eastern Ghouta and the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk. From then on, the government intensified its military operations in the southwest, with air and artillery attacks in the area of Deraa, Quneitra and in areas bordering Jordan. The offensive ended the negotiated agreement between Jordan, Russia and the US that had enabled a significant reduction in violence in the area since mid-2017. Towards the end of July, the Syrian regime's forces had assumed control over most of this region after it and Russia forced the surrender of most rebel groups. Violence in this area forcibly displaced over 325,000 people, of which some 60,000 remained displaced and in a grave humanitarian situation in late 2018. Many incidents also occurred in this region, particularly in the area close to the Golan Heights, as a result of the tension between Israel, Syria and Iran due to the presence of Iranian forces on Syrian soil, including the shooting down of drones, exchanges of artillery fire and Israeli attacks in Syria against alleged Iranian targets.³⁵ In September, Israeli sources acknowledged that they had launched more than 200 attacks on Iranian targets in Syria since 2017.

Northwestern Syria was the scene of violence throughout 2018, with clashes between the government and opposition forces and between dissident armed actors, including fighting between the Hay'at Tharir al-Sham

(HTS) jihadist group alliance, the most powerful in the area, and other armed groups. Violence intensified in the area, especially in Idlib, starting in September. Thus, in September Russia and Turkey agreed to create a demilitarised zone in Idlib, one of the "de-escalation zones", according to previous deals as part of the Astana process supported by Russia, Iran and Turkey.³⁶ Among other things, this agreement stipulated a halt to attacks by the regime and Russia within a range of between 15 and 20 kilometres and the withdrawal of heavy weapons held by "radical terrorist groups" under Ankara's supervision. Some groups consented implicitly (including HTS), while others continued their activity (such as Wa Harrid al-Mumineen). The pact began to be implemented in October and by the end of the year there were many reports of violations in this area, but the agreement was formally in force. The northwestern region was also affected by a serious humanitarian crisis, which worsened in 2018 as a result of the flow of tens of thousands of internally displaced people from other parts of the country. According to UN data, between January and July 2018 the number of people in need of help rose from 520,000 to 4.2 million in the areas of Idlib and Aleppo.

North of Aleppo, Afrin was another flashpoint of violence, forced displacement and civilian casualties after Turkish military forces and armed Syrian groups allied with Ankara entered the area earlier this year with the aim of expelling Kurdish forces. YPG fighters allied with pro-government forces tried unsuccessfully to counteract the offensive. Meanwhile, the US and Turkey created a working group on Manbij, a town 100 kilometres from Afrin under Kurdish control. Throughout the year, Turkey threatened a major offensive against the Kurdish forces controlling much of the northwest border of Syria and said it could create "safe zones" in northern Syria. Ankara rejected US plans to create a 30,000-man border security force in YPG-controlled areas and raised the tone of its threats after the US set up some observation posts on the Syrian-Turkish border. The confused US policy towards Syria, with glaring discrepancies between senior officers and President Trump, reached a milestone at the end of the year after Washington's announcement that it would withdraw its 2,000 troops from the country. The SDF criticised the announcement, warning that it would have negative consequences in the campaign against ISIS. Analysts warned that a rapid and uncoordinated withdrawal could lead to dangerous destabilisation in the northeastern region of Syria and expose the YPG to attack by Turkey. In this context, at the end of the year, Syrian regime troops entered Manbij after the YPG asked for help to defend against a Turkish attack. The SDF and the Syrian government started a direct negotiation channel in 2018, but the meetings ran aground due to disagreements over decentralisation and autonomy issues.

According to estimates, a total of 20,000 people died as a result of the armed conflict in Syria in 2018, of which about 6,500 were civilians

35. See the summary on Israel – Syria – Lebanon in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

36. For further information, see the previous edition of this report and Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

Finally, in the eastern region of Dayr-al-Zawr, especially in the area near the Euphrates River, fighting took place between the SDF, led by the YPG, and pro-government forces supported by Iran and Russia, leading to many deaths, including Russian mercenaries. Fighting also intensified in the area between the SDF, supported by the US-led coalition, and ISIS in the second half of the year, with serious consequences for the civilian population. Throughout the year, ISIS continued to carry out suicide attacks and took advantage of some government offensives to seize control of land that had previously been held by other armed groups, as in the case with HTS in Hama. By mid-year, the UN estimated that there were between 20,000 and 30,000 ISIS fighters in Syria and Iraq, with approximately half in each country. With Damascus' consent, Iraqi military forces conducted many attacks against suspected ISIS positions in Syrian border towns throughout the year. In addition to these various battle fronts, the population of Raqqa gradually returned after ISIS was defeated in the city, despite the great humanitarian need and the fragile security situation due to explosive devices and the end of the siege on the towns of Fu'ah and Kafraya, surrounded by armed opposition groups since 2015. After the chemical attack in Douma, in April, forces from the United Kingdom, France and the United States launched a coordinated attack on three sites linked to Syria's chemical weapons programme as a warning to Russia. Finally, in late 2018 the special UN envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, announced his resignation after four years of unsuccessful efforts to seek a political solution to the conflict. In his last messages, the diplomat called for combining efforts to end the war and for intensifying pressure on the Syrian regime. The Norwegian diplomat Geir Petersen was appointed Staffan de Mistura's successor.

The Gulf

Yemen (AQAP)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias
Intensity:	1
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. AQAP has taken advantage of the climate of instability and the escalation of violence in the country since March 2015 in the framework of the conflict between the Houthis and the forces loyal to the Government of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi. The al-Qaeda branch has faced both sides. Yemen's conflict scenario has also favoured the rise of ISIS, which has begun to claim various actions in the country.

Throughout 2018, the branches of al-Qaeda and ISIS continued to carry out some armed actions in Yemen (ISIS has emerged most recently in the country). However, information on their activities was overshadowed by the dynamics of the main conflict rocking the country, which pits Houthi forces against a cluster of actors, including the government of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), secessionist groups in southern Yemen and others.³⁷ During the first half of the year, information emerged about some of these groups' attacks, such as an ISIS attack on a counterterrorist unit in Aden (south), in January, killing 14 and leaving more than 40 people injured; a car bomb against other military facilities in Aden, in March, claiming seven people's lives; and an AQAP attack against UAE elite forces at a checkpoint in Mukalla (southeast), also in March, killing nine soldiers. However, some of the most important news emerged in August, when **an investigation by the Associated Press (AP) concluded that the military coalition that intervened in Yemen against Houthi forces had reached a number of deals with AQAP.** According to the investigation, the coalition paid some al-Qaeda commanders to abandon cities and towns and allowed others to withdraw from certain areas with equipment, weapons and large sums of money. The AP report determined that hundreds of al-Qaeda fighters had been recruited to join the coalition as combatants. The AP and some experts emphasised that the US was aware of the agreements, which means that it agreed to delay its drone strikes against AQAP positions and that it prioritised supporting the campaign against the Houthis (perceived as allies of Iran) over fighting against al-Qaeda's branch in Yemen. In this vein, **US air support in Yemen fell significantly in 2018, with 36 strikes, compared to**

37. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) in this chapter.

the record of 125 in the previous year. One of these attacks occurred at the end of November 2018 in Al Bayda, killing several members of AQAP.

Citing several sources on the ground, the AP also reported that some of the UAE's announcements of victory and of recapture of territory from AQAP, such as in the area of al-Said, for example, in the mountainous Shabwa governorate (south), were actually a result of the withdrawal agreements. The AP report said that as part of the deal, thousands of tribal combatants have joined the Shabwa Elite Forces (funded by the UAE) and that between 50 and 70 of every 1,000 combatants were members of AQAP. The UAE responded to the AP report by denying that it had entered into any secret agreements with AQAP, claimed to have trained about 60,000 Yemenis to face the threat of al-Qaeda and asserted that since 2015 more than 1,000 AQAP members had died in the campaign against the group. According to estimates, AQAP has between 6,000 and 8,000 combatants. Finally, media reports described mutual accusations between the branches of ISIS and al-Qaeda through their propaganda media and direct clashes between both groups, especially in the Al Bayda area. **In one of these clashes, in July, 14 AQAP fighters and 22 ISIS fighters lost their lives.** Some analysts say that ISIS has gradually declined in Yemen since 2016, in part because of its inability to control territory and deepen ties with local tribes.

Yemen (Houthis)	
Start:	2004
Type:	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Armed forces loyal to Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), armed factions loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, 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 armed conflict in Yemen intensified during 2018, although at the end of the year the main dissenting parties reached an agreement that could lead to a reduction in hostilities. The body count of the conflict continued to be difficult to determine. According to the UN Office of Human Rights, 6,600 civilians had died between March 2015, when the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia first intervened, and August 2018, though it acknowledged that the figure could be significantly higher. In fact, other estimates indicated that **the total number of people killed was six times higher than the latest UN figure (10,000) since acts of violence multiplied significantly in 2018.** According to the data provided by the Armed Conflict Locations and Event Data Project (ACLED), 60,233 people, including 6,480 civilians, died a direct result of the violence in Yemen between January 2016 and November 2018. Of this total, **28,182 died in the first 11 months of 2018, meaning an increase of 68% compared to 2017.** The figures provided by ACLED found that **the Saudi-led military coalition was main party responsible for civilian casualties** (4,614 since January 2016, including 1,326 in 2018). The Houthis and their allies were also responsible for at least 1,000 civilian casualties since 2016, including 494 in 2018.

Meanwhile, the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, which the UN Human Rights Council has charged with investigating abuses in the country, concluded that all parties had committed and continued to commit crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. After analysing the period from September 2014 to June 2018, the Group of Eminent Experts also indicated that the Saudi-led coalition was the main party responsible for civilian deaths with air strikes in residential areas, markets, funerals, weddings, detention centres and medical facilities. In fact, one of the most controversial episodes of violence in 2018 occurred in August (after the publication of the Group of Experts' report), when an attack on a school bus left more than 50 people dead, including 40 children. Other abuses committed by the parties to the conflict in Yemen included indiscriminate attacks, sieges, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence, child recruitment and restrictions on the freedom of expression. Regarding other impacts, the death toll cited above did not account for deaths caused indirectly by the armed conflict, as a result of illness or famine, for example, a number that

Save the Children estimated to be in the thousands. Yemen continued to be the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in 2018, according to the UN. At the year's end, **the number of people in need of assistance exceeded 24 million, of which 11.3 million were underage**. People suffering from hunger increased by 15% in 2018, reaching 20 million people. Similarly, 3.9 million people had been forced to leave their homes in the last three years due to violence.

The armed conflict was waged on several fronts throughout 2018 and the dynamics of violence were affected by divisions and internal struggles in the warring parties.

The main confrontation between pro-Houthi and anti-Houthi forces combined the fragmentation of the bloc consisting of the Houthis and the General People's Congress (GPC), following the murder of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and GPC leader in late 2017, and the hostilities between the Hadi government and southern secessionist groups making up the Southern Transitional Council (STC), supported by the UAE. Clashes between Hadi's forces and separatist groups were mostly fought in Aden and caused dozens of fatalities. The STC took control of the city in January and thereafter the UAE and Saudi Arabia mediated to try to achieve a truce. However, disagreements and clashes continued throughout the year. At the same time, after breaking with the GPC, the Houthis redesigned the government structure in the capital, Sana'a, while groups close to Saleh sought partnerships with the southern forces to fight the Houthis. Meanwhile, fighting between the Houthis and the cluster of actors opposed to them mainly took place in Ta'iz (Red Sea coast), Al Bayda (south), Saada and Hajjah (north), and especially in Al Hudaydah, the point of access for 80% of the goods that enter the country. According to ACLED, this city on the Red Sea was the main scene of the violence, with 37% of the total civilian casualties in Yemen in 2018. Held by the Houthis, Al Hudaydah was increasingly targeted by the troops of the coalition, mainly by the UAE and its allies. The fate of this port was one of the main concerns of the new UN special envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, who took office in March and has since

The armed conflict in Yemen may have caused the deaths of over 60,000 people between January 2016 and November 2018, according to some estimates

tried to secure a cessation of hostilities in the area. The conflict continued to spill outside Yemen. Throughout the year, Houthi forces also launched missiles at Saudi Arabia. The Saudi kingdom condemned attacks and/or intercepted rockets in areas such as Najran, Jizan and Khamis Mushait (south), as well as some in the capital, Riyadh. The conflict in Yemen was still perceived as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Riyadh, but also other actors, continuing to accuse the Houthis of receiving support from Iran and Hezbollah.

It was not until the last quarter of 2018 that there were signs leading to dialogue between the parties to the conflict, in an international context of alarm regarding its impact on the civilian population, the threat of famine and worldwide commotion over for the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October.³⁸ After a failed attempt at negotiations in Geneva in September, the UN special envoy's efforts resulted in some confidence-building measures. In mid-November, Saudi Arabia

reported a break in its offensive and days later the Houthis announced that they would stop launching missiles and that they were ready for a ceasefire. Finally, **Houthi and Hadi government delegations met in Sweden between 6 and 13 December and reached the Stockholm Agreement**. Presented as a consensus for humanitarian purposes and not as part of a political agreement on the background of the conflict, the accord established a ceasefire in Al Hudaydah and the adjacent ports of Salif and Ra's Isa, activated a mechanism for exchanging prisoners and drafted a memorandum of understanding for the city of Ta'iz. The UN endorsed the agreement by passing UNSC Resolution 2451, which provides that the organisation will monitor implementation of the pact. At the end of the year, the parties remained committed to the ceasefire, but accused each other of breaking the agreement, and efforts to achieve access for humanitarian assistance were unsuccessful. In this context, some analysts warned of the fragility of the agreement, pointing to elements such as the brief implementation schedule for the ceasefire in Al Hudaydah and the exclusion of some important actors from the talks who could boycott the deal.

38. See the summary on Yemen in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

2. Socio-political crises

- There were 83 socio-political crises around the world in 2018. These crises took place mainly in Africa (33) and Asia (18), while the rest of the crises were in Europe (12), the Middle East (11) and the Americas (nine).
- In the western part of the DRC, armed clashes between the Bnugu and Batende communities left around 890 people dead and displaced 16,000.
- The economic and political crisis in Sudan triggered major civic protests that were harshly repressed by the government, leaving a death toll of at least 37 people.
- The increase in insecurity and violence in the central, northeastern and northwestern parts of Nigeria aggravated the instability in the country.
- Nicaragua experienced the most serious crisis in recent decades, with somewhere between 200 and over 560 fatalities by the end of the year.
- In Venezuela, the number of protests increased and tensions between the government and the opposition intensified following the presidential election, the results of which neither the opposition nor part of the international community recognise.
- The tension between India and Pakistan remained at very high levels with dozens of people killed as a result of exchanges of fire on the border.
- Reports of the human rights situation in the Chinese province of Xinjiang increased, especially regarding the existence of re-education camps for the Uyghur population.
- The murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul had a great media impact and exposed the repressive policies of Saudi Arabia to international scrutiny.
- The tension between Israel, Syria and Lebanon intensified during 2018, partly as a result of the dynamics of the conflict in Syria and misgivings about Iranian influence there.

The present chapter analyses the socio-political crises that occurred in 2018. 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 2018. 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 2018.

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 2018

Conflict ¹ -beginning-	Type ²	Main parties	Intensity ³
			Trend ⁴
Africa⁵			
Angola (Cabinda)	Internal	Government, armed group FLEC-FAC, Cabinda Forum for Dialogue	2
	Self-government, 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	1
	Resources		↓
Chad	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
Congo, Rep. of	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	3
	Government		↑
DRC – Rwanda ⁶	International	DRC, Rwanda, armed groups FDLR and M23 (former CNDP)	1
	Identity, Government, Resources		=
DRC – Uganda ⁷	International	DRC, Uganda, ADF, M23 (former CNDP), LRA, armed groups operating in Ituri	1
	Identity, Government, Resources, Territory		↑
Equatorial Guinea	Internal	Government, political opposition in exile	1
	Government		=
Eritrea	Internationalised internal	Government, internal political and social opposition, political-military opposition coalition EDA (EPDF, EFD, 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	3
	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 2018 with 2017, using the ↑ symbol to indicate that the general situation during 2017 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. The socio-political crises regarding Cameroon, Chad and Niger that were present in 2016 due to the instability generated by the armed conflict of Boko Haram are analyzed in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts) in the case of the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram).
6. This title refers to international tensions between DRC–Rwanda–Uganda that appeared in previous editions of this report. Even though they share certain characteristics, DRC–Rwanda and DRC–Uganda are analysed separately in *Alert 2019!*
7. Ibid.

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)	3
	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, ISIS	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		↓
Morocco – Western Sahara	International ⁸	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		=
Mozambique	Internal	Government, former armed group RENAMO, RENAMO militias, islamist armed group al-Shabaab	2
	Government, System		↓
Nigeria	Internal	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, farmers and livestock raisers, community militias, IMN, IPOB, MASSOB	3
	Identity, Resources, Government		=
Nigeria (Niger Delta)	Internal	Government, armed groups MEND, MOSOP, NDPVF, NDV, NDA, NDGJM, IWF, REWL, PANDEF, Joint Revolutionary Council, militias from the Ijaw, Itsekere, Urhobo and Ogoni communities, private security groups	2
	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	2
	Territory		↑
Sudan	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Sudan – South Sudan	International	Sudan, South Sudan	1
	Resources, Identity		=
Togo	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
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), ISIS	2
	Government, System		=

8. 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			
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		=
El Salvador	Internal	Government, state security force groups, gangs (Mara Salvatrucha-13, Mara/Barrio/Calle 18, 18 Revolucionarios, 18 Sureños)	2
	Government		↓
Guatemala	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, gangs	1
	Government		=
Haiti	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, MINUSTAH, former military officers	1
	Government		↓
Honduras	Internal	Government, political opposition, social movements, organised crime structures (drug trafficking, gangs)	2
	Government		↓
Mexico	Internal	Government, political and social opposition (peasant and indigenous organisations, unions, students), armed opposition groups (EZLN, EPR, ERPI, FAR-LP), cartels.	3
	System, Government		↑
Nicaragua	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
Peru	Internal	Government, armed opposition (remnants of Shining Path), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)	1
	Government, Resources		=
Venezuela	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
Asia			
Bangladesh	Internal	Government (Awami League, AL), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami political parties), International Crimes Tribunal, armed groups (Ansar-al-Islami, JMB)	2
	Government		↑
China (Xinjiang)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition	2
	Self-government, Identity, System		↑
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	1
	Territory, Resources		=
India (Assam)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(ICS), KPLT, NSLA, UPLA and KPLT	2
	Self-government, Identity		=
India (Manipur)	Internal	Government, armed groups PLA, PREPAK, PREPAK (Pro), KCP, KYKL, RPF, UNLF, KNF, KNA	2
	Self-government, Identity		↓
India (Nagaland)	Internal	Government, armed groups NSCN-K, NSCN-IM, NSCN (K-K), NSCN-R, NNC, ZUF	1
	Identity, Self-government		↓
India – Pakistan	International	India, Pakistan	3
	Identity, Territory		↑

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Asia			
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	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	International	DPR Korea, Rep. of Korea	1
	System		↓
Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea ⁷	International	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia	1
	Government		↓
Kyrgyzstan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	1
	System, Government, Identity, Resources, Territory		↓
Lao, PDR	Internationalised internal	Government, political and armed organisations of Hmong origin	1
	System, Identity		↑
Pakistan	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed opposition (Taliban militias, political party militias), Armed Forces, secret services	2
	Government, System		↓
Sri Lanka	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, Tamil political and social organizations	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	1
	Government		=
Uzbekistan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan	1
	Government, System		↓
Europe			
Armenia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	International	Armenia, Azerbaijan, self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh	2
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Belarus	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
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	Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Greece, Turkey	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↑
Georgia (Abkhazia)	Internationalised internal	Georgia, self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		=
Georgia (South Ossetia)	Internationalised internal	Georgia, self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Moldova, Rep. of (Transnistria)	Internationalised internal	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓

9. 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
Europe			
Russia (Dagestan)	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Dagestan, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)	2
	System		↓
Russia (Chechnya)	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Chechen Republic, armed opposition groups	2
	System, Government, Identity		=
Serbia – Kosovo	International ¹⁰	Serbia, Kosovo, Serbian community in Kosovo, UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX	2
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Turkey	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, ISIS, Fetullah Gülen organization	2
	Government, System		=
Middle East¹¹			
Bahrain	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government, Identity		↓
Egypt	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		=
Iran	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
Iran (northwest)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group PJAK and PDKI, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)	3
	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 ¹²	International	Iran, USA, Israel	2
	System, Government		↑
Iraq (Kurdistan)	Internationalised internal	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran, PKK	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 Jabhat al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Saraya Ahl al-Sham	2
	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 (al-Hijaz Province, Najd Province)	2
	Government, Identity		=
1: low intensity; 2: medium intensity; 3: high intensity. ↑: escalation of tension; ↓: decrease of tension; =: no changes.			

2.2. Socio-political crises: report on trends in 2018

This section analyses the general trends observed in the socio-political crises throughout 2018, whether globally or regionally.

2.2.1. Global trends

In 2018, (83) socio-political crises were identified around the world. As in previous years, the largest number of socio-political crises was found in Africa, with 33 cases, followed by Asia (18), Europe (12), the Middle East (11) and Latin America (nine). There

10. 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.

11. With regard to Yemen (south), the events related to this dispute have ceased to be analyzed as tension - as in past editions of the report - and the analysis has been integrated in the case of armed conflict Yemen (al-Houthists).

12. This international socio-political crisis refers mainly to the dispute over the Iranian nuclear program.

were four new crisis scenarios: in Nicaragua, which has experienced its most serious political and social crisis in recent decades after the wave of demonstrations in April to protest against the government and condemn human rights violations committed by the state security forces and armed groups sympathetic to the government; in Armenia, which suffered an escalation of anti-government protests that led to the departure of President Serzh Sargsyan and early elections; in Russia (Dagestan), which until 2017 had been considered an armed conflict, but which was no longer viewed as such due to the drop in violence that was experienced during the previous years, but in which dynamics of tension were still present; and in the Lao PDR, which was once again considered a socio-political crisis due to the rise in violence in recent years linked to the security forces' increasing repression against the Hmong community. Furthermore, three cases considered crises in previous years were reclassified as armed conflicts in 2018 due to the rising violence: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Burkina Faso and Niger.¹³

Although crises can be attributed to multiple factors, our analysis of the crises in 2018 makes it possible to identify trends in terms of their main causes or motivations.

In line with the data observed in previous years, **practically 70% of the crises in the world were mainly caused by opposition to internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments (Government),¹⁴** which led to conflicts to access or erode power, or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective states (System). In Latin America, for example, all identified crises were linked to one of these two variables. In turn, **the main causes of nearly half the crises (45%) included demands for self-government and/or identity, but this percentage was clearly higher in regions such as Europe (more than 66%, or two out of every three crises in Europe) and Asia (more than 55%).** Disputes over the control of territory and/or resources were particularly relevant in around one third of the crises (31%), although this is a factor that fuels many situations of tension to varying degrees.

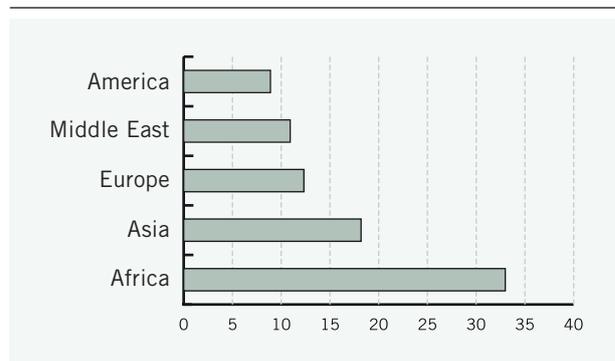
In line with previous years, **slightly more than half of the crises in the world were internal in nature (45 crises, or 54%),** with Latin America being particularly paradigmatic, as practically all crises there (except Haiti) were of this type. Moreover, **almost one third of the crises around the world were internalised (24 crises, or almost 29%),** but this percentage was clearly higher in regions such as Europe (half the crises) and the Middle East (45%), and significantly lower in Africa (15%) and Latin America (11%). Finally, **one sixth of the crises**

were international (14, or almost 17%), following the downward trend in recent decades, although no such context was identified in Latin America. Many (40%) of the crises did not experience significant changes, 30% saw some improvement and the remaining 30% deteriorated compared to 2017. Except in Asia, where there were more cases of improvement than of deterioration (seven and five, respectively), in aggregate terms, the number of crises whose situation worsened equalled those in which there was improvement. Regarding the intensity of socio-political crises, during 2018 half of them were of low intensity (50%, a percentage higher than the 47% reported in 2017), one third were of average intensity (similar to the figure in the previous year) and only 15% had high levels of tension (13), six of them in Africa.

Eighty-three (83) socio-political crises were identified in 2018: 33 in Africa, 18 in Asia, 12 in Europe, 11 in the Middle East and nine in Latin America

Compared with previous years, the number of serious tensions followed the downward trend in recent years (representing 15% in 2018, 20% in 2017 and 24% in 2016) as several crises that had experienced high levels of tension in 2017 de-escalated during 2018 and became medium- or low-intensity crises. This was the case in Angola (Cabinda); the different crises in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea and Eritrea-Ethiopia); Mozambique; Korea, DPR-USA, Japan, the Republic of Korea; India (Manipur); and Lebanon. However, there were also four crises that reported medium or low levels of tension in 2017 and in previous years, whose levels of conflict increased substantially and were considered high-intensity in 2018: Iran (northwest), Israel-Syria-Lebanon, Mexico and Nicaragua. There were three other cases where the intensity of the violence also increased, causing them to be viewed as armed conflicts: in Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), due to the escalation of violence by the separatist armed groups as well as by the disproportionate use of force and repression by the security forces in western regions of the country and in the northern region of Niger and Burkina Faso, which together with northern

Graph 2.1. Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2018



13. See the summaries on Cameroon and on the Western Sahel region in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
14. See note 2.

Mali were affected by a climate of instability and violence generated by the growing presence of armed groups and jihadist militias in the Western Sahel (a conflict that was renamed the Western Sahel region).

The most serious crises in Africa in 2018 were in **Chad**, which is affected by a climate of political and social instability and by the escalation of violence in the northern part of the country, linked, among other issues, to illegal mining; **Ethiopia and Ethiopia (Oromia)**, where despite the significant positive changes that occurred with the rise to power of new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a strained and violent atmosphere persisted; **Kenya**, where there was an increase in inter-community violence during the year, alongside the ongoing actions of the Islamist armed group al-Shabaab, the counterinsurgency operations of the Kenyan Armed Forces and security forces and the growing presence of ISIS since 2016; **Nigeria**, where the military campaign against Boko Haram in the northeast continued,¹⁵ alongside acts of violence between livestock and agricultural communities in the country's Middle Belt, actions carried out by various groups in the northwestern region (Kaduna and Zamfara), tensions in the southern region of Biafra and recurring violence in the Niger Delta¹⁶); and the **DRC**, where, in addition to the armed conflicts affecting various regions of the country, sources of tension included the elections in December 2018, the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu province (east) and the outbreak of violence in the province of Mai-Ndombe (west).

Maximum-intensity tension in the rest of the regions took place in **Mexico**, where the number of homicides increased significantly, reaching the highest figure in the last 20 years, as did political violence, which was linked to the presidential election and other factors; **Nicaragua**, which underwent the most serious political and social crisis in recent decades after the harsh government crackdown on the wave of protests throughout the country that began in April when the government attempted to reform the social security system; **Venezuela**, where the number of demonstrations and social protests increased significantly compared to the previous year and the institutional crisis and international concern about the situation worsened after President Nicolás Maduro won the presidential election in May, which was boycotted by the opposition (and considered fraudulent by some actors); **India-Pakistan**, where high levels of intensity persisted, with mutual armed attacks at different points along the Line of Control that separates the two countries; **Egypt**, where the climate

Seventy per cent (70%) of the crises were mainly caused by opposition to the internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective states

Half the crises throughout the world were of low intensity, more than in recent years

of internal tension continued, characterised by the repression of dissent, violations of human rights, abuse by the security forces and the application of emergency measures; Iran (northwest), where hostilities between the Iranian government and Kurdish armed groups intensified and killed at least 60 people during 2018; and **Israel-Syria-Lebanon**, where the crisis worsened during 2018, partly as result of dynamics linked to the Syrian armed conflict.

2.2.2. Regional trends

As in previous years, in 2018 **Africa** remained the main scenario for global socio-political crises, accounting for 39% of them (33 of 83, a figure relatively similar to the 37 in 2017 and the 34 in 2016). There were no new cases compared to the previous year. As mentioned above, **almost half the high-intensity crises worldwide (six out of a total of 13) were concentrated in Africa in 2018: Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia) Kenya, Nigeria and the DRC.** However, there was a notable reduction in the number of high-intensity cases in Africa due to the decrease in violence in Angola (Cabinda) and Mozambique. Meanwhile, violence increased in Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) and the Western Sahel region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), reclassifying them as armed conflicts.¹⁷ Less than one third of the socio-political crises in Africa (10) deteriorated, fewer than in 2017 (16). **Moreover, there was improvement in nine crises: Central Africa (LRA), Angola (Cabinda), the Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Madagascar and Mozambique. Domestic political changes in Ethiopia had a positive impact on the crises in the Horn of Africa.**¹⁸ In almost half the cases (42%), there were no significant changes.

Furthermore, the vast majority of the crises in Africa were internal (67%), similarly to previous years. More than one sixth of the crises presented signs of internationalisation (15%, a figure that fell compared to 2017, when they accounted for 19%), including the influence of foreign actors, including armed non-state actors of various kinds, like the armed organisation al-Shabaab, which is originally from Somalia, in Kenya; the actions of regional or global jihadist groups, such as the branches of ISIS and AQIM in Tunisia; the presence of international troops, such as UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire and MONUSCO in the DRC; and the influence of parts of the diaspora and local armed groups present in neighbouring areas, such as in Eritrea or Rwanda, for example. Only six of the 33 crises in Africa were international in nature,

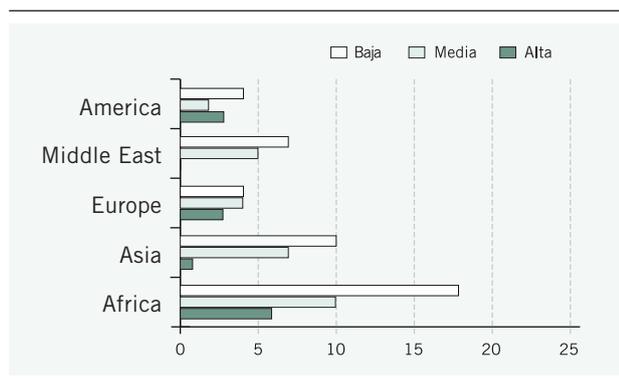
15. See the summary on the Lake Chad region in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

16. The situation in the Niger Delta region, in Nigeria, is another socio-political crisis. See Table 2.1. Summary of the crises in 2018.

17. See chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

18. See "Window of opportunity for peace in the Horn of Africa" in chapter 4 (Opportunities for peace in 2018).

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



most of them in the Great Lakes region, Central Africa and the Horn of Africa: Central Africa (LRA), Eritrea-Ethiopia, Morocco-Western Sahara, DRC-Rwanda, DRC-Uganda and Sudan-South Sudan. Among these, tensions only rose in one crisis during 2018: between the DRC and Uganda. In July, the tension escalated due to the permanent dispute on the common border at Lake Edward, which led to an exchange of fire between ships of both countries and the death of a Ugandan soldier. The DRC later accused Uganda of having killed 11 Congolese fishermen and arresting 100, while the crises in Central Africa (LRA) and Eritrea-Ethiopia saw improvement.

The most serious crises in Africa were located in Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Kenya, Nigeria and the DRC

The crises had multiple underlying causes, in line with the global trend. **Two thirds of the socio-political crises in Africa (22 of the 33, or 66.7%) were linked to opposition to the government** and three (Kenya, Mozambique and Tunisia) included opposition to the system at the same time. Furthermore, 39% of the crises in Africa had demands for identity and/or self-government as one of their main causes and four (Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia (Oromia) and Morocco-Western Sahara) had both variables. In addition, the struggle to control resources and/or territory was also an important factor in more than one third (specifically 39%) of the crises in Africa.

In line with previous years, **the Americas** had the lowest number of crises in the world, with a total of nine in 2018 (10%). Four of them were of low intensity, while three of them (**Venezuela, Mexico and Nicaragua**) were of high intensity, as it was the region with the highest percentage of high-intensity crises (33%). However, as in previous years, although Latin America continued to be the region in the world with the least number of crises and armed conflicts, the same situations are affected by some of the highest homicide rates in the world. The leader of the pack is Venezuela, which has the highest homicide rate in Latin America and one of the highest worldwide with 81.4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by El Salvador, with a rate of 51, Honduras, with 40, Mexico,

In proportional terms, Latin America had the highest percentage of serious crises worldwide

with 25.8, Colombia, with 25, and Guatemala, with 22.4. Moreover, all the crises in Latin America were internal, with the exception of Haiti, due to the role that MINUSTAH has played in the country in recent years. Regarding the trends of the crises in the Americas, the situation deteriorated in three cases (Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela). In three other cases (El Salvador, Haiti and Honduras), the tension observably subsided, while in another three cases (Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru), there were no changes compared to the previous year. **The main causes of the nine crises identified in Latin America included opposition to government policies**, which materialised in protests of varying intensity and character, such as those mentioned in Venezuela and in Nicaragua, and in the severe repression of these protests. In some cases, this factor occurred in combination with other causes, such as demands for self-government (Bolivia) or disputes over access to or use of resources (Bolivia, Mexico, Peru).

Eighteen (18) crises were reported in **Asia**, the same number as in 2017. The conflict in the Lao PDR was reclassified as a socio-political crisis due to the rise in violence in recent years because of the security forces' increasing crackdown on Hmong political organisations and civilians. **Only one high-intensity crisis was observed in Asia during 2018 (the crisis between India and Pakistan) due to the improvement of the situation in the other three high-intensity contexts of 2017 (India (Manipur), Pakistan and the crisis between several countries and North Korea). In this sense, Asia was the region with the highest percentage of crises where the situation improved (in seven, corresponding to 39%),** while there were no significant changes in six and the situation deteriorated in five: Bangladesh, China (Xinjiang), India-Pakistan, Indonesia (West Papua) and the Lao PDR.

As in 2017, Asia continued to be the region with the highest percentage of international crises, three of which were located in northeastern Asia, specifically in the area between the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea: the dispute between China and Japan (mainly regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands) and the tension between North Korea and its southern neighbour, as well as with several other countries, regarding its weapons programme. The other international crisis was the historical dispute between India and Pakistan. Nearly 39% of the crises that were internal also had a clear international dimension due to regional armed groups and border tensions, as in three of the Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), and either transnational links to local armed organisations (as in the Chinese province of Xinjiang and the Indian state of Assam) or armed organisations in neighbouring countries,

as in the Lao PDR. In the Chinese province of Tibet, the dispute has an international dimension due to the presence of the Tibetan government-in-exile in northern India and the demonstrations of the Tibetan diaspora.

As for the root causes, 11 of the 18 crises in the region were linked to opposition to the system or the government. Both variables coincided in four of them (Pakistan and the three former Soviet republics of Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), while opposition to the system was identified as one of the fundamental sources of tension in four others (the provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, in China, the dispute between North Korea and South Korea and the situation of the Hmong community in the Lao PDR). Furthermore, 10 other crises (55%) were related to identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government. Finally, the control of resources and territory was also a factor in a third of the crises in Asia.

Following the trend of previous years, all the crises in **Europe** were of low intensity (58%) or medium intensity (42% of cases), as no high-intensity crisis was found. Tensions rose between **Serbia and Kosovo** during the year as a result of several factors, including Serbia's accusation that Kosovo had breached the agreement to establish the association of Kosovo Serb municipalities, Kosovo's legislative approval to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army and, finally, Kosovo's application of tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia in protest of their lack of recognition of its independence of Serbia, which was considered the most difficult challenge since Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008. There was improvement in three of the 12 crises, no changes occurred in five and the situation deteriorated in four, in contrast with the trend in 2017, when the political and social situation worsened in nine of the 13 crises. The crises in which there was deterioration included **Armenia**, as a result of the climate of anti-government protests that led to the resignation of President Serzh Sargsyan and early elections, which ended the hegemony of the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). However, prominent crises in which the tension subsided included those between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** and in the Russian region of **Dagestan**. The security situation had already improved between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to a process that had begun in 2017 and continued in 2018 after an agreement to establish a mechanism of direct communication between the parties to the conflict, which meant less ceasefire violations. The atmosphere of violence in Dagestan continued to subside to the point that it was reclassified and was no longer considered a situation of armed conflict, although incidents that caused dozens of fatalities and persistent human rights violations continued.

Asia was the region with the highest percentage of crises that observably improved

In Europe, the crisis deteriorated between Serbia and Kosovo, leading to the breakdown of the negotiating process in December

Regarding the root causes, Europe continued to be the region where disputes related to identity demands and/or self-government had the highest incidence worldwide, with 67% of the crises linked to these factors, similarly to previous years. One of the main causes in 67% of the crises that took place in Europe was certain groups' opposition to government policies or to the system as a whole. In line with previous years, the control of territory was a factor present in two of the most prolonged crises in the region: the dispute between the government of Cyprus and the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Finally, in relation to the geographical scope of action and the influence of the actors involved, half of the socio-political crises that took place in Europe were **internationalised internal in nature, emphasising the role that foreign governments play in certain contexts and especially the role that Russia plays** in some self-proclaimed independent regions in countries that were once part of the USSR, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova. One third of the crises were internal, while two were considered international: Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Serbia-Kosovo.

Finally, 11 crises were reported in the **Middle East**, a similar figure to 2017. The Middle East remained the region of the world with the lowest number and percentage of low-intensity crises (four, representing 36%, a figure higher than the previous year). This was the same number as the medium-intensity crises (four). There were three high-intensity socio-political crises, one more than in 2017: Egypt, Iran (northwest) and the crisis affecting Israel in relation to Syria and Lebanon. Three crises saw relative improvement compared to 2017: Bahrain, Iraqi Kurdistan and Lebanon. In five, the situation did not experience significant changes compared to the previous year, while in three the tension worsened, including in **Iran (northwest)**, where hostilities between the Iranian government and Kurdish armed groups intensified, causing at least 60 deaths during 2018, and in **Israel-Syria-Lebanon**, where incidents that may have caused more than 100 deaths were reported amidst a volatile and menacing environment.

Regarding the causes of the disputes, the **Middle East was the region with the greatest number of crises whose main causes were related to opposition to the internal or international policies of the government or the system (in almost 73% of the crises, or eight)**. In almost half the crises (five) the factor of identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government was also an outstanding motivation. Four of the crises in the region were internal and two were of an international nature: the dispute between Iran and the

US and Israel over the Iranian nuclear programme and the case of Israel-Syria-Lebanon, linked to the regional dynamics and consequences of the conflicts in Syria and in Israel-Palestine. Five other internal crises showed an outstanding degree of internationalisation: Saudi Arabia, Iran (northwest), Lebanon and Iraq (Kurdistan).

2.3. Socio-political rises: annual evolution

2.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Central Africa (LRA)	
Intensity:	1
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 overthrowing 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. The sustained reduction of violence in recent years meant that the situation was no longer considered an armed conflict in early 2015, although less intense violence persists.

The armed activities of the insurgent group of Ugandan origin LRA continued during the year in the triangle formed between the CAR, the DRC and South Sudan, though at a lower intensity than previous years.

Again, the most affected areas were concentrated in the eastern CAR (Haut Kotto, Mbomou and Haut Mbomou) and the northeastern DRC (the provinces of Haut Uelé and Bas Uelé and Garamba National Park), and no acts of violence were reported on the South Sudanese side of the border area between the DRC and South Sudan. **According to the project LRA Crisis Tracker, a total of 90 violent incidents were recorded during the year** (less than in the previous year, when 103 were reported) in which **eight people lost their lives (10 in 2017) and 362 people were temporarily or permanently abducted. Though this is an increase over the 293 reported in 2017, it is far below the 729 that occurred in 2016. In general, in 2018 there was a decrease in the impact of the actions committed by the LRA in the region.**¹⁹ Again, most of the activities of the active subgroups that currently make up the LRA consisted of looting, ambushes, temporary kidnappings and sexual violence.

Chad	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, Resources, Territory Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

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. After the 2016 election, which was won with no surprises by Idriss Déby, the climate of social instability persisted. Finally, the military intervened in the north against groups based in Libya, illegal miners and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, as well as periodic inter-community clashes over property and land use.

19. See Invisible Children – Resolve, *LRA Crisis Tracker*. [Viewed on 21 February 2019]

Chad remained affected by an atmosphere of political and social instability, ongoing attacks by the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region¹⁹ and escalating violence in the northern part of the country linked to illegal mining and other issues.

Regionally, Chad continued to participate in the G5 Sahel Joint Force. In the political and social arena, the national forum on institutional reform was held in March. Though it was boycotted by the opposition, around 1,000 representatives of pro-government parties participated. Different measures were proposed in the forum that were introduced into the constitutional reform. Approved by Parliament and ratified by President Idriss Déby in May, the new Constitution abolishes the office of prime minister and reinstates the presidential term limits that Déby eliminated in 2005. However, the political opposition mobilised against the new Constitution. At the end of October, the government and the unions reached an agreement putting an end to five months of strikes in the public sector. Furthermore, violence escalated in the northern part of the country: periodic clashes between groups of miners who illegally mine for gold and local communities in the Tibesti region were joined by the regular and growing intervention of the Chadian Army in pursuit of Chadian armed groups based in Libya and official government action to expel the illegal miners, groups of arms dealers and slaver groups. In November, clashes escalated between the Chadian Army and militias of the Tebu community, which tried to retain control and mining resources in the area of Miski, in Tibesti, causing dozens of fatalities. The real death toll is unknown. The actions involved combat aircraft that bombed areas inhabited by civilians. Opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo condemned the government's silence on the resurgence of armed groups in the north and the parliamentary political opposition later called for a ceasefire and for dialogue in the northern part of the country.

DRC	
Intensity:	3
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.²⁰ 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 extension of President Kabila’s term of office, which was due to expire in the 2016 election (which in turn was postponed until the end of 2018), exacerbated the instability and political and social protests against him remaining in power, which were harshly repressed.

The country remained affected by the serious nationwide political and social crisis resulting from the expiration of President Joseph Kabila’s term of office in December 2016 and preparations to hold the election in December 2018, amidst a climate of political violence and insurgent activity in the provinces of Ituri, North and South Kivu (east) and in the Kasai region (centre). There was also tension related to the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu province (east) and the outbreak of violence in Mai-Ndombe province (west).

The fragility of the opposition, divided by a leadership vacuum following the death in early 2017 of historical opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi,

the head of the opposition party UDPS, affected the implementation of the peace agreement. Moreover, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) declared that holding the elections in 2017 would be impossible and published a new election schedule in November 2017. Though rejected by the opposition and triggering large demonstrations, in the end the UN Security Council validated this new schedule, which provided for holding national presidential and legislative and provincial elections on 23 December 2018 and for appointing the president in January 2019, more than a year after what was stipulated in the agreement of 31 December 2016. The government justified the delay in the elections due to the security situation and the logistical and technical difficulties. The entire year passed amidst disputes between the presidential majority and the opposition over the electoral preparations and the repression of the political and social protests in the street. In August, the deadline for submitting candidacies, Kabila finally announced that he would not run for a new term and that Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, his protégé, would run on behalf of the presidential majority.

In early April, a new Ebola outbreak was detected in the province of Équateur, leaving around 33 people dead at the end of July. On 1 August, the government declared another outbreak in Beni, in the province of Ituri (North Kivu), which reportedly claimed 75 lives by the end of that month. The escalation of violence in the Ituri region complicated the work of health care professionals and was joined by popular protests in the Beni region in late October. This led the Electoral Commission in charge

20. See the summary on DRC (east) in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

of organising the presidential election in the country in December to cancel it in Beni and Butembo (North Kivu), postponing it until March 2019. The election was also suspended in Yumbi, in the western province of Mai-Ndombe, due to the deterioration of the security situation. Also in Mai-Ndombe, clashes between the Brugu and Batende communities, reported between 16 and 18 December, left a death toll of around 890 and displaced 16,000, who took refuge in the Republic of the Congo, according to the United Nations human rights office in the country.

Finally the presidential, legislative and regional elections were held on 30 December, a week later than planned (23 December) because a fire destroyed around 8,000 electronic counting machines stored in a local electoral commission. After several days in which some governments and international organisations pressured the CENI to publish the results of the elections, finally on 10 February it declared Felix Tshisekedi (38.57%) the winner, followed by Martin Fayulu (34.83%) and the ruling party candidate Emanuel Ramazani Shadary (23.84%), with a turnout of 47.5%. The CENI also announced the results of the legislative and local elections, in which the parties supporting former President Kabila won an overwhelming majority. Both Tshisekedi and Kabila accepted the results, but Martin Faluyu filed a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court alleging electoral fraud and claiming that he would have received 62% of the votes and Tshisekedi 18%, according to his estimates and those of the Catholic Church. The Church, which deployed 40,000 electoral observers, publicly stated that the official results did not coincide with their own conclusions or with the results indicated by most international observers, including those of the African Union and the SADC, which would have handed victory to Faluyu.

The political and economic crisis in Sudan unleashed major popular demonstrations across the country that were harshly repressed by the government

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.

The tension in the country increased throughout the year, reaching its peak during December, when major demonstrations against the government were harshly repressed by the security forces.

The national budgets submitted for the year 2018 included cuts to the flour subsidy that caused the price of bread to triple, triggering major protests throughout the country during January. The protests were suppressed by the security forces, resulting in the arrest of hundreds of people, including the opposition leader of the Sudanese Congress Party, Omar al-Digar. During February the protests continued to be concentrated mainly in the capital. After the violence

was condemned by EU embassies and the United States, the government of Sudan released 80 of the people arrested in January. Later, on 10 April, President Omar al-Bashir ordered the release of the dozens of political prisoners who remained in prison. During May, the economic situation worsened due to the shortage of fuel that began in late April. In response to the crisis, on 7 May the government announced an agreement with Saudi Arabia to provide oil at preferential rates for five years. In the midst of the

political and economic crisis, on 14 May President al-Bashir announced that he was reshuffling the government cabinet, appointing new ministers of foreign affairs, oil and the interior. Amidst political reforms enacted by the new cabinet, on 10 June the Council of Ministers announced it had approved a draft electoral law reducing the number of seats in Parliament from 450 to 300 and increasing subnational state representation from two MPs to three. In order to alleviate the political and economic crisis in the country, President al-Bashir dissolved the government in September and appointed a new prime minister, Motazz Moussa, who had been the minister of irrigation and electricity, thereby reducing the number of ministries from 31 to 21. In the same month, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) again selected Omar al-Bashir as its candidate to run in the presidential election scheduled for 2020. The announcement prompted significant criticism from the opposition, because the Constitution allows a maximum of two presidential terms, and if al-Bashir runs in the next election it will be his third term. On 4 December, Parliament approved the constitutional amendment to extend presidential term limits, thereby allowing al-Bashir to run in future elections. In the midst of the economic and political crisis, demonstrations against the government began in the northeastern city of Atbara on 19 December and quickly

spread throughout the country. Their many demands included the resignation of the president and resulted in the burning of ruling party headquarters buildings in various parts of the country. The regime's security forces responded by cracking down hard on the protests, leaving a death toll of at least 37 in the first few days. The Internet was ordered closed, as well as several newspapers and educational centres, including universities. The United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, the UN and other international actors condemned the repression and asked the government to investigate the deaths of the demonstrators. The year closed with the protests continuing and spreading across a large part of the country.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese and US governments worked to normalise their diplomatic relations during the year and remove Sudan from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism. The US State Department informed Khartoum of its willingness to stop designating it a "state sponsor of terrorism" if the Sudanese government makes progress in six different areas, including expanding anti-terrorism efforts, peacefully resolving the armed conflicts in the country, downgrading relations with North Korea and improving the human rights situation in the country. These negotiations remained active at the end of the year.

Horn of Africa

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, EFD, 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 Somali armed group al-Shabaab.

The positive development of the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia had a positive influence on Eritrea's regional policy, but not its domestic policy. On 14 November, the UN Security Council lifted sanctions against Eritrea that had been in place since 2009 through UN Resolution 2444, which was approved unanimously. **The historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia²¹ that was reached during 2018 resulted in overcoming the deadlock in other regional disputes, including the situation between Eritrea and Djibouti over the Ras Doumeira border dispute.** Although the conflict is still pending resolution, on 7 September 2018 both countries announced the normalisation of their relations after Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh's visit to Djibouti. Djibouti Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf announced the start of a new era of relations between the two countries. Following the meeting, Ethiopia publicly celebrated the change in attitude. Osman Saleh appeared in Djibouti accompanied by his Somali counterpart, Ahmed Isse Awad, and his Ethiopian counterpart, Workneh Gebeyehu, who travelled to Djibouti to facilitate the dialogue. Internally, however, the situation remained serious, as evidenced by the fact that since the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia reopened in September, more than 27,500 Eritreans applied for refugee status in Ethiopia, according to ECHO, the humanitarian agency of the EU, as it reported on 21 December. As of 31 August, there were 174,000 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, according to ECHO. Several analysts indicated that the resumption of diplomatic ties with Ethiopia and the regional dynamics had not been accompanied by changes in the domestic arena such as the release of the thousands of political prisoners held in the country as a consequence of the repression, the absence of freedom of expression, the closure of prisons where serious human rights violations have been committed and indefinite conscription for people between 18 and 50 years of age, which are the main reasons why the country's population is fleeing. In October, UNHCR highlighted that the flow of Eritreans seeking refugee status in Ethiopia had risen from 53 to 390 a day.

Eritrea - Ethiopia	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Territory International
Main parties:	Eritrea, Ethiopia

Summary:

Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia in 1993, although the border between both countries was not clearly defined, causing them to face off between 1998 and 2000 in a war that cost over 100,000 lives. In June 2000 they signed a cessation of hostilities agreement, the UN Security Council established the UNMEE mission to monitor it and they signed

21. See the summary on Eritrea-Ethiopia.

the Algiers peace agreement in December. This agreement established that both would submit to the ruling issued by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), which is in charge of delimiting and demarcating the border based on the relevant colonial treaties (1900, 1902 and 1908) and on international law. The EEBC announced its opinion in April 2002, assigning the disputed border village of Badme (the epicentre of the war, currently administered by Ethiopia) to Eritrea, though Ethiopia rejected the decision. Frustrated by the lack of progress in implementing the EEBC's ruling due to insufficient pressure on Ethiopia to comply, Eritrea decided to restrict UNMEE operations in late 2005, forcing its withdrawal in 2008. A year earlier, the EEBC had ended its work without being able to implement its mandate due to obstructions in Ethiopia, so the situation has remained at an impasse ever since. Both countries maintained a situation characterised by a pre-war climate, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers deployed on their shared border, sporadic clashes and belligerent rhetoric.

In 2018, a historic agreement was reached between Eritrea and Ethiopia that put an end to 20 years of conflict between both countries. The appointment of Abiy Ahmed as the new prime minister of Ethiopia was decisive, although according to some sources, the process began to take shape during the government of Hailemariam Desalegn. Eritrea and Ethiopia had been exchanging messages since 2017 with the support of the United States and particularly the United Arab Emirates, a country that has been the greatest backer of this process. On 15 February, former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn announced that he would resign from office and from the leadership of the ruling coalition to facilitate the implementation of reforms due to the serious crisis affecting the country. On 16 February the Ethiopian government reinstated the state of emergency, which had been in force between October 2016 and October 2017. However, in January the government had announced that it would pardon hundreds of political prisoners, and in February the attorney general decreed the release of hundreds of prisoners, though the demonstrations and tension continued. On 27 March, Abiy Ahmed was appointed president of the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forum (EPRDF). A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward as a candidate by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the governing EPRDF coalition. He was appointed prime minister of the country on 2 April. His first acts were aimed at mitigating ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties. In his inaugural address, Abiy Ahmed promised that he would achieve peace with Eritrea. However, Eritrea dismissed the statement and again urged Addis Ababa to withdraw its troops from the border area.

A historic agreement was reached between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018 that put an end to 20 years of conflict between both sides

On 5 June, the governing EPRDF coalition announced that it would accept the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission's (EEBC) ruling, which includes the transfer of Badme, the epicentre of the conflict, to Eritrea. At the same time, it urged Asmara to accept its openness to dialogue without preconditions. The announcement did not establish any agenda for withdrawing troops, which was Eritrea's main concern and demand, but was unanimously welcomed by the international community nonetheless. The Eritrean opposition movement Forum for National Dialogue²² urged the Ethiopian government to withdraw its troops from Eritrean soil without preconditions. However, peaceful civic demonstrations were staged days later in Badme and the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray in protest against the government's announcement. The TPLF party, a member of the ruling coalition representing the Tigray minority, also criticised the decision. On 20 June, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki revealed plans to send a delegation to hold peace talks with Ethiopia, which became effective on 26 June with a meeting in Addis Ababa between the Eritrean foreign minister and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. After the meeting, Abiy said that his country was willing to end hostilities and make sacrifices to restore peace with Eritrea if necessary. The decisive moment came on 8 July, when Abiy set out on a two-day visit to Asmara. On the same day, telephone connectivity between both countries was re-established for the first time in 20 years. **On 9 July, the leaders of both countries signed the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship,** ending

20 years of war and including agreement on implementing the border decision and on restoring diplomatic, economic and communications agreements, among other issues. Abiy asked UN Secretary-General António Guterres to lift the sanctions on Eritrea. Between 14 and 16 July, Afewerki visited Ethiopia for the first time in 20 years and reopened the Eritrean Embassy. Ethiopian Airlines resumed flights with Eritrea on 18 July and its Eritrean counterpart did the same on 4 August. On 24 July, both leaders thanked Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates for his role in promoting peace between the two countries. Abiy Ahmed made his second visit to Eritrea on 5 September and the Ethiopian Embassy opened in Asmara the next day. On 11 September, both leaders agreed to withdraw their troops from the shared border. This decision gave way to the tripartite meeting between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) that culminated in the **signing of the peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia on 16 September, known as the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation,** with the leaders of both countries and King Salman of Saudi Arabia, the UN Secretary-General, the chair of the AU

22. Opposition movement created in London in 2014 that promotes democracy and political transition in the country that includes several former senior officials of the ruling party, the EPLF, who reject the authoritarian path that the country has taken since the 1990s.

Commission and the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates in attendance. This agreement added the creation of joint investment projects to the Joint Declaration of 9 July, including the establishment of Joint Special Economic Zones and collaboration in the fight against terrorism and human, drug and weapons trafficking, as well as a committee and subcommittees to monitor implementation of the agreement.

Ethiopia	
Intensity:	3
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. The following elections (2010, 2015) limited even more the democratic opening by increasing the verticality of the regime and the repression of the political opposition. The 2009 Counter-Terrorism Law contributed to decimate the opposition. The attempt since 2014 to carry out the Addis Ababa Master Plan, a plan that provided for the territorial expansion of the capital, Addis Ababa, at the expense of several cities in the Oromiya region, and the organization of the development of the city generated important protests and deadly repression in the Oromiya region, which contributed to increasing tension.

The appointment of Abiy Ahmed as the new prime minister of Ethiopia in March 2018 was decisive, although according to some sources. In February, former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn announced that he would resign from office and on 27 March, Abiy Ahmed was appointed president of the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forum (EPRDF). A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward as a candidate by the

Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the governing EPRDF coalition. He was appointed prime minister of the country on 2 April. His first acts were aimed at mitigating ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties. On his first trip, in April, he visited Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region, to meet with representatives of the Oromo and Somali communities. On 30 June, the government presented a proposal to Parliament to remove three armed groups from the list of terrorist organisations (OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7), opened access to more than 200 forbidden websites, dismissed senior prison officials for failing to protect prisoners' rights and promoted the release of political prisoners, which ostensibly reduced the violence and the tense atmosphere in the country.

However, as stated by ACLED, the change in leadership and the opening to democracy promoted by Abiy Ahmed's government did not halt the political violence.²³ In this vein, ACLED observed greater tolerance of the protests and a reduction in the number of demonstrations in Oromia, but instability in other parts of Oromia and intercommunity violence in Ethiopia increased at the same time. In June 2018, a state of emergency was lifted that included a ban on holding public protests, which implied a rise social and political mobilisation and a drop in clashes between the demonstrators and the security forces of the country at the same time, due to the security forces' greater tolerance.

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
Intensity:	3
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. Meanwhile, the region of Oromia has been hit by a series of protests against the Ethiopian regime. Initiated by the student movement

23. Matfess, Hilary and Watson, Daniel, *Change and Continuity in Protests and Political Violence in PM Abiy's Ethiopia*, ACLED, 13 October 2018.

in 2014 over the the Oromo people's perception that it is marginalised, the protests were harshly repressed. Furthermore, violence broke out recurrently between Somali pastoralist communities and Oromo agricultural communities along the border between the Oromia and Somali regions due to competition for resources and the demarcation of the land of both communities. Violence also flared in remote areas of both regions. Finally, the crackdowns of the Liyu Police have exacerbated the situation and fuelled further violence.

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After it was removed from the list of terrorist groups, where it had been listed since 2008, the OLF declared a unilateral ceasefire in July. On 20 July, Parliament passed an amnesty law for former political prisoners. After these historic decisions, the government and the OLF reached a reconciliation agreement to end the hostilities in Asmara on 7 August. Both parties agreed to establish a joint committee to monitor implementation of the agreement.

However, after these breakthroughs, there was an escalation of violence in the capital, Addis Ababa, and the surrounding area linked to the return of OLF members who had been in exile. On 15 September, a major demonstration was staged to commemorate their return, which ended with acts of violence committed by

On 7 August, the Ethiopian government and the armed group OLF signed a Reconciliation Agreement in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, laying the foundations for ending a conflict that is over 40 years old

sympathisers of the rebellion against other communities. Other acts of violence occurred in some neighbourhoods and districts of the capital in the days that followed, in which 28 people lost their lives. Later, the government asked the OLF fighters who had not yet disarmed as established by the reconciliation agreement reached in August to proceed to disarm. Around 1,300 OLF fighters had already disarmed in compliance with the agreement. However, clashes were reported between the OLF and Ethiopian security forces in the district of Qelem de Wolega between 28 and 29 October, which were repeated at the end of the year. The OLF accused the government of not having respected the August agreement.

In this vein, ACLED observed greater tolerance of the protests and a reduction in the number of demonstrations in Oromia, but instability in other parts of Oromia and intercommunity violence in Ethiopia increased at the same time.²⁴ In addition, the geography of political violence also shifted from the capital, Addis Ababa, and from western Oromia, to the Somali region and the border area between the Somali region and Oromia. There were outbreaks of violence between Somali livestock-raising communities and Oromo agricultural communities along the border between the Oromia and Somali regions. These communities compete for resources but above all for the demarcation of their respective lands, as no formal border has ever been drawn and the symbolic lack of a boundary is used to promote intercommunal violence. To this must be added the escalation of violence perpetrated by the Liyu Police, the governmental paramilitary group responsible for serious human rights violations against civilians in Oromia and the Somali region.²⁵

Kenya	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Identity, Government, Resources, Self-government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ethnic militias, political and social opposition (political parties and civil society organisations), SLDF, Mungiki sect, MRC, Somali armed group al-Shabaab and groups sympathetic to al-Shabaab in Kenya, ISIS

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

24. Matfess, Hilary and Watson, Daniel, op. cit.

25. In 2008, the Liyu Police became a powerful counterinsurgency group led by the region's security chief, Abdi Mohammed Omar, also known as Abdi Illey, who became the president of the Somali region in 2010, although the Liyu Police remained under his control. HRW, *Ethiopia: No Justice in Somali Region Killings*, HRW, April 2017.

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 Somali armed group al-Shabaab in Kenya and the subsequent animosity towards the Somali 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.

The country suffered an increase in intercommunal violence during the year alongside the continuous activity of the Somali Islamist armed group **al-Shabaab**, **the counterinsurgency operations of the Kenyan Armed Forces and the security forces and the growing presence of ISIS in the country since 2016**. The political demonstrations linked to the 2017 election cooled down and the post-electoral tension subsided. In December 2017, President Uhuru Kenyatta rejected dialogue with the opposition and the electoral reform and opposition leader Raila Odinga postponed his decision to proclaim himself president due to domestic and international pressure between 12 December to 30 January.²⁶ Kenyatta appointed his cabinet in January (without including members of the opposition) and Odinga proclaimed himself “president of the people” in a crowded ceremony despite threats of police intervention. The ceremony took place peacefully, although the government interrupted the broadcasts of some media outlets that intended to cover it. In February there were clashes between supporters of the opposition and the police following the arrest of opposition lawyer Miguna Miguna, who played a predominant role in Odinga's proclamation as president and was charged with treason. However, President Kenyatta and Odinga met unexpectedly on 9 March in their first meeting since the disputed election, creating a space to start talks in April that included the launch of a joint committee formed by 14 members on both sides

that was supposed to resolve the political conflict. This negotiating and reconciliation process was consolidated in April and both parties carried out confidence-building measures in May, including Kenyatta's announcement of the creation of new offices in his government to which he would appoint allies of Odinga.

Furthermore, al-Shabaab staged periodic insurgent attacks in the north and east of Kenya, specifically in the border area between Somalia and Kenya (the counties of Mandera, Wajir and Garissa) and in the coastal zone of Kenya (mainly in Lamu county), which caused dozens of fatalities throughout the year. Human Rights Watch reported in February 2018 that police and armed gangs had killed at least 37 people between September and November 2017 as part of the new election held in October. In this vein, fewer people died at the hands of the police in 2018 than in 2017, as revealed by Deadly Force.²⁷ In 2015, 143 people were killed by the police. This figure climbed to 205 people in 2016 and to 256 in 2017, but fell to 219 in 2018, a 14% drop in one year. This decrease may be directly linked to the electoral period, since in August 2017 there were 67 deaths while in August 2018 there were only 16. During the rest of the year, the number of fatalities per month was relatively similar. Finally, militias linked to different communities clashed on various occasions throughout the year in the northern part of the country due mainly to the theft of cattle, boundary disputes between territories of different communities, reprisals for previous attacks and land use and ownership, causing dozens of fatalities.

North Africa – Maghreb

Tunisia	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups including the Uqba ibn Nafi Battalion or the Oqba ibn Nafaa Brigades (branch of AQIM), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS

Summary:

From its independence in 1956 until early 2011, Tunisia was governed by only two presidents. For three decades Habib Bourghiba laid the foundations for the authoritarian regime in the country, which Zine Abidine Ben Ali then continued after a coup d'état in 1987. 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 stood in contrast to its international image

26. See Escola de Cultura de Pau. *Alert 2018! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2018.

27. Deadly Force is a database for murders committed by the police. This Nation Newsplex project, which in turn is a project of the Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation*, seeks to report all the deaths resulting from police operations in Kenya based on public reports and including information from individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors. The database is compiled from information from the media, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority, other government agencies and accounts provided by human rights organisations.

of stability. Despite allegations of corruption, electoral fraud and human rights violations, Tunisia was a privileged ally of the West for years. In December 2010, the outbreak of a popular revolt exposed the contradictions of Ben Ali's government, led to its fall in early 2011 and inspired protests against authoritarian governments throughout the Arab world. Since then, Tunisia has been immersed in a bumpy transition that has laid bare the tensions between secular and Islamist groups in the country. At the same time, Tunisia has been the scene of increased activity from armed groups, including branches of AQIM and ISIS.

The situation in Tunisia continued to be characterised by **ongoing security challenges linked to the activity of armed groups, as well as a climate of political and social tension. Following the trend of the previous year, during 2018 different acts of violence caused the deaths of about 15 people.** The most prominent incidents included an ambush on a border patrol by suspected jihadist fighters in the Ain Sultan area, near the Algerian border, which killed six members of the security forces in July, and an attack conducted by a suicide bomber in October that injured 20 people, making it the first attack in the Tunisian capital since 2015. Meanwhile, the Tunisian authorities maintained their offensives against leaders and presumed fighters of armed jihadist groups, active mainly in areas bordering Algeria and Libya. The killing of Bilel Kobi, a senior AQIM official whose mission was to reorganise the group's branch in Tunisia, was announced in January 2018.²⁸ Other prominent figures who lost their lives during the year included Chawki Fakraoui, the leader of Jund al-Khilafa, a branch of ISIS, in the governorate of Kasserine, in March, and Aymen Ben Younes, the leader of the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, an AQIM splinter group, in December. Some analysts pointed out that even though the actions of these groups were of low intensity, the security forces were unable to dismantle them. On the contrary, they have grown in size and are in a position to take advantage of the instability in Tunisia and Algeria.²⁹ The Tunisian authorities renewed the current state of emergency in force since 2015 on five occasions in 2018 and upheld measures such as controls and restrictions on movement in border areas. Amnesty International reported that these measures were being applied in a discriminatory manner and were leading to arbitrary arrests.

Meanwhile, the country remained mired in an atmosphere of social protest. The most serious incidents occurred at the beginning and end of the year. In January, three days of protest over the rising cost of living resulted in clashes with the police that left one dead in Teborurba (north) and more than 800 people arrested. **In December, the death of a journalist who had condemned the economic problems and unfulfilled promises of the 2011 revolution sparked new protests and clashes with the police** in Kasserine (centre). In this context, Amnesty International also denounced the arbitrary arrest of demonstrators and cases of excessive use of force by security forces. Tunisia

also continued to be affected by a political crisis stemming mainly from the power struggle between President Essebsi and Prime Minister Chahed, leaders of two factions of the ruling party, Nida Tounes, which led to the breakup of the coalition with the Islamist Ennahda party in September. Moreover, in March Parliament voted against extending the mandate of the Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD) to end its investigative work on human rights abuses in the country since 1955. In the midst of controversies related to procedural issues, the IVD continued its work until December and submitted its report at the end of the year in the absence of government and parliamentary representatives. The chair of the IVD called on civil society to continue working towards reconciliation in the country. International human rights NGOs criticised the obstacles and lack of political support for the IVD and called for the proper development of transitional justice in the country.

Southern Africa

Mozambique	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, RENAMO political party, RENAMO militias, islamist armed group al-Shabaab

Summary:

The coup against the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and the guerrilla war between the Marxist-Leninist FRELIMO insurgency 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 regime of 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.

28. See the summary on Algeria in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

29. Matt Herbert, "The insurgency in Tunisia's western borderlands", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 28 June 2018.

While the tensions between the Mozambican government and the main opposition group RENAMO subsided considerably during the year, the escalation of instability and violence in the northern region of Cabo Delgado continued due to the emergence

in late 2017 of an armed Islamist-based group known locally as Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a or al-Shabaab. The tensions between the FRELIMO government and the main opposition group in the country, RENAMO, continued their trend of de-escalation that began in 2017, making headway in implementing the peace agreement.³⁰ In February, President Filipe Nyusi (FRELIMO) and Afonso Dhlakama (the head of RENAMO) held bilateral meetings to discuss the terms of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of RENAMO members into the country's security forces. The government then announced the implementation of measures to reach an agreement in Parliament to amend the Constitution to decentralise the state, which is one of the main sources of the tensions. One of the opposition's historical demands is that political parties that win provincial elections should choose the governors of those provinces instead of the president, and this change was included. On 23 May, Parliament approved the decentralisation project. Dhlakama, the historical leader of RENAMO since 1979, died on 3 May at 65 years of age, generating uncertainty about the future of the peace agreement. Ossufo Momade, a former RENAMO general, was elected its interim leader pending a party congress in which the successor would be chosen. Both RENAMO and the government expressed their commitment to the peace process and on 11 July President Nyusi and Momade issued a joint statement announcing the upcoming disarmament of RENAMO, which was signed on 6 August. Later, on 10 October, local elections were held in the country under the new decentralisation framework approved by Parliament. For the first time in 10 years, RENAMO ran in the elections. FRELIMO won in 44 of the 53 municipalities (out of the 49 that it had previously controlled) with 57% of the vote, while RENAMO won in eight municipalities with 36.5% of the vote, although it claimed victory in another five. The Constitutional Court validated the election results on 14 November, except in the municipality of Marromeu (Sofala province), where FRELIMO prevailed in the run-off held on 22 November.

Furthermore, **instability continued in the northern region of Cabo Delgado, bordering Tanzania, as a result of the armed activities of the jihadist group known locally as Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a or al-Shabaab**, which emerged in late 2017. Although there were different attacks in the region directed against government interests and local communities during the first half of the year, it was during June that there was a higher incidence of violence in Cabo Delgado. That month, suspected Islamist militants stepped up the number

The violence in the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique increased due to the activity of jihadist militants

of attacks against communities, carrying out at least seven, mainly in the districts of Macomia and Quissanga, which left an estimated 39 people dead, with dozens injured and hundreds of homes burned down. In response, the government established army command centres in the districts of Macomia and Quissanga and subsequently announced the arrests of various people. The increased presence of the Mozambican Army in the region reduced attacks by the Islamist militants, though they continued to take place. In a Mozambican Army attack in August on a suspected insurgency camp near the village of Pundanhar, in district of Palma, at least four people were killed, and one of the group's alleged leaders, Abdul Raim, was reportedly captured. In new attacks reported in the town of Paqueue in September, 12 people were killed, 14 were wounded and more than 50 houses were burned by suspected Islamist militants. In October, the Mozambican government announced that 132 people had been arrested, while the Tanzanian Police reported that it had arrested 104 people in the country. Later, between 26 and 28 November, the Mozambican authorities announced new arrests of more than 200 people suspected of belonging to the armed group. The violence, which lasted until the end of the year, forced thousands of people to seek refuge in Tanzania.

West Africa

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

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.

30. See the summary on Mozambique in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus, 2019: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

The climate of violence in the country persisted during the year due to the instability in various regions, notably the military campaign against Boko Haram in the northeast,³¹ **the acts of violence between livestock-raising and agricultural communities in the middle belt of the country, armed attacks conducted by various groups in the northwest region (Kaduna and Zamfara) and tensions in the Biafra region**, as well as the instability in the Niger Delta.³² All these different fronts made the security situation in the whole country much worse in a year marked by the presidential election campaign scheduled for early 2019. In addition to the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, the other most significant sources of violence were concentrated in the central region and the northwest. In the former, **intercommunity fighting between nomadic herders from northern Nigeria and agricultural communities in the centre and south of the country** continued throughout the year. In January, there were many attacks that affected mainly the states of Benue, Taraba, Kaduna and Plateau, with a death toll of at least 203 people, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG). In response, in mid-February the Nigerian Army launched the Ayem Akpatuma (“Cat Race”) military operation, which was operational in six states (Benue, Taraba, Kogi, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Niger) until 31 March. The violence continued however, spreading to the southern states of Ebonyi, Kogi, Delta, Abia and Ogun. In March, at least 194 people lost their lives in different armed episodes. The escalation continued in April, when 20 different incidents were reported that claimed 350 lives, mostly in the states of Benue and Nasarawa. The increasing instability led several MPs to demand that the government make changes in its military and intelligence operations. Benue State authorities declared that the violence had transformed from a conflict between pastoralists and farmers into an insurgency. Although the intensity of the violence subsided in May, claiming around 50 lives, it increased again in June, with around 200 fatalities in a single incident between 21 and 24 May in the area of Barkin Ladi (Plateau). Later, in the third quarter of the year, violence in the region fell again in intensity, widening again in the final months of the year. Thus, in mid-November the Plateau State government reported at least 1,801 people killed and 50,212 displaced as a result of the violence there in recent months.

In relation to the **violence reported in the northwestern part of the country, mainly concentrated in the states of Kaduna and Zamfara, the year was also characterised by an increase in clashes and armed attacks** as part of different crisis situations, including tensions linked to grazing and resource management, actions resulting from

The increase in violence and tensions in the central, northeastern and northwestern regions generated an atmosphere of insecurity throughout Nigeria

vandalism and crime, tensions related to inter-community disputes and tension between the government and the Shia community organised in the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). In the first half of the year, according to data collected by the ICG, at least 382 people were killed in different episodes of violence. In June, violence displaced 12,000 people in the states of Zamfara and Sokoto. In the middle of the year the government increased its military deployment in the area, including air force operations. In one of the different security operations, taking place on 30 November, the police reported that at least 104 people accused of vandalism had been killed in the area of Zurmi (Zamfara). Meanwhile, tensions between IMN supporters and the government remained active during the year. The former continued to demand the release of their leader, Ibrahim El Zakzaky, through various demonstrations that were suppressed by the state security forces, leading to the deaths of many people during the year.

In the southern region of **Biafra**, Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of Biafran secessionist movement Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which was declared a terrorist organisation by the Nigerian government in September 2017, reappeared in Israel in October after going missing since the government’s declaration. Kanu demanded a boycott of the **presidential election** until Biafra agreed to a referendum on its political-territorial status in the year commemorating the 50th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra. His reappearance coincided with the moment when the national political parties presented their candidacies for the presidency. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) nominated the incumbent President Buhari, while the main opposition party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), nominated Atiku Abubakar. In total, the Electoral Commission confirmed that 79 candidates will run in the election scheduled for February 2019. In December, as the election date approached, different incidents targeted representatives of political parties, increasing the tension in the country.

Nigeria (Niger Delta)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Resources, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, MEND, MOSOP, NDPVF, NDV, NDA, NDGJM, IWF, REWL, PANDEF, armed groups, Joint Revolutionary Council, militias of the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ogoni communities, private security groups

31. See the summary on the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
32. See the summary on Nigeria (Niger Delta) in this chapter.

Summary:

Instability in the Niger Delta is the result of the loss of livelihoods of the population due to oil activity in the area. 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 projects promised by the government could lead to a return to armed struggle.

The situation of tension in the southern region of the Niger Delta persisted during 2018. Since 2016, instability in the region has remained constant due to local groups' demands for the government to comply with the measures stipulated in the peace agreements signed in 2009. Although there were some attacks on oil pipelines in 2017, in the closing months of the year the tension subsided, reactivating the talks between the government and the coalition of Delta organisations, the Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF). In early 2018, the armed group Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) announced that it would renew its attacks against foreign oil companies due to the lack of progress. There were some incidents in the region while talks took place during the year. In September, after the police raided the house of the PANDEF leader in Abuja on the pretext of searching for weapons, the armed group NDA reacted by announcing the end of the ceasefire and the resumption of the attacks on oil installations. At the end of the year, on 30 December, the armed coalition announced the end of the ceasefire that had been maintained for two years, arguing that the Nigerian government had not complied with the region's demands for development. Five days before the announcement, a new armed group calling itself War Against Niger Delta Exploitation (WANDE) threatened to disrupt the presidential election scheduled for early 2019 if the government did not comply with the demands of the region.

2.3.2. America

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

El Salvador	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, state security force groups, gangs (Mara Salvatrucha-13, Mara/Barrio/ Calle 18, 18 Revolucionarios, 18 Sureños)

Summary:

After the end of the Salvadoran Civil War (1980-1992), which claimed around 75,000 lives, the situation in El Salvador has been characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality, the proliferation of gangs of youths and other organised crime structures and high homicide rates that have made the country one of the most violent in the region and the world. A truce with the gangs was achieved during the government of Mauricio Funes (2009-2014), which led to a significant drop in the homicide rate, but the inauguration of Sánchez Cerén in 2015 was followed by a tightening of security policies and a substantial rise in levels of violence, resulting in a crisis of defencelessness and the forced displacement of thousands of people.

In 2018, according to official data, 3,340 homicides were reported in El Salvador. Though this was 15% less than the year before, the homicide rate still ranked the country as one of the most violent in Latin America and the world. The government stated that **both this figure and the homicide rate have gradually fallen after reaching a record high in 2015** (103 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, making El Salvador the country with the highest rates of violence on the planet). The homicide rate dropped to 81 in 2016, 60 in 2017 and 51 in 2018. According to the government, this decrease in violence is mainly due to programmes to fight crime, programmes to prevent crime in at-risk communities and rehabilitation programmes in Salvadoran prisons, which according to the government have managed to get thousands of gang members to dissociate from their gangs. The number of police officers killed (32) was also lower than in the previous year (46), but the number of disappearances increased to 3,514, which was 10% more than in the previous year. Until the middle of the year, the levels of violence were clearly higher than in the previous year. In fact, in January and February, the number of homicides in El Salvador was 25% higher than in 2017. In these circumstances, the government took several steps to try to address the rising insecurity. Notable actions included the mass arrests of gang members (357 in August, around 200 in September, 340 in November and 631 in December) during major operations against the main gangs in the country (Mara Salvatrucha and the two factions of Barrio 18), the arrest of important leaders of those gangs, an increase in sentencing (in August, for example, 61 Mara Salvatrucha members were sentenced to over 100 years in prison) and, especially, the extension of the package of extraordinary measures approved in March 2016 that regulates the confinement of *mara* members and raises ideas such as the extreme isolation of certain individuals. This package of extraordinary measures was debated for a good part of the year and provoked criticism from many human rights organisations and experts, considering that it is a violation of fundamental rights and makes it harder to resume the dialogue with gangs to reduce levels of violence in the country. Regarding the human rights situation, **the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions issued a report in February that condemned these types of executions, the excessive use**

of force against gang members, the deplorable state of certain prisons and the validity of the aforementioned exceptional measures in certain prisons. Later, in April, the United Nations Human Rights Council deplored the existence of death squads in the Salvadoran Armed Forces and the high incidence of abuse by state security forces and bodies that remains unpunished.

Honduras	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, social movements, organised crime structures (drug trafficking, gangs)

Summary:

The political and social situation in the country is mainly characterised by the high homicide rates in Honduras, which in recent years has often been considered among the most violent countries in the world, as well as by the social and political polarisation following Manuel Zelaya’s rise to power in 2006. Criticism from broad swathes of the population for his intention to call a referendum to reform the Constitution and run for a new term of office and for his relationship with the governments that make up the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), especially in Venezuela, led to a coup in 2009 that was criticised by the international community, led to the loss of the country’s membership in the OAS and forced Zelaya into exile, which prevented him from running in the presidential election of 2009. Although Zelaya was able to return to the country in 2011, there has been a certain degree of social polarisation in the country ever since, reflected in the political crisis stemming from the 2017 presidential election between the incumbent president and a candidate who is politically close to Zelaya.

The number of murders and homicide rate fell in 2018, in line with the trend observed since 2015, but **high levels of conflict related to the political and social crisis continued, leading to a lack of agreement about the results of the presidential election of November 2017, in which incumbent President Juan Orlando Hernández and opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla both claimed victory.** This disagreement triggered several weeks of protests and demonstrations (the National Human Rights Commission said that by the end of 2017, 31 people had died and more than 1,600 had been arrested) and the temporary imposition of a state of emergency and curfew in January 2018. Although the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ruled that Hernández won the election by a narrow margin in mid-December 2017, the Opposition Alliance against the Dictatorship, led by Nasralla and former President Manuel Zelaya, who was deposed in a coup d’état in 2009, refused to recognise the results and urged the people to protest permanently. Thus, the protests continued in 2018 and were especially intense in January, with various incidents of violence both in the days before Hernández’s inauguration for a second term of office and on the day

of the investiture ceremony that injured more than 200 people. In February, Zelaya called for the formation of 10,000 commandos to lead the continued protests against the government. Episodes of violence between demonstrators and policemen reappeared later, during protests in November to mark the first anniversary of the general election. In early January 2019, a new platform close to the opposition Liberal Party, Citizen Action against the Dictatorship (ACCD), staged major protests in most of the country’s departments to demand Hernández’s resignation.

Given the magnitude of the crisis, the United Nations promoted dialogue between the country’s main political forces. Despite the reluctance and difficulties encountered during the exploratory phase, the talks officially began in late August, with four topics and working groups, each facilitated by foreign experts hired by the United Nations: the electoral crisis of 2017, human rights, constitutional reforms and electoral reforms. Previously, the parties had agreed to give legal validity to the agreements that may be reached at the negotiating table, in addition to agreeing on a protocol to prevent violence during political demonstrations and on the establishment of a commission to investigate human rights violations after the 2017 election. These talks ended in December, with 169 “agreements” reached between the parties but no substantive agreement on core or more controversial items of the negotiating agenda.

Furthermore, **the number of homicides in 2018 (3,310) fell by 6% compared to the previous year, although the homicide rate (40 per 100,000 inhabitants) remained among the highest in Latin America and the world.** Since 2014, when Honduras was the country with the highest homicide rate in the world (87), homicides have gradually subsided in the country. In 2017, for example, they fell by 26% compared to 2016. Although the data for 2018 seem to confirm and consolidate a downward trend in homicide rates (which the government attributes to its crime prevention policies and, especially, to its programmes to fight against the *maras*), the Observatory of the Violence at the National Autonomous University of Honduras reported that the number of massacres increased in 2018. According to the Observatory, a total of 108 people died in 33 massacres between January and September 2018. In the same vein, 30 people died in eight different massacres in the first half of January 2019.

Mexico	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition (peasant and indigenous organisations, unions, students), armed opposition groups (EZLN, EPR, ERPI, FAR-LP), cartels.

Summary:

Since 2006, when Felipe Calderón started the so-called “war on drug-trafficking”, the level of violence and human rights’ violations throughout the country increased substantially making the country one of the ones with most murders in the world. Since then, the number of organized crime structures with ties to drug trafficking have multiplied. In some parts of the country, these structures are disputing the State’s monopoly on violence. According to some estimates, by the end of 2017, the “war against drug-trafficking” had caused more than 150,000 deaths and more than 30,000 disappearances. Also, Mexico has insurgency movements in States such as Guerrero and Oaxaca –including the EPR, the ERPI or the FAR-LP. In Chiapas, after a short-lived armed uprising of the EZLN in 1994, conflict is still present in Zapatista communities.

The number of homicides, which hit its highest point in the last 20 years, increased significantly in 2018, as did cases of political violence, linked, among other factors, to the presidential election of 1 July, which was won by Andrés Manuel López Obrador. In July, it was reported that **153 politically active people, 48 of them candidates, had been killed since the beginning of the election campaign in September 2017**. Approximately 80% of these incidents occurred at the municipal level and half took place in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla. Thus, in April the National Association of Mayors reported that 121 mayors have been assassinated since 2000. According to statements made by the National Commission of Human Rights in May, 133 journalists had also been killed since 2000. In March, the NGO Artículo 19 reported that 1,986 journalists had been attacked during Enrique Peña Nieto’s presidency alone. In June, after the murder of three LGTBI activists in Guerrero, it transpired that 381 people had been murdered because of their sexual orientation and gender identity during Peña Nieto’s presidency. Furthermore, 2018 was the year with the highest number of reported femicides (861) in recent years (there were 422 in 2015). The states with the highest incidence of this phenomenon were Colima (3.37 per 100,000 inhabitants), Sinaloa (3.09) and Nuevo León (2.96).

According to official data, there were 33,341 homicides in Mexico in 2018, a figure 15% higher than the 28,866 homicides reported in 2017 and the highest since homicide records were first collected in 1997. These increased dramatically since the end of 2006 –date in which former President Felipe Calderón initiated the so-called “war against drug trafficking”– and increased by 74% since 2014. According to official data, 250,547 homicides were reported in Mexico between December 2006 and April 2018. In 2018, the states with the highest relative rates of violence were Colima (81.09 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants), Baja California (77.19) and Guerrero (61.35), while those that experienced the greatest increase in violence in 2018 compared to the previous year were Guanajuato (138%), Quintana Roo (106%) and Jalisco (45%). In April, the Igárape Institute published a report stating, among other things, that Mexico was the country with

the second-highest number of homicides in the world in 2017, that the murders that occurred in Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela accounted for a quarter of the 437,000 that occurred around the world and that five Mexican cities were among the 50 with the highest homicide rates in the world. Finally, the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights published *The War Report*, which indicated that Mexico deserved to be considered a “non-international armed conflict” (classification according to international law) and sustained that the number of fatalities in Mexico surpasses that of several past wars and many current armed conflicts. The report also asserts that the country has gone from having the four drug cartels operational in 2000 to between 60 and 80 criminal groups, highlighting especially the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, the Beltrán Leyva Cartel, La Familia Michoacana and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, an organisation that has gained prominence in recent years.

Nicaragua	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

As a result of the government’s attempt to reform the social security system, a series of protests began throughout the country in 2018 that plunged it into the worst socio-political crisis in recent decades, with hundreds of people dying, thousands becoming injured and tens of thousands leaving the country. Faced with domestic and international concern regarding the protests, the crackdown by the state security forces and clashes between government supporters and opponents, the National Dialogue began in May. Involving the government and various opposition groups and facilitated by the Catholic Church, it was interrupted by the political dynamics and violence of the crisis and did not achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Nicaragua experienced the most serious political and social crisis in recent decades after the wave of protests that began in April throughout the country against the government’s attempt to reform the social security system. Despite the fact that the government scrapped the reform immediately and that the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua (ECN) said it was willing to facilitate talks between the government and the opposition in April, between 25 and 60 people died in the first few days of the demonstrations, according to sources, and protestors continued to demand the resignation of President Daniel Ortega for the rest of the year alongside ongoing complaints about human rights violations, especially those committed by state security forces and agencies and armed groups sympathetic to the government. Although Ortega accused the opposition of provoking and leading the main episodes of violence on several occasions and defended the

performance of the state security forces, many national and international human rights organisations and bodies condemned the wave of repression and massive human rights violations in Nicaragua. In December, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) indicated that the government had established a police state and a regime of terror that suppressed all freedoms. At around the same time, the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts, a part of the IACHR, was expelled from the country one day before presenting a report that accused Managua of crimes against humanity. **According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), 325 people had died in the crisis at the end of the year, while another 2,000 had been injured and some 550 had been arrested.** However, the government cited a death toll of 199 and said that 340 persons were detained. The Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights stated that 561 people had died and that 4,578 others had been wounded between April and the end of December. According to the Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners, 767 people had been arrested in Nicaragua for participating in protests. In mid-December, the Jesuit Migrant Service declared that around 80,000 people had left the country since April and that 23,000 of them were seeking protection in Costa Rica. Moreover, according to the Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua movement, 55 journalists went into exile in 2018. In addition to the relatively frequent protests and demonstrations throughout the year, the opposition platform Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (ACJD) called three major national strikes that enjoyed significant continuity. In October, a new opposition platform called Blue and White National Unity, made up of more than 40 student, political, academic, professional, women's, peasant and business organisations, called for a new general strike. According to the government's own data made public in early October, the crisis had caused the loss of 350,000 jobs and an economic impact of more than 1.1 billion dollars.

The crisis in Nicaragua also had repercussions on the international level. Given the lack of progress of the National Dialogue and its interruption in July after an attack on a church in the town of Diriamba by dozens of government supporters in which several religious figures were assaulted, including two of those with more important roles in mediation efforts between the parties (Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and Monsignor Silvio Báez), **several governments and some international organisations stepped up pressure against the Nicaraguan government.** Both the United Nations, whose Secretary-General met with the Nicaraguan chancellor, and the Central American Integration System (SICA) offered to facilitate the dialogue, while organisations such as the European Union and MERCOSUR came out more explicitly in favour of releasing the people arrested or in their criticism of the human rights situation in Nicaragua. However, it was the OAS that had a more prominent role in managing the crisis and that was more critical of Managua. In mid-July, it passed a resolution calling for the elections to be held in March 2019, which

Ortega rejected outright. A little later, it created the Working Group on Nicaragua, made up of 12 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Guyana, Mexico, Panama and Peru) to monitor the political situation in the country, but this was considered interference by the Nicaraguan government, which refused to cooperate with the OAS in the following months, received no visitors from the organisation and even called for OAS Secretary-General Luis Almagro to resign. The tension rose even more after the OAS Permanent Council raised the need to activate the Inter-American Democratic Charter to restore democracy in Nicaragua, which could lead to its expulsion from the OAS.

Some international organisations voiced concern about the repercussions that the crisis in Nicaragua was having on women during the year. In October, for example, UN Women deplored the situation in which some female human rights advocates found themselves and called on the Nicaraguan government to respect freedom of expression and the participation of women. Days before, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua said that it was worried about sexual violence against women and even rape by government agents and supporters in the repressive atmosphere. The IACHR also condemned the state authorities' harassment of the mothers of detainees, based on discriminatory gender stereotypes. In the same vein, in December, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a programme run jointly by the World Organisation against Torture and the International Federation of Human Rights, stated that it is receiving information from reliable sources about a campaign of attacks against female human rights advocates and feminist organisations. In addition, other Nicaraguan organisations, such as Catholics for the Right to Decide, blasted the killing of 15 women and five girls by pro-government paramilitary forces and the government's connivance with the murder of dozens of other women in the country. Many women's organisations and networks played an active role in protests against the Nicaraguan government during the year and some of them, like the Women against Violence Network, the Autonomous Women's Movement and the Feminist Articulation of Nicaragua, published manifestos with condemnation and criticism of the government, as well as the demand that it form a Truth Commission endorsed by the IACHR.

South America

Venezuela	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

The current political and social crisis gripping the country goes back to the rise to power of Hugo Chávez in 1998 and his promotion of the so-called Bolivarian Revolution, but it became more acute during the political transition that led to Chávez's death in March 2013 and his replacement by Vice President Nicolás Maduro, which was considered unconstitutional by the opposition. The tensions rose markedly after the presidential election of April 2013, which Maduro won by a narrow margin (50.6% of the votes), with the opposition denouncing numerous irregularities and demanding a recount and verification of the votes with the support of several governments and the OAS. Amidst a growing economic crisis and recurrent and sometimes massive demonstrations, the political crisis in Venezuela worsened after the opposition comfortably won the legislative elections in December 2015, winning its first election victory in two decades. This victory caused a certain degree of institutional paralysis between the National Assembly on the one hand and the government and many of the judicial authorities on the other.

The number of social demonstrations and protests in 2018 increased significantly compared to the previous year, though they were less virulent, as more than 120 people died and another 2,000 were injured in 2017, according to the state attorney general at the time. Furthermore, the institutional crisis and international concern about the situation in Venezuela worsened after President Nicolás Maduro won the presidential election handily in May, which was boycotted by most of the opposition and considered fraudulent by certain countries and international organisations. The Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict reported **12,715 protests between January and December, a 30% increase over the previous year and the highest number of protests since Maduro has been president.** The number of protests in 2018 clearly exceeds the two years with the highest rates of social conflict (2014 and 2017). The vast majority of these demonstrations, which caused the deaths of 14 people, were linked to economic, labour and health issues, as well as the quality of basic services in general. According to data from the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence (the only source available, given the absence of official data), **there were 23,047 homicides in 2018, which places Venezuela as the country with the highest homicide rate in the Latin America** (81.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, far higher than the 51 reported in El Salvador). The total number and the homicide rate in 2018 were lower than in 2017 (26,616 and 89 per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively), but these estimates are based on the 2011 population, so they do not account for the enormous flow of people (around three million since 2015, according to data from the United Nations) that have fled the crisis affecting the country. In addition, the number of murders committed by state security forces has increased notably (from 5,535 in 2017 to 7,523 in 2018) and account for almost one third of the violent deaths in the country. According to some human rights organisations, some of the deaths reported under the category of “resistance

to authority” were actually extrajudicial killings. In this vein, the High Commissioner for Human Rights accused the state security forces of having committed 500 extrajudicial killings between July 2015 and March 2017 as part of operations to reduce crime. Almost 90% of the municipalities in Venezuela suffer from an epidemic of violence (a category attributed by the World Health Organisation when the homicide rate is over 10). The situation was especially serious in municipalities such as El Callao (620 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants) and in states like Aragua, where the homicide rate is double the national average. Some women’s organisations and human rights groups warned of the repercussions that the Venezuelan crisis was having on women during the year, such as the increase in sexual exploitation. According to Global Voices, for example, the number of Venezuelan victims of human trafficking had quadrupled between 2014 and 2018, while the femicide rate in Venezuela was among the 15 highest in the world.

Regarding the country’s political and institutional situation, the tension between the government and the opposition (and many countries and international organisations) increased markedly early in the year following the deadlock in the negotiations that the parties had begun in the Dominican Republic in the last quarter of 2017 and after Caracas unilaterally announced that it would hold the presidential election on 22 April (though it was finally postponed until 20 May). This announcement prompted criticism and in some cases even sanctions from many governments, such as the United States and the 14 Latin American countries that make up the Lima Group, which believe that the election would lack legitimacy and credibility. Finally, according to the Electoral Commission, Nicolás Maduro prevailed with 67% of the votes in an election that had 46% turnout and in which the opposition candidate Henri Falcón (who had previously broken the consensus among the opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable to boycott the election) obtained 21% of the votes. **Both Falcón and the opposition as a whole and several countries did not recognise the results because they thought that the elections had been fraudulent and had not complied with international electoral standards.** The countries of the Lima Group called their ambassadors in Caracas, the US imposed new economic sanctions against Venezuela, the EU also announced new sanctions and the OAS proceeded in its intention to submit evidence to the International Criminal Court that Maduro’s government had committed crimes against humanity. In addition, after the Supreme Court rejected Falcón’s request to annul the election due to the commission of many irregularities (such as vote buying), the OAS passed a resolution that did not recognise the results and urged the government and opposition to initiate talks that would lead to a new election. Diplomatic pressure on Venezuela increased during the second half of the year. Some OAS member countries urged

the activation of the Democratic Charter (which could mean suspending Venezuela's membership in the organisation), while others threatened to break diplomatic relations with Venezuela and US President Donald Trump did not rule out coercive steps to solve the crisis in the country. The tension was also exacerbated by an alleged assassination attempt against President Maduro in August, by the growing militarisation of society (Maduro said in December that the popular militias aimed at defending the country against external aggression had grown to include 1.6 million people) and by the opposition's calls on the international community to stage some kind of intervention to end the country's humanitarian crisis.

2.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

Central Asia

Tajikistan	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, System, Resources, Territory Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition and social opposition, former warlords, regional armed groups, 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 jihadist groups.

Tension remained in the country around various lines, including the repression of political Islam and violent border incidents, while attacks in the country for which ISIS claimed responsibility increased. The authorities continued to restrict civil and political liberties under the umbrella of security policies, following the trend in recent years to persecute the political opposition, human rights defenders, independent journalists and parts of the population practicing Islam. In 2018 the government introduced legislative changes with new

restrictions on religious freedom, including the power of the executive branch to restrict religious expression in many areas. In February, authorities closed 45 mosques in the city of Isfara, alleging that they were illegal. In 2017, the state closed 1,938 mosques. This persecution has been accompanied by pressure against the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), a participant in the armed conflict of the 1990s, a signatory of the 1997 peace agreement and a subject of institutional repression since 2015, as it was banned in 2015 and designated a terrorist organisation in 2016. ISIS also made its presence in the country known in 2018. The group claimed responsibility for an attack in July against a group of foreign cyclists in the Khatlon region (south), killing four of them. The authorities accused the IRP of being behind the attack, while the party denied any such connection. In November, a court sentenced 15 defendants to various prison sentences. Also in November, ISIS claimed responsibility for riots in a high security prison in the northern town of Khujand, which houses prisoners convicted of terrorism and extremism. The resulting attacks on prison guards claimed the lives of two prison agents and 25 prisoners (though some sources put the figure at 50). Several other people were injured. According to government sources, 12 of the assailants had fought in Syria and Iraq. Furthermore, the Tajik authorities admitted detaining 12 people suspected of planning an attack on the Russian military base in the Tajik capital after initially denying the information. There were also new outbreaks of border tension in 2018, with intercommunity clashes between the population of the Tajik district of Isfara and Batken province, in Kyrgyzstan, in April, injuring several people. The tension ended up involving the security forces of both countries, with altercations and the temporary detention of several Tajik border guards by Kyrgyzstan in June, though they were later released. There were also violent incidents on the border with Afghanistan in August, resulting in the death of two Tajik border guards in clashes with armed actors that some sources defined as Taliban fighters and others as smugglers. These incidents were followed by an air strike that the Afghan authorities blamed on either Tajikistan or Russia, while both countries denied being behind it. Meanwhile, the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan improved and they began demining their border in October. The mines have caused 374 deaths and 485 injuries in the last 20 years, according to records kept by Tajikistan.

East Asia

China (Xinjiang)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, System, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition

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, until it peaked in 2014. Afterwards, the growing militarisation in the region and the implementation of counter-insurgency measures led to a drastic reduction in violent episodes, although there was also an increased number of reported cases of human rights' violations.

As in previous years, there were no reports of significant episodes of violence committed by insurgent groups (Uyghur organisations claim that both the government and the government-controlled media systematically silence any such incident), but allegations about the human rights situation in Xinjiang increased dramatically. In August, **the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reported that it had received credible reports that one million Uyghurs would be held in re-education and political indoctrination camps.** One of the experts on the committee claimed to have information according to which two million Uyghurs and other national minorities (especially Kazakhs) have been forcibly transferred to internment camps, although this figure surely includes people who are obliged to attend political and social training sessions (but not internal ones). According to some reports, up to 10% of the Uyghur and Kazakh adult population could be in this situation. Subsequently, many human rights organisations and media outlets expanded on and deepened these complaints. In October, the AFP agency reported that there were at least 182 facilities in Xinjiang aimed at re-educating and confining people, while the BBC warned that the number of new detention centres had multiplied by 10 since 2016 and 2017. Radio Free Asia reported that Beijing had initiated a massive transfer of inmates from Xinjiang to other centres outside the region due to overcrowding. According to the organisation Chinese Human Rights Defenders, 21% of the arrests that occurred all over China in 2017 were in Xinjiang. **Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned the existence of systematic campaigns against the Uyghur population that included cases of torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, restrictions on movement, the control of religious practices, etc.** In July, the government-affiliated media reported that over 460,000 people had been relocated to work in other parts of the province in the first quarter of 2018 alone and that it planned to relocate 100,000

more people by 2019. According to some analysts, this policy is not only intended to alleviate the levels of poverty in the region, but also to contain the levels of conflict. Faced with this situation, during the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of China, several countries voiced concern about Beijing's treatment of several Chinese national minorities and demanded that it close the aforementioned camps and release the arbitrarily detained people. In addition, some expressed concern about the possibility that the anti-terrorist cooperation agreement signed between the authorities of Xinjiang and those of Ningxia province at the end of the year may involve the transfer of the Xinjiang counter-insurgency strategy to other parts of the country and lead to the violation of rights of the Muslim Hui minority.

South Asia

Bangladesh	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	Government (Awami League, AL), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami political parties), International Crimes Tribunal, armed groups (Ansar-al-Islami, JMB)

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 losing 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.

Political tension persisted in Bangladesh throughout the year, with a major escalation of violence near the end, before parliamentary elections were held on 30 December. At least 30 people were killed and hundreds were wounded as a result of clashes between supporters of the country's two main political forces, the ruling

AL party and the opposition BNP, whose leader is in prison on corruption charges. The BNP complained that thousands of its members had been arrested prior to the elections and although it initially indicated that it would not run if the elections were not held under the auspices of an interim government, it finally joined the platform Jatiya Oikya Front (United National Front). The electoral commission did not allow Khaleda Zia, the leader of the BNP and former prime minister, to run in the elections. Zia had been sentenced to five years in prison for corruption in February and her imprisonment was a source of tension and social protest throughout the year, some of which led to riots and clashes between police and demonstrators. Several political activists and human rights defenders were arrested during the year. There were also massive student protests that resulted in riots with injuries and many arrests. Members of the BNP were also convicted during the year and some of them were given death sentences, such as the former minister of the BNP, Lutfozzaman Babar. Moreover, over 200 people died in a large-scale anti-narcotics operation in which human rights organisations condemned extrajudicial killings, corruption and impunity for the country's main drug traffickers, including political leaders.

Violence prior to the parliamentary elections in December claimed the lives of at least 30 people

insurgent activity of the armed groups active in the state and security force operations in response to the rebels. Sporadic armed clashes were reported and the armed groups also carried out attacks against state infrastructure and engaged in extortion to finance their armed activity. One of the most prominent sources of tension during the year was the publication of the National Register of Citizens, which initially excluded four million people who were not recognised as having Indian nationality. The nationality issue has been a source of conflict in the state due to the sharp tension between the indigenous population and the Bangladeshi population, which arrived in the state in different waves of immigration in recent decades. There have been inter-community clashes on several occasions in recent years.

India (Assam)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(IKS), KPLT, NSLA, UPLA and KPLT

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.

Tensions remained active in Assam, with levels of intensity similar to those in the previous year. According to the body count kept by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 20 people died in 2018 as a result of the

India (Manipur)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups PLA, PREPAK, PREPAK (Pro), KCP, KYKL, RPF, UNLF, KNF, KNA

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.

Manipur continued to be the scene of tension and sporadic clashes between the security forces and the insurgent groups operating in the state. Around 30 armed groups would be active in the state, though their operational and recruitment capacity would be very unequal. According to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 23 people lost their lives during the year as a result of armed violence in the state (seven civilians, seven members of the security forces and nine insurgents). This was a lower death toll than in the previous year, when 55 people lost their lives as a result of armed violence. Security force operations resulted in many arrests of alleged members of insurgent groups. These groups' activities included attacks on infrastructure and extortion, as well as attempts to attack different public representatives. The conflict in

Nagaland and the possibility of agreement between the Naga insurgents and the Indian government was also a source of tension because of all the possible implications it could have for the territorial configuration of Manipur and the Naga population residing 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, 1999) 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 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 tension remained at very high levels of intensity, with mutual armed attacks at different points along the Line of Control (the *de facto* border between both countries) repeating throughout the year, especially between January and May. Both sides traded blame for having initiated the different episodes of violence, which caused the deaths of security force personnel and civilians living in towns on both sides of the border. In January, four Pakistani soldiers were killed in a mortar attack launched by the Indian Armed Forces. The Pakistani response led to the death of three Indian soldiers. Days later, six civilians and two Indian soldiers were killed by exchanges of fire that went on for several days in a row. In February, India responded to an attack on one of its military bases in Kashmir that killed six soldiers and the resulting escalation of violence forced hundreds of people to flee. Finally, in May, after several days of shelling on the border that killed at least six civilians and a member of the security forces and left 30 people injured, both countries pledged to fully implement the 2003 ceasefire agreement. The number of people killed since the situation worsened in 2016

Tensions between India and Pakistan worsened throughout the year with armed clashes on the border

had topped 150 in May. The countries' diplomatic relations deteriorated markedly in March when the Pakistan foreign ministry reported that its diplomatic staff in India and their families were suffering intense harassment and monitoring that led it to call Pakistan's ambassador in the country. India responded by noting that its diplomatic staff also suffered the same treatment routinely. However, it also emerged that senior Pakistani military commanders had approached India offering the possibility of opening peace negotiations, but did not receive a positive response from India. Finally, after agreeing to hold a meeting alongside the session of the UN General Assembly, which would have been the first high-level meeting since 2015, India cancelled it, referring to an attack on its security forces in Kashmir that was allegedly conducted by armed groups based in Pakistan and also to Pakistan's issuance of postage stamps bearing the image of Burhan Wani, an insurgent whose death in 2016 led to an escalation in the conflict in Kashmir.

Southeast Asia and Oceania

Indonesia (West Papua)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, OPM armed group, political and social opposition (secessionist, pro-autonomy, indigenous and human rights organisations), Papuan indigenous 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.

Administratively divided in the provinces of Papua and West Papua, the Papua region experienced the worst episode of violence in recent years after at least 17 people (some sources claim 31) were kidnapped and killed by the armed opposition group OPM in early December in the Nduga district. This led to the start of one of the most intense counterinsurgency campaigns in recent times by the Indonesian Armed

Forces and the police, which were accused of using chemical weapons (specifically, white phosphorus) and of attacking several communities with aerial bombings, troops and heavy artillery. According to the International Coalition for Papua (which groups together 15 NGOs), around 20 civilians and an undetermined number of combatants and soldiers also died two weeks after the counterinsurgency operation began. In addition, thousands of people who were forced to leave their homes were in a precarious humanitarian situation, living in the jungle without access to water, food or medicine. The OPM admitted that it had carried out the attack, but maintained that the people killed were not civilians who were building a road, but military personnel belonging to corps of engineers who had been photographing demonstrators in the days leading up to the massacre. On 1 December, almost 600 people had been arrested in Indonesia during the demonstrations that often take place in various parts of the country to commemorate the day when the flag symbolising the independence of Papua was raised for the first time in 1961. The OPM also justified its armed action by claiming that the construction of the aforementioned Trans-Papua Highway (measuring about 4,600 kilometres) would be used by state security forces to enhance its counterinsurgency operations and to control areas that are more remote and difficult to access. The OPM took advantage of the media coverage of its action to publicly assert its refusal to surrender and its determination to continue fighting until the region achieves independence. Faced with unanimous condemnation following the accusations made by Australian journalists that they had used chemical weapons against the population, the Indonesian Armed Forces not only denied having done so, but also denied that it possessed them. The government also announced its intention to double its military presence in the region and announced that the Indonesian Armed Forces would be responsible for completing the Trans-Papua Highway. In the face of international pressure arising from the accusations that they had used chemical weapons, in late January 2019, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet announced that Jakarta had authorised personnel from her office to visit West Papua to investigate the situation first-hand. The episodes of violence experienced in late 2018 and early 2019 are part of an upward trend in the dynamics of confrontation between the Indonesian Armed Forces and the OPM, whose armed wing declared war on the Indonesian government in January 2018. The declaration was acknowledged by the OPM in January 2019 at the same press conference in Port Moresby (the capital of the neighbouring country of Papua New Guinea) in which it invited the Indonesian government to begin peace negotiations. This development came after several years in which, according to some analysts, the OPM lowered the intensity of its armed actions to give an opportunity to the new conflict management strategy announced by current President Joko Widodo at the beginning of his term in 2014.

Thailand	
Intensity:	1
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. Although a new Constitution was voted in August 2017, the new Government was unable to bring down the political and social polarisation and there continued to be regular mass demonstrations encouraged by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (a movement also receiving the name of "red shirts", supporting the return of former prime-minister Thaksin Shinawatra) and by the People's Alliance for Democracy –also known as the "yellow shirts". This instability gave place to many violent acts, the resignation of several governments, and the overthrowing of the Government led by Yingluck Shinawatra –Thaksin Shinawatra's sister– with a military coup in May 2014. Since then the country is governed by a military government called the National Council for Peace and Order, which has been repeatedly accused of prohibiting the action of parties, retraining fundamental rights and freedoms and wanting to institutionalize and perpetuate a constitutional and democratic exceptionality situation.

As in previous years, there were no mass social protests or notable episodes of violence, but there was an **increase in demonstrations and national and international pressure for the Thai government (officially the National Council for Peace and Order, NCPO) to lift its ban on the political parties' activity and to announce the final date of the election that should allow the country to restore democracy and put an end to the military junta that has ruled it since May 2014.** Despite the drastic restrictions on the right of association and demonstration, several demonstrations were staged in Bangkok and other cities in the first quarter of the year after the government postponed the election again (for the fifth time) and did not specify a new date. A march undertaken by about 200 people making various social, environmental and political demands, such as the democratisation of the country and respect for human rights, produced great social and media interest. The march covered more than 450 kilometres (from Bangkok to the north-eastern town of Khon Kaen) and lasted almost a month. It was organised by the People Go Network, a platform created by civil society organisations in 2016. The demonstrations increased again in May, coinciding with the fourth anniversary of the coup against former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. In fact, the NCPO took several forms of legal action during the year against the Pheu Thai party, which is linked to former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (another former

prime minister who was also deposed in a coup d'état in 2006), on the grounds that it broke the electoral law and the regime's ban on political party activity. Finally, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha announced that the general election would take place in February 2019, although he added two conditions that created uncertainty and discomfort: that the coronation of the new King Rama X must have already taken place by then and that the conditions for upholding peace and order must be guaranteed. Moreover, some analysts believe that several statements by General Prayuth during the year and the support he has received from various political groups suggest that he will run in the election himself. In addition to the protests linked to the election date, local and international human rights organisations criticised the regime repeatedly during the year. Notable in this regard was the UN Secretary-General's report, published in September, which includes Thailand on the list of 38 countries that carries out acts of reprisal and intimidation against people who cooperate with the United Nations to promote or protect human rights.

Peaceful anti-government protests in Armenia resulted in a change of government, which was ratified in early elections in December

Tensions increased between April and May, in the wake of anti-government protests that led to the resignation of former President and Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan and early elections, which put an end to the long-lived hegemony of the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

After a 14-day march through the country by opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan, a member of the minority opposition party Civil Contract, protests broke out in the capital, Yerevan. These protests against Serzh Sargsyan's prolonged grip on power spread and amplified on 13 April.

Specifically, the protests rejected the government's plans to appoint Sargsyan, who had completed his second presidential term in 2018, to be the new prime minister, relying on the constitutional amendments approved in a referendum in 2015, which turned Armenia into a parliamentary republic and came into force with the legislative elections of 2017, in which the HHK won. Tens of thousands of people gathered in the capital on 17 April, the same day that Parliament voted to make Sargsyan prime minister (76 votes in favour and 17 abstaining). The day before, 46 people were injured, including six policemen, in clashes between police and demonstrators in which the police used concussion grenades. The protests were prolonged, mostly peaceful and employed strategies of non-violent civil disobedience. Pashinyan called for a "peaceful revolution". Negotiations began between Pashinyan and Sargsyan, which failed, and Pashinyan was arrested on 22 April. Thousands of women urged Sargsyan to resign by beating on cooking pots. Amidst mass protests, Sargsyan resigned on 23 April. Pashinyan was released that same day. Acting Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan ruled out negotiations with Pashinyan. According to media reports, a day earlier President Putin had urged Karapetyan to find a quick solution that would reflect the results of the 2017 elections, which the HHK won. Subsequently, the Russian government stated that it considered the events in Armenia to be an internal affair. Pashinyan was finally elected acting prime minister by the Armenian Parliament on 8 May, with 59 votes in favour, including several from the HHK, and 42 against. Hundreds of protesters were arrested during the weeks of protests, accusing them of participating in mass unrest, though they were released hours or days later, according to Human Rights Watch. In any case, analysts highlighted the containment in the use of force by the security forces during the weeks of protest, in contrast to escalating tension in previous years, including the post-election crisis of 2008, which resulted in a dozen fatalities and several hundred people injured. Members of the security forces even joined the 2019 protests. The new government programme focused on the fight against corruption, the strengthening of education and the economy. The new government upheld a public position in line with previous governments on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including defending Armenian forces' control of the districts around

2.3.4. Europe

Russia and Caucasus

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

Summary:

The former Soviet republic of Armenia became independent in 1991, within the framework of the dissolution of the USSR, and began a process of convulsive transition, characterised by political instability and the war with Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (1992-1994). Armenia's participation in this war led to international sanctions, with serious impact in its economy, although it experienced a certain recovery in later years. Internally, the country has faced various political crises since its independence, including the resignation in 1998 of President Levon Ter-Petrosian, accused of concessions to Azerbaijan in the peace process; or the violent episodes of 1999 in Parliament, in which several armed men killed the prime minister, the president of the chamber and six parliamentarians. Recurrent themes of tension in the post-Soviet era have included disputes between the incumbent government and the opposition over electoral irregularities, complaints about the violation of human rights, especially freedom of expression and the press, criticism of the use of force in repression of demonstrations or corruption. The climate of discontent and polarization worsened after the electoral crisis of 2008, with protests against the result, various fatalities and the declaration of a state of emergency. In 2018 peaceful mass protests against former President and Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan's prolonged grip on power led to his departure from the government, followed by new elections and a new government.

Nagorno-Karabakh. Early parliamentary elections were held in December, as part of Pashinyan's aspirations to ratify his electoral support. His party obtained 70% of the votes (88 of the 132 seats), while the HHK did not achieve any parliamentary representation. Turnout was lower than in previous elections, at 48.6%.

Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International
Main parties:	Azerbaijan, Armenia, self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh,

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.

The security situation improved in the final months of the year, following an agreement on a mechanism of direct communication between the parties to the conflict, which led to a significant reduction in violence.

Questions were raised during the year about the impact that the change of government in Armenia, resulting from massive anti-government protests, could have on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In what came to be called the Velvet Revolution, massive peaceful protests were staged between April and early May against outgoing President Serzh Sargsyan's prolonged grip on power and attempt to become the new prime minister after the constitutional amendments of 2015 and after completing two presidential terms. The protests eventually led to his resignation and the appointment of Nikol Pashinyan, a member of the opposition Civil Contract party and one of the main leaders of the protests, to be acting prime minister in May. The early elections in December were won by Pashinyan's My Step alliance, with more than 70% of the votes, while Sargsyan's Republican Party did not get enough votes to enter Parliament. However, turnout for the elections was low, at 48.6%, in contrast to the high levels of mobilisation during the protests. The change in leadership raised questions about its impact on the dispute. After being appointed acting prime minister, Pashinyan upheld a

public position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue similar to that of previous Armenian leaders, affirming that various districts around Nagorno-Karabakh that were seized militarily by Armenian forces during the war in the 1990s belong to Nagorno-Karabakh. Pashinyan also called for the direct participation of representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh in the peace process. However, under his leadership progress was made in the final months of the year. Thus, during a summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States in September, Armenia and Azerbaijan reached an agreement to **create a mechanism of direct communication between the ministries of defence aimed at preventing incidents. Its entry into force in October was accompanied by a drop in the number of violent incidents**, as announced by both governments. The co-mediators of the OSCE Minsk Group welcomed the move. At the end of the year, in a new meeting with the Minsk Group, the foreign ministers agreed on the need to take concrete steps to prepare their respective populations for peace. There had been **new breaches of the ceasefire in previous months, leaving several dozen people dead**. Both countries also carried out large-scale military exercises. Moreover, there were protests in Nagorno-Karabakh at various times of the year. Unprecedented protests were staged in June following violent incidents between security agents and two civilians. The demonstrations led to the resignation of the chief of police, the head of the national security service and another senior official. In addition, the top leader of Nagorno-Karabakh announced that he would not run in the 2020 election. Some analysts established links between social protests in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. At the end of the year, tensions arose between representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh and the new Armenian government.

Russia (Chechnya)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	System, Identity, Government Internal
Main parties:	Federal Russian Government, Government of Chechnya, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)

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.

Tensions remained high along several lines and included violent incidents, with several dozen fatalities, and harsh internal repression by the Chechen authorities. **ISIS claimed responsibility for several attacks**, including one against an Orthodox church in the capital, Grozny, in May, that killed two policemen, one worshipper and the four assailants and wounded two other policemen and one worshipper. ISIS also claimed responsibility for several attacks in August, including a suicide attack on a police station in the town of Merker-Yurt, an attack with a vehicle against police officers in Grozny and an assault with a knife against a police station in the town of Shali. According to the Chechen authorities, the assailants were minors. These events were followed by mass arrests and interrogations of young people in Shali. The Chechen authorities rejected allegations that ISIS was behind these attacks, claiming that the group did not exist in Chechnya, despite the fact that a large part of the Islamist fighters of the North Caucasus have pledged allegiance to ISIS in recent years, which in 2015 declared the Vilayat Kavkaz (Caucasian Province) in various parts of the region, including Chechnya. It is also estimated that several thousand Russian nationals have joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq, an unknown number of which came from Chechnya. As in previous years, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov threatened collective punishment against the suspects' relatives. In November there was another suicide attack on a police station in Grozny, which caused no injuries.

The climate of repression and violence against human rights defenders and activists continued. The director of the Chechen branch of the human rights group Memorial, Oyub Titiev, was arrested in January and kept in pre-trial detention for the rest of the year on charges of drug possession. Human rights organisations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the World Organisation Against Torture, FIDH and others issued a joint statement that month, defending the work of Titiev and Memorial and demanding his release. International actors such as the European Parliament also demanded his release. Fifteen OSCE member states expressed concern about the situation of the human rights defenders, as well as journalists and people who have been arrested, detained, tortured and murdered because

For the first time since 2011, a group of OSCE member states invoked an organisational mechanism to establish a mission to investigate human rights violations in Chechnya

of their sexual orientation and gender identity, invoking the OSCE Vienna Mechanism in August. Through this tool, they demanded that Russia clarify the measures taken by the federal authorities to ensure that the Chechen regime complies with Russia's commitments to the OSCE. They also requested information on the steps taken in the federal investigation of human rights violations in Chechnya, including of LGBTI people and the extrajudicial killing of 27 people in January 2017. Furthermore, they demanded that Russia move to guarantee the work of media and human rights organisations, including Memory. In November, 16 states invoked another OSCE tool, the Moscow Mechanism, to establish a mission of experts to investigate reported human rights violations. The Moscow Mechanism had been used for the last time in 2011. Finally, a border demarcation agreement reached between the authorities of Chechnya and Ingushetia and involving an exchange of territory sparked protests in Ingushetia.

Russia (Dagestan)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Dagestan, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)

Summary:

Dagestan –which is the largest, most highly populated republic in the north of the Caucasus, and with the greatest ethnic diversity–, has faced different levels of conflict since the end of the 1990s. The armed rebel forces of Salafist Islamist ideology, 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 has been articulated around various structures, such as the network of armed units of an Islamist nature known as Sharia Jamaat, and later through Vilayat Dagestan, both integrated into the insurgency of the North Caucasus (Caucasus Emirate). From the end of 2014 various commanders from Dagestan and the North Caucasus declared their loyalty to ISIS, splitting from the Caucasus Emirate and establishing a Caucasian branch linked to ISIS (Vilayat Kavkaz). In addition, part of the insurgency has moved to Syria and Iraq, joining various armed groups. Armed violence in Dagestan is the result of different factors, including the regionalization of the Islamist insurgency from Chechnya as well as human rights violations in Dagestan, often under 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 corruption 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. The armed violence has subsided in recent years.

Tensions in Dagestan continued to decline, following the trend of recent years, to the point that it was no longer considered an armed conflict. Even so, violent incidents continued, **causing several dozen deaths amidst an atmosphere of human rights violations**. ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on an Orthodox church in the town of Kizlar in February that killed six people, including the assailant, and wounded five, three of them police officers. ISIS also claimed responsibility for an attack with firearms on a police vehicle in July that killed two police officers and wounded one. The authorities conducted counterterrorist operations during the year that claimed several lives. People were also arrested and given prison sentences on charges of terrorism. The human rights situation continued to be serious. The Dagestani branch of the Russian human rights organisation Memorial suffered attacks, including against its director, Sirazhutdin Datsiev, in May. It also suffered material damage to one of its vehicles in January, in addition to attacks and persecution against Memorial in Chechnya and Ingushetia in the first few months of the year. As in previous years, the authorities conducted raids on mosques considered sympathetic to Salafism and arrested worshippers. The regime persecutes the Salafist branch of Islam and has been accused in recent years of yielding “false positives” (killing young civilian men that it presents as insurgents or terrorists).

Relations between Serbia and Kosovo deteriorated due to factors such as the approval of the Kosovar law to transform its security forces into an army and Kosovo’s application of tariffs on imports from Serbia

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.

Tensions rose between Serbia and Kosovo during the year. First, the **Serbian government accused Kosovo of failing to keep its promise to establish the Association of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo** that resulted from the 2013 agreements. Several security incidents also highlighted the strained relations between Serbia and Kosovo. The Kosovar police arrested and deported the head of the Serbia’s Office for Kosovo, Marko Duric, during a visit to Mitrovica, setting off protests by Kosovo Serbs in which several people were injured in clashes with the police. In September, Serbia ordered its army to prepare for battle during a surprise visit by Kosovo President Hashim Thaci to northern Kosovo, including the Serb-majority town of Zubin Potok and Lake Gazivode. Thaci was accompanied by special police forces during his visit. Lake Gazivode is disputed between Kosovo and Serbia and its hydroelectric power plant is controlled by Serbia. At the same time, the Kosovo Albanian opposition movement

Vetevendosje (“self-determination”) organised protests in the capital, Pristina, against the possibility that a final agreement between Serbia and Kosovo might include any exchange of territory. In that vein, in August Thaci had announced that he would bring to the bargaining table the idea of a “correction of the border” to integrate the Albanian areas of Serbia’s Presevo Valley into Kosovo, while rejecting the possibility of any territorial partition of Kosovo, which would affect the Serb-majority areas of northern Kosovo. The possibility of territorial modification provoked many different reactions. The president of Serbia supported demarcating the border and defended integrating the Serb areas of northern Kosovo into Serbia. US National Security Advisor John Bolton said the United States would not impede a change to the border if it were the result of an agreement between both sides. The tension around this issue was palpable in the EU-facilitated negotiating process. Another factor that caused relations between both governments to deteriorate was **the Assembly of Kosovo’s approval in December of legislation to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army**. NATO regretted the decision. The plans and progress made during the year in that direction prompted criticism and warnings from Serbia. In November, the government of Kosovo applied a 10% tariff on imports from Serbia and Bosnia in protest of their refusal to recognise Kosovo’s independence, among other factors, and increased it

South-east Europe

Serbia – Kosovo	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Government International ²¹
Main parties:	Serbia, 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

33. 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.

to 100% at the end of that month. Serbia called it the most difficult challenge since Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008. Mayors from four northern Serb-majority townships resigned and cut off communication with Kosovo in protest, while the Serbian president cancelled the negotiating process in December.

Egypt continued to suffer from a climate of persecution of dissent and many human rights violations

he won 97% of all valid votes. This was after several of his opponents either dropped out of the race, were arrested or were banned from running. The election took place in March amid allegations of vote buying and a lack of guarantees on free and fair elections. The authorities intensified their persecution of opponents in the pre-election period and the judiciary

announced investigations against opposition leaders who called for a boycott on the vote. After the elections, the arrest of various critics continued, including bloggers, political activists, journalists, representatives of local human rights organisations, diplomats, academics and lawyers for political prisoners. After al-Sisi was sworn into office in June, he pushed for reform of the military high command and approved controversial and restrictive new measures, including a rule giving the government greater control over the Internet. Parliament also passed a law allowing the president to grant immunity to senior military officers for crimes committed between July 2013 and January 2016, covering the period of the military coup against the government of Mohamed Mursi and the crackdown on demonstrations in support of the Islamists, which led to the deaths of 1,000 people. Trials continued against members of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the year and people were arrested on the suspicion of having links to the group, which has been banned and declared a terrorist organisation. Many people were sentenced to death in 2018 for crimes related to political violence and terrorism.

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 parliamentary 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, political repression and increasing control by military sectors.

Egypt continued to be the scene of an atmosphere of internal tension characterised by the repression of dissent, human rights violations, abuse by the security forces and the application of emergency measures. The state of emergency, which is renewed every three months by the authorities, remained in force throughout the year. It was initially imposed in response to armed insurgent activity in the Sinai Peninsula³⁴. **The key political issue during the year was the presidential election that consolidated Abdel Fatah al-Sisi’s hold on power.** The president announced his intention to run early in the year. In line with the results obtained by Hosni Mubarak and his predecessors before the revolts in the region,

In this context, international human rights organisations condemned many cases of abuse, reporting that many of the arrests of dissidents occurred without arrest warrants and that in some cases could constitute enforced disappearance, as their whereabouts were unknown. **The independent Stop Enforced Disappearance campaign had documented 230 cases of disappearance between August 2017 and August 2018. Human Rights Watch warned of the use of allegations of terrorism to silence individuals and organisations close to the opposition.** Amnesty International also drew attention to the use of mistreatment, torture and prolonged periods of pre-trial detention for government opponents, the lack of investigation into cases of extrajudicial killings and other issues.

Iraq (Kurdistan)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Territory, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran, PKK

34. See the summary on (Sinai) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

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.

After the intensification of the conflict in 2017 due to the independence referendum promoted by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which did not obtain international support and led to retaliatory measures by Baghdad, including the expulsion of Kurdish forces from disputed areas, **tensions slackened in 2018. Starting early in the year, Erbil and Baghdad maintained regular contact to address several issues**, including the management of airports and land borders, oil resources and the budget for the Kurdish region. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani met for the first time after the crisis in late January and the federal leader insisted on Baghdad's conditions to lift the restrictions imposed on the region. After the referendum, the federal government closed the airports in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and they were not reopened until the parties reached an agreement in March. The agreement also required Baghdad to send funds to pay the salaries of public employees in the Kurdish region for the first time since 2014. However, the budgets approved by the federal Parliament in March provoked controversy and encouraged protests by the Kurdish leaders, which boycotted the vote, because of the decrease in resources allocated to the KRG. **Throughout 2018, the situation in the Kurdish area was also determined by two elections.** The federal elections took place in May and were won by the coalition led by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.³⁵ The elections were marred by protests and some episodes of violence in Iraqi Kurdistan and allegations of fraud. Following the vote, KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, the nephew of historical KDP leader Massoud Barzani, who resigned as KRG president after the 2017 crisis, met in Baghdad with the outgoing Iraqi prime minister and with his successor, Adel Abdul Mahdi, to address outstanding issues between the Iraqi federal government and the KRG. Thus, during the last quarter,

Erbil and Baghdad reached an agreement to resume exports from Kirkuk, which had been suspended since the referendum was held in 2017.

The Kurdish legislative elections were held in September, after Parliament was dissolved in 2017 amidst the crisis between Baghdad and Erbil. The elections (the first since 2013) were won by the KDP (45 seats), followed by the PUK (21). The electoral commission also had to process allegations of fraud, which led to the annulment of results in 96 polling stations (120,000 votes). The Barzani family's influence in the KRG was confirmed after the elections, with the appointment of two cousins to the highest positions. **The KDP appointed Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani to be the new president of the KRG and Masrour Barzani, the son of Massoud Barzani and the chief security officer of the region, was promoted to be the new prime minister.** The sole KRG president until 2017, Massoud Barzani has remained at the head of the KDP. Various analysts indicated that tensions between the Kurdish political groups intensified due to the failure of the referendum and to the electoral context. These tensions were also projected onto the politics of Baghdad, where by convention the president is a Kurd. This position has traditionally been occupied by a representative of the PUK, but the KDP also promoted its own candidate. The vote in the federal Parliament gave the victory to the PUK candidate, Barham Salih, who became the new president of Iraq in October. Finally, Turkey launched many attacks against PKK positions in territories controlled by the group throughout the year, resulting in dozens of deaths.³⁶ Iran also conducted at least one attack on a base belonging to the Iranian Kurdish group KDPI, killing 12.³⁷ Turkish attacks caused civilian casualties in Iraqi Kurdistan and the deaths of at least two KRG peshmergas, according to media reports.

Israel – Syria, Lebanon	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Resources, Territory International
Main parties:	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah (party and militia), Iran

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

35. See the summary on Iraq in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

36. See the summary on Turkey (southeast) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

37. See the summary on Iran (northwest) in this chapter.

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.

The historical tension between Israel, Syria and Lebanon intensified during 2018, partly as a result of dynamics linked to the armed conflict in Syria. **There were many armed incidents that may have caused more than 100 deaths during the year, although the body count is difficult to determine. The acts of violence took place in a volatile environment and in an atmosphere scarred by aggressive rhetoric and mutual threats.** Many of the incidents were related to Israel's growing misgivings about Iran's presence and influence in Syria. Early in the year, in the midst of cross-accusations, Israel's downing of an Iranian drone that allegedly entered Israeli airspace (though Tehran denied it) led to an escalation with Israeli attacks against Iranian targets in Syria and missiles fired by Syrians that may have reached Israeli territory. In April, a new Israeli attack on an air base in central Syria caused the deaths of seven Iranian troops. Weeks later, another set of attacks against military bases in northern Syria led to the deaths of 38 Syrian soldiers and 18 Iranian troops. The perpetrator of these attacks was vague, though some sources blamed them on Israel. The escalation worsened in May when Israel launched attacks after accusing Iran of firing rockets in the area of the Golan Heights. Some of the Israeli missiles hit Damascus. These Israeli attacks killed 23 people and were considered the most intense since the conflict in Syria began in 2011. Damascus said the attack had struck Syrian targets, not Iranian ones. Israel also attacked targets near the border area with Iraq, allegedly against forces of Iraqi origin aligned with Tehran. In this context, Syria's anti-aircraft system mistakenly shot down an allied Russian aircraft, killing 15 people, when trying to hit four Israeli planes that had launched an attack in the Latakia area allegedly against Iranian interests. **A senior Israeli official acknowledged that at least 200 attacks had been launched on suspected Iranian targets in Syria since early 2017.** The Israeli government insisted that Iran must withdraw completely from Syria, rejected Russia's offers for Iranian forces to remain more than 100 or 85 kilometres from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and stressed that it would not cease its operations in Syria as long as Iranian arms transfers to Hezbollah through Syria continued. The Lebanese Shia militia-party confirmed that it would continue to support the Damascus regime for as long as was necessary.

There were also another series of incidents in the border area between Israel and Lebanon in 2018. One of the most

Tensions between Israel, Syria and Lebanon intensified during 2018, partly as a result of the dynamics of the Syrian conflict and misgivings about Iranian influence on the country

prominent took place at the end of the year, when Israel launched an operation that it called "Northern Shield" to destroy tunnels allegedly built by Hezbollah for entering Israeli territory. The UN mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) confirmed that at least two of the tunnels crossed the "Blue Line" in contravention of UN Security Council. Other attacks against Hezbollah and Hamas targets on Lebanese soil were also attributed to Israel throughout the year. As such, the dispute over the land and, above all, maritime borders between Lebanon and Israel remained on the agenda, influenced by the discovery of gas reserves in the Mediterranean, and no headway was made in establishing a permanent ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel. The UNIFIL periodic reports also found that Israel continued to violate Lebanese airspace on a recurring basis, more than 1,000 times in 2018.

The Gulf

Iran (north-west)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups PJAK and KDPI, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

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.

Hostilities between the Iranian government and Kurdish armed groups intensified and killed at least 60 people during 2018.

The incidents were concentrated in the second half of the year, in the northwestern part of the country and in border territories controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. The acts of violence included an attack by Iranian forces against alleged militants that left nine dead on the border with Iraq in June, an assault by Kurdish fighters on a checkpoint in Marivan that killed a dozen members of the Revolutionary Guard and an undetermined number of militiamen in July, clashes in August between members of the KDPI and Iranian security forces in

Oshnavieh that left over 20 fatalities (12 guards and 11 Kurdish fighters, according to various sources) and a missile attack against a KDPI base in Iraqi Kurdistan that killed 12 people in September. After some of these incidents, Iran protested to the KRG, complaining that Kurdish fighters had entered its territory from Iraq, while the KRG accused Tehran of violating its territorial integrity. Kurdish organisations reported the killing of Kurdish people, including at least one woman and one minor. International human rights NGOs continued to condemn violations of the rights of minorities in Iran, including Kurds, citing cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, ill-treatment and unfair trials against activists. The instability in the northwestern part of the country exacerbated insecurity in other Iranian border areas with significant minority populations. During 2018 more than a dozen people were killed in several incidents in the Balochistan area (bordering Pakistan), linked to the activity of the Jaish al-Adl group. Another 25 people were killed in Ahvaz, in the southern province of Khuzestan (bordering Iraq), in attacks for which the armed opposition group Ahvaz National Resistance and ISIS claimed responsibility.

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 (al-Hijaz Province, Najd Province)

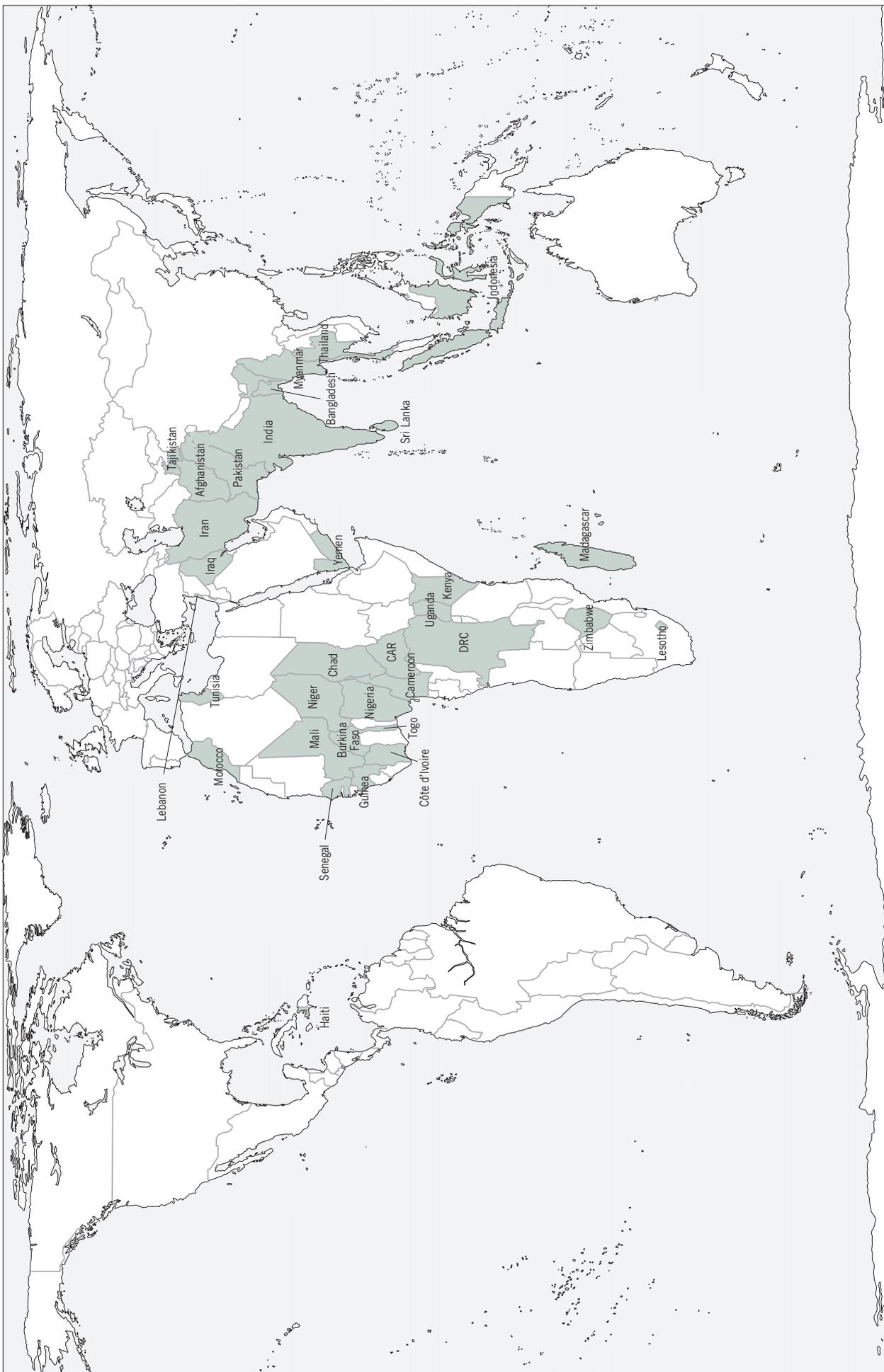
Summary:

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. Internally, 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.

As in previous years, the tension in Saudi Arabia was fuelled by domestic policy issues and by the consequences of its foreign policy, given its growing

involvement in regional issues, such as the war in Yemen and its power struggle with Iran. In 2018, there were fewer episodes of violence associated with armed groups and with unrest in the Shia part of the country than in 2017. However, **the regime's repressive policies received wide international exposure as a consequence of the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October.** The brutal crime provoked criticism of the kingdom and particularly of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who was believed to have instigated the murder. An investigation by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency concluded that the prince had ordered the journalist killed. The Saudi government dismissed senior officials, announced that it would restructure the intelligence services and arrested nearly 20 people for their alleged responsibility for the crime. However, by the end of the year no independent investigation had yet been launched, as demanded by the UN. The murder was just one of the many forms of abuse and human rights violations of which the regime was accused during the year. International organisations stressed that Riyadh continued with its severe restrictions on freedom of expression and association and with the persecution of dissenting voices, including human rights defenders and women activists. For example, a royal decree in June ended the ban on driving for women. However, a month earlier, authorities had detained prominent activists who had defended women's right to drive. In the following months, two other advocates of women's right to drive and of an end of the male guardianship system were arrested. In addition, the UN special rapporteur on counterterrorism warned in June about the abusive use of the anti-terrorist law in Saudi Arabia to criminalise criticism of the authorities. Amnesty International also called attention to the death sentences in the country and, in particular, its application after confessions under torture or against dissidents. These include some Shia activists charged with participating in demonstrations to demand reforms and greater rights for their community, which is affected by several discriminatory policies. Throughout the year, Saudi Arabia faced the consequences of its involvement in the war in Yemen. Houthi forces launched many missiles in 2018, mainly towards the areas of Najran, Jizan, Khamis Mushait and also against the capital, Riyadh. Saudi forces intercepted many of these missiles, but one of them killed an Egyptian citizen in Riyadh in March, the first victim of the Yemeni conflict in the Saudi capital. Saudi Arabia maintained its regional rivalry with Iran and continued to persecute people with suspected links to the Islamic Republic and Hezbollah. No progress was made during the year in resolving the regional crisis that led Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region to break off relations with Qatar in 2017, such as Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia accuses Qatar of financing terrorism and of seeking to undermine its position, charges that Qatar denies and blames on Riyadh's intention to punish the country for pursuing an independent foreign policy.

Map 3.1. Gender, peace and security



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

3. Gender, peace and security

- Seventy-nine per cent (79%) of the armed conflicts for which data on gender equality existed took place in contexts with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination.
- Nine of the 19 conflicts that were subject to examination in the UN Secretary-General's report on sexual violence on armed conflicts were of high intensity during 2018.
- Most international peace processes continued to exclude women and did not include gender equality issues in their negotiating agendas, although some progress was made in Afghanistan, Georgia and the Philippines.
- Parity was achieved for the first time in the Senior Management Group of the United Nations, a high-level body chaired by the Secretary-General that brings together the leaders of the organisation's departments, offices, funds and programmes. Gender parity was also achieved among the resident coordinators.
- A total of 79 countries had an action plan at the end of 2018, of which only 43% had a specific budget associated with implementing the plan, according to WILPF.

The Gender, Peace and Security chapter analyses the gender impacts of armed conflicts and socio-political crises, as well as the inclusion of the gender perspective into various international and local peacebuilding initiatives by international organisations, especially the United Nations, national governments, as well as different organisations and movements from local and international civil society.¹ In addition, the chapter conducts a specific follow-up of the implementation of the agenda on women, peace and security, established after the adoption by the UN Security Council in 2000 of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The gender perspective brings to light the differentiated effects of the 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 peacebuilding. 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 Social Institutions and Gender Index; 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. At the beginning of the chapter, a map is attached that shows those countries with serious gender inequalities according to the Index of Social Institutions and Gender.

3.1. Gender inequalities

The Index of Social Institutions and Gender (SIGI)² is a measure of discrimination against women in social institutions, which reflects discriminatory laws, regulations and practices in 180 countries taking into account five dimensions: discrimination within the family, violence against women, preference for sons, women's access to resources and their access to public space. Discriminatory social institutions (formal and informal regulations, attitudes and practices) restrict women's access to rights, justice and empowerment, and perpetuate gender inequalities in areas such as education, health, employment or participation in politics.

According to the SIGI, levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 29 countries, mainly concentrated in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The analysis obtained by crossing the data of this index with those of countries experiencing armed conflict reveals that **13 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2018 occurred in countries where serious gender inequalities existed, with high or very high levels of discrimination,**

1. Gender is the analytical category that highlights that inequalities between men and women are a social construct and not a result of nature, underlining their social and cultural construction in order to distinguish them from biological differences of the sexes. Gender aims to give visibility to the social construction of sexual difference and the sexual division of labour and power. The gender perspective seeks to show that the differences between men and women are a social construct which is a product of unequal power relations that have historically been established in the patriarchal system. Gender as a category of analysis aims to demonstrate the historical and context-based nature of sexual differences.

2. The SIGI is an index developed by the OECD that measures five sub-indexes composed of 14 indicators that include: legal age of marriage, early marriage, parental authority, violence against women, female genital mutilation, reproductive autonomy, selective abortions by sex, fertility preferences, secure access to land, secure access to the ownership of other resources, access to financial services, access to public space, access to political participation and representation. OCDE, *Social Institutions & Gender Index*, OCDE, 2019.

Table 3.1. Countries in armed conflict and/or socio-political crisis with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination³

	Medium levels of discrimination	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination	No data
Armed conflicts⁴	Burkina Faso ⁵ DRC (3) India (2) Thailand	CAR Chad ⁶ Mali Myanmar Nigeria ⁷	Afghanistan Cameroon ⁸ Iraq Niger ⁹ Pakistan (2) Yemen (2)	Algeria Burundi Egypt Israel ¹⁰ Libya Niger Palestine ¹¹ Somalia South Sudan Sudan (2) Syria
Socio-political crises	DRC (4) ¹² Haiti India (4) ¹³ Kenya Lesotho Senegal Tajikistan Thailand Zimbabwe	Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia Iraq Madagascar Morocco Nigeria (2) Sri Lanka Togo Tunisia Uganda	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Lebanon (2) ¹⁴ Pakistan (2)	Angola Bahrain China Djibouti Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Gambia Guinea Bissau Israel (2) Palestine ¹⁵ Republic of the Congo Saudi Arabia Somalia South Sudan (2) Sudan (2) Syria Uzbekistan Venezuela

and seven in countries with medium levels of discrimination, while 11 armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data: Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger, Palestine,¹⁶ Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Thus, more than 54% of the armed conflicts for which data on gender equality existed took place in contexts with high or very high levels of gender discrimination. This figure rises to 79% when contexts with medium levels of discrimination are included. In four other countries experiencing one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, and in some cases reached low (Ethiopia, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low levels (Colombia),

20 of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018 took place in countries where there were medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

according to the SIGI. At least 26 of the 83 active socio-political crises during the year 2018 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities (high or very high levels according to the SIGI), accounting for 41% of the socio-political crises for which data existed. This figure rises to 56% if countries with medium levels of discrimination are included. Eighteen (18) socio-political crises occurred in countries for which no data are available (Angola, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, China, the Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Gaza and the West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uzbekistan and Venezuela).

3. Table created based on levels of gender discrimination found in the SIGI (OECD), as indicated in the latest available report (2019), and on Escola de Cultura de Pau's classifications for armed conflicts and socio-political crises (see chapter 1, Armed conflicts, and chapter 2, Socio-political crises). The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

4. The number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in the country appears between parentheses.

5. Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali are involved in the same armed conflict, called the Western Sahel region.

6. Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are involved in the same armed conflict, called the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram).

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Israel and Palestine and involved in the same conflict.

11. In the SIGI, Palestine is referred to as Gaza and the West Bank.

12. One of the socio-political crises in the DRC is the international one called Central Africa (LRA), in which both the Congolese Armed Forces and self-defence militias from the DRC are involved. See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

13. One of the socio-political crises in India refers to the one between it and Pakistan.

14. One of the socio-political crises in Lebanon refers to the one it has with Israel and Syria.

15. See footnote 11.

16. Ibid.

3.2. The impact of violence and conflicts from a gender perspective

This section addresses the gender dimension in the conflict cycle, especially in reference to violence against women. The gender perspective is a useful tool for the analysis of armed conflicts and socio-political crises and makes it possible to give visibility to aspects generally ignored in this analysis both in terms of causes and consequences.

3.2.1. Sexual violence in armed conflicts and crises

As in previous years, during 2018 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts.¹⁷ Its use, which in some cases was part of the deliberate war strategies of the armed actors, was documented in different reports, as well as by local and international media.

In April, the UN Security Council held an open discussion on sexual violence in armed conflicts. The Secretary-General presented his annual monitoring and evaluation report on the issue. The Secretary-General's report covered the year 2017 and analysed the situation in 19 countries, 13 of which experienced armed conflict: Afghanistan, the CAR, Colombia, the DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Syria and Yemen, as well as the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which includes Nigeria. The report also identified governmental and non-governmental actors responsible for the use of sexual violence in conflicts, stated that 21 female protection advisors were deployed in seven missions and added that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict conducted activities in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan in 2017. The report noted the deteriorating conditions for civil society organisations around the world and how violence has been used to assault human rights advocates and intimidate witnesses in trials for crimes of sexual violence and war crimes. The Secretary-General's report noted that most of the victims are economically and politically marginalised women and girls, often in remote rural areas or in situations of forced displacement.

The UN Secretary-General's annual report identified armed actors responsible for sexual violence in 10 countries where 14 armed conflicts took place

Sexual violence was also a factor causing displacement and an obstacle to the return of refugees or internally displaced persons.

The discussion focused on the prevention of sexual violence, with Rohingya lawyer Razia Sultana participating as a civil society representative. Sultana spoke about the violent situation of the Rohingya civilian population, which has been massively displaced as a result of Burmese state military operations, denouncing the alarming levels of sexual violence that occurred. Sultana also referred to the impact of arms transfers and the mining industry on the use of sexual violence against the civilian population in the context of the armed conflict. It was the first time that the Secretary-General's report mentioned the sexual violence in Myanmar. Meanwhile, the Secretary-General's special representative for sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Patten, outlined the Secretary-General's new agenda in this area based on three pillars: 1) transforming the culture of impunity into one of deterrence through judicial action; 2) addressing structural gender inequalities as the root cause of sexual violence; and 3) enhancing national ownership and leadership to provide sustainable responses focused on survivors through the empowerment of women and civil society. Patten also invited the UN Security Council to consider the possibility of establishing a reparations fund for the victims.

Nine of the 19 armed conflicts¹⁸ that were analysed in the UN Secretary-General's report experienced high levels of intensity in 2018 –Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), South Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)–, topping 1,000 fatalities during the year and producing serious impacts on people and the territory, including conflict-related sexual violence. Moreover, five of them also reported an escalation of violence during 2018 compared to 2017, notably in the CAR, Mali, Colombia, Afghanistan and Yemen (Houthis).

Regarding the situation in **Myanmar**, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, which was established by the United Nations Human Rights Council, presented its report on human rights violations

17. The UN considers sexual violence related to conflicts to be “incidents or patterns of sexual violence [...], that is, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancies, forced sterilisation or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, boys or girls. These incidents or patterns of behaviour occur in situations of conflict or post-conflict or in other situations of concern (for example, during a political confrontation). In addition, they have a direct or indirect relationship with the conflict or political confrontation, that is, a temporal, geographical or causal relationship. Apart from the international nature of the alleged crimes, which depending on the circumstances constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide or other gross violations of human rights, the relationship with the conflict may be evidenced by taking into account the profile and motivations of the perpetrator, the profile of the victim, the climate of impunity or the breakdown of law and order by which the State in question may be affected, the cross-border dimensions or the fact that they violate the provisions of a ceasefire agreement”. UN Action Against Sexual Violence In Conflict, Analytical and conceptual framework of sexual violence in conflicts, November 2012.

18. There was more than one armed conflict in some countries covered by the UN Secretary-General's report, according to the definition of the Escola de Cultura de Pau. The complete list of armed conflicts in the countries included in the Secretary-General's report is: the CAR; the DRC (East); the DRC (East-ADF); the DRC (Kasai); the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), which includes Nigeria; Libya, Mali (North); Somalia; South Sudan; Sudan (Darfur); Colombia; Afghanistan; Myanmar; Iraq; Syria; Yemen (Houthis); and Yemen (AQAP).

Box 3.1. Armed actors and sexual violence in conflicts¹⁹

The UN Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflicts, published in March 2018, included a list of armed actors who are suspected of having committed systematic acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence or of being responsible for them in situations of armed conflict, which are subject to examination by the Security Council.²⁰

	STATE ACTORS	NON-STATE ACTORS
CAR		LRA; former Séléka factions: Union for Peace in the Central African Republic, Central African Patriotic Movement, Popular Front for the Revival of the Central African Republic/Gula faction, Popular Front for the Revival of the Central African Republic/Abdoulaye Hussein faction, Patriotic Association for the Renewal of the Central African Republic; Democratic Front of the Central African People/Abdoulaye Miskine; Revolution and Justice; Return, Claim and Rehabilitation/General Sidiki; anti-balaka groups
DRC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Congolese National Police	Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo; Allied Democratic Forces; Forces for the Defence of the Congo; Bana Mura militias; Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda; Patriotic Resistance Front of Ituri; Kamuina Nsapu; LRA; Nduma Defence of the Congo; Mai-Mai Kifuafua; all Mai-Mai Simba factions; Nyatura; Nduma Congo Defence-Renewed; Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki; all the TWA militias
Iraq		ISIS
Mali		MNLA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, Imghad Tuareg Self-Defence Groups and Allies
Myanmar	Burmese Armed Forces (Tatmadaw)	
Somalia	Somali National Army; National Police of Somalia and its allied militias; military forces of Puntland	Al-Shabaab
South Sudan	Sudan People's Liberation Army; National Police of South Sudan	LRA; Justice and Equality Movement; Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition/pro-Machar faction); Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition/pro-Taban Deng faction
Sudan	Sudanese Armed Forces; Rapid Support Forces	Justice and Equality Movement
Syria	Syrian Armed Forces and Syrian intelligence services	ISIS; Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (previously the al-Nusra Front); Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham; pro-government forces that include militias attached to the National Defence Forces
Other cases		Boko Haram

in the states of Kachin, Rakhine and Shan.²¹ The report identifies many infringements on rights and freedoms, as well as serious violations of International Humanitarian Law. The mission included an expert advisor on sexual and gender-based violence with a mandate to investigate cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report reveals that sexual violence was used as a method of torture against women accused of being part of or supporting the armed ethnic opposition groups in the states of Shan and Kachin during the security operations carried out by the Burmese Armed Forces, known as Tatmadaw. This sexual violence was also perpetrated by the intelligence services against people in detention. Many victims suffered sexual violence at the same time that they were subjected to forced labour for the Tatmadaw. Some of these victims were underage girls, who were repeatedly threatened. The report denounces the specific persecution of civilians and the use of sexual violence mainly against women and girls, but also against men, including sexual slavery, forced marriage, and the persecution of victims who managed to escape. The UN

report collects stories of many victims of kidnapping by soldiers individually and in groups in order to subject them to sexual violence in areas affected by the armed conflict. The report says that sexual violence has been accompanied by extreme cruelty and very humiliating treatment of the victims. It also indicates that sexual violence and other serious human rights violations have forcibly displaced large numbers of people. The armed Kachin and Shan opposition groups also engaged in sexual violence, though on a much smaller scale than the Burmese Armed Forces, and yet the report describes the serious difficulties experienced in documenting this situation as a result of obstacles to its work imposed by the Burmese authorities.

The report also notes the use of sexual violence against Rakhine and Rohingya civilians in the armed conflict in Rakhine State. Rohingya women and girls suffered many different forms of sexual violence in 2012 and there is also ample evidence of the use of sexual violence when the conflict escalated in 2017. The United Nations

19. This table uses the names of the armed actors as they appear in the Secretary-General's report, so they do not necessarily coincide with the ones used in chapters 1 and 2 of this yearbook.

20. UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence*, S/2018/250, 23 March 2018.

21. *Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar*, A/HRC/39/64, 12 September 2018.

report shows that women and girls were separated from men by the Burmese Armed Forces, subjected to gang rape and various forms of sexual torture, including mutilation, and raped during security operations that forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of people who took refuge mostly in Bangladesh. The pattern observed in these operations started with the security forces' entry into a village, continued with their burning of houses and property belonging to the Rohingya population, and ended with their indiscriminate or selective killing of civilians and use of sexual violence against women and girls, causing massive displacements of the population.

In the **CAR**, reports about sexual violence in the armed conflict persisted. Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) reported an armed attack in the village of Kiriwiri in February in which a dozen women became victims of sexual violence.²² The NGO also indicated that it treated 1,914 victims of sexual violence in its specialised clinics in the country during the first six months of the year.²³ In November, UNICEF reported that thousands of children had been victims of sexual violence, mostly girls, as a result of the armed conflict rocking the country in which two out of every three children depend on humanitarian aid.²⁴ Girls not only suffer sexual violence by armed actors, but also by people from their trusted environment. Once demobilised, girls who have participated as combatants in armed groups suffer from great stigma due to prejudices regarding their sexual activity within them. UNICEF has also pointed out that girls who do not attend school are at serious risk of sexual violence and early marriages and pregnancies, putting their health in serious jeopardy.

South Sudan was another scenario of armed conflict where sexual violence had a serious impact. In December, the United Nations reported that more than 100 women had been treated as a result of the attacks suffered in the Bentiu area, near the border with Sudan. Several human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned the violence during the year. Amnesty International condemned cases of kidnapping, systematic rape and gang rape committed by government forces and related militias in the counties of Leer and Mayendit (Greater Upper Nile region) as part of the military offensive that took place between April and July. Human Rights Watch also reported allegations of sexual assault and rape against women and girls who sought refuge in UN facilities in the town of Wau (the northwestern region of Bahr el Ghazal).

Sexual violence continued to be reported in **Nigeria** as part of the armed conflict pitting the Nigerian

government against the regional Boko Haram insurgency. Members of the Nigerian Armed Forces have committed sexual violence and sexual exploitation against women and girls in the so-called satellite camps, established in areas controlled by the Nigerian Army after being controlled by Boko Haram, according to a new report by Amnesty International published in 2018.²⁵ According to the report, sexual violence was especially widespread between late 2015 and mid-2016 and was carried out by Nigerian soldiers and the allied militias of the Civilian Joint Task Force. According to Amnesty International's investigation, soldiers and members of the militias have continued to commit sexual violence and sexual exploitation since. The report also condemns the collective arrest of men and adolescents and their transfer to military detention centres for prolonged periods of time, without individualised evaluations, simply on the basis of having fled from areas previously controlled by Boko Haram, and without receiving any further information regarding many of them. According to Amnesty International, various factors led people to flee from areas previously controlled by the insurgents, including attempts to escape Boko Haram's control, food insecurity, indiscriminate violence committed by the Nigerian Army in those locations and others.

Furthermore, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report on the human rights situation in the Indian state of **Jammu and Kashmir**. The report documented the sexual violence that both the Indian security forces and armed opposition groups have committed in the armed conflict in recent decades, the enormous difficulties that the victims face in getting access to justice and the impunity and inaction of the Indian government and the state of Jammu and Kashmir.²⁶ The report mentioned the Kunan Poshpora Survivors organisation's request that the government's Human Rights Commission investigate 143 cases of sexual violence between 1989 and 2017. The report also voiced concern about the fact that the anti-terrorism legislation currently in force (AFSPA) makes it extremely difficult to prosecute members of the security forces responsible for sexual violence. The United Nations said that allegations of sexual violence by security forces have not been investigated credibly and independently, and there is also evidence of sexual violence perpetrated by the insurgents.

Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continued to be reported in an atmosphere of impunity in Libya. The UN and international NGOs reported deaths of civilians, torture, execution and arbitrary detention, both in official centres and in facilities administered by

22. Médecins Sans Frontiers, *Survivors describe a mass rape ordeal outside Bossangoa*, MSF, 8 March 2018.

23. Médecins Sans Frontiers, *"The tip of the iceberg": Stream of patients offer glimpse into scale of sexual violence*, MSF, 7 September 2018.

24. UNICEF, *Crisis in the Central African Republic: in a neglected emergency, children need aid, protection and a future*, UNICEF, November 2018.

25. Amnesty International, *They took our husbands and forced us to be their girlfriends: women in north-east Nigeria starved and raped by those claiming to rescue them*, AI, November 2018.

26. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir: Developments in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir from June 2016 to April 2018, and General Human Rights Concerns in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan*, OACNUDH, 14 June 2018.

militias, as well as cases of women and girls who were arbitrarily arrested due to family ties or “moral crimes”. The migrant and refugee population continued to be especially vulnerable in Libya and were subjected to violence and sexual exploitation, kidnapping, extortion, forced labour and slavery. A report published by UNSMIL and the OHCHR in December 2018, based on over 1,300 interviews between January 2017 and August 2018, described the inhumane conditions in detention centres for migrants and refugees and deplored that the overwhelming majority of women and adolescents interviewed confirmed that they were direct victims of sexual violence or witnesses of this type of abuse directed against other women.²⁷ The report stated that the prevalence of rape of women who have travelled through Libya has been documented by many sources and that there are repeated reports of gang rape, the use of physical violence and death threats. The report states that Nigerian women and girls appear especially vulnerable to exploitation by criminal and human trafficking networks, as they leave their country in the belief that a job is waiting for them in Europe and end up in brothels connected with the sex trade in Libya. Although refugee and migrant women and girls are disproportionately victims of sexual violence in Libya, the UN and OHCHR report noted an increase in the number of men and boys who have received physical and psychological support after suffering abuse during their passage through the North African country. It also reported that no or not enough assistance was given to victims in Libya, increasing their risk of being victimised again.

The International Criminal Court opened a preliminary investigation into the crimes committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar, including acts of sexual violence

3.2.2. Response to sexual violence in armed conflicts

Throughout the year there were different initiatives to respond to sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts, as well as to fight against impunity in different judicial bodies. Some of these are described below.

The International Criminal Court opened a preliminary investigation into the crimes committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar, which could lead to a formal investigation. The ICC prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced the start of this investigation that will include acts of sexual violence and other human rights violations. Even though Myanmar is not part of the ICC, Bangladesh is a member, and has allowed the ICC to begin this preliminary investigation. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken refuge in Bangladesh after fleeing from the violence of the Burmese security forces. The announcement came after the United

Nations presented its extensive report on human rights violations in Rakhine State in Myanmar. The United Nations special rapporteur for Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, had recommended launching the investigation. Furthermore, Amnesty International recommended that the ICC open another full investigation into the activity of the armed group Boko Haram, including sexual violence.

The UN Security Council approved two resolutions imposing sanctions on Libya and Somalia in 2018 that included aspects related to sexual violence and gender violence. In Libya, Resolution 2241 (2018) stated that “the planning, direction or commission of acts of sexual and gender-based violence” may constitute acts that “threaten the peace, stability or security of Libya, or obstruct or undermine the happy conclusion of its political transition”, in an explicit and nearly unprecedented link between sexual and gender violence and insecurity and instability in a country. Similarly, Resolution 2444 (2018), concerning Somalia, stated that “the planning, direction or commission of acts of sexual and gender-based violence” may also be “acts that constitute a threat for the peace, security or stability of Somalia, or the provision of support for such acts”. It should be noted that the resolutions were adopted with China and Russia abstaining.

The United Nations continued to deploy its strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel. Unveiled by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017, the strategy focuses on four areas of action: the rights and dignity of the victims, the end of impunity, the participation of civil society and external partners and the improvement of strategic communication. As part of the deployment, 34 United Nations agencies facilitated country strategies and action plans.²⁸ According to the report, many included provisions for conducting field visits without prior notice and mandatory pre-deployment training for all categories of personnel. Also, in 2017, special representatives were instructed in the four peacekeeping operations with the highest number of sexual exploitation and abuse complaints (MINUSCA, MONUSCO, MINUJUSTH and UNMISS) to establish a position of intermediate or senior status to defend the rights of victims in the field. The purpose of this office is to ensure the incorporation of a victim-centred approach with a gender perspective. They will also answer before the special representative on duty and before the defender of the rights of the victims. According to the report, the work of these new positions has already had positive effects. Moreover, since 2017 all agencies of the United Nations system have been required to file complaints when they have enough information to detect possible sexual exploitation or abuse involving an identifiable victim.

27. UNSMIL-OHCHR, *Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya*, joint report issued by UNSMIL and OHCHR, 18 December 2018.
28. UN Secretary-General, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse*, A/72/751, 15 February 2018.

Regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by military and civilian personnel deployed in United Nations missions, the UN Secretary-General's report found a decrease in the number of complaints reported in 2017 compared to 2016. **62 complaints were filed in 2017, 20 of which referred to sexual abuse and 42 to sexual exploitation (compared with 145 complaints in 2016, 99 in 2015 and 80 in 2014).** In addition, 41 complaints involved 101 military personnel, another 10 involved 23 police officers and 11 accused 11 civilian officials. The 62 complaints affected 130 victims (21 girls and 109 women). 61 of the 62 complaints were referred for investigation, while one was still under review at the end of the year. 20 of those 61 were completed, with 14 considered founded and six unfounded, while another 41 were still pending at the end of the year. Regarding the complaints filed in 2016 and investigated in 2017, 14 were considered founded and 19 unfounded. Moreover, **75 complaints were filed against personnel from bodies other than peacekeeping operations and special political missions** in 2017, including UNHCR (39 complaints), IOM (nine), UNICEF (eight), UNRWA (eight), UNFPA (three), WFP (three), UNOPS (two), the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (one), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (one) and UN Women (one), which meant a 42% increase compared to 2016. 25 of these complaints involved executing partners.²⁹ In 2017, there was also a report of sexual violence perpetrated by forces outside the United Nations operating under the mandate of the UN Security Council, which meant a drop compared to the 20 complaints filed in 2016.

In addition, the **Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General** on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the **CEDAW** Committee signed in 2018 a cooperation framework agreement to promote and protect the rights of women and girls affected by sexual violence related to conflicts. The cooperation framework commits them to 1) establish a joint work programme for implementing the recommendations of both institutions; 2) promote the nationwide implementation of human rights standards for protecting women and girls affected by sexual violence; and 3) cooperate to investigate and collect data that will make it possible to gain ground in governments' accountability regarding their obligations in this matter. The agreement aims to promote the end of impunity with respect to sexual violence. It is the first cooperation framework between a body with a mandate established by the Security Council and a human rights mechanism.

In **Ukraine**, the OSCE special monitoring mission (SMM) established a gender structure in order to strengthen integration of the gender perspective in its work to observe

the security situation, including sexual and gender-based violence. The new architecture includes the position of a senior gender advisor, which answers to the head of mission. Since August 2018, it has also included two gender officers, based in Kiev and Kramatorsk. Finally, it has a network of 13 gender focal points.

3.2.3. Other gender violence in contexts of crisis or armed conflict

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and crises had other serious gender impacts. **Female human rights activists** continued to face many obstacles in armed conflicts, socio-political crises and human rights-related persecution. In the report *Situation of Human Rights Defenders*, published in early 2019,³⁰ the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the situation of women human rights defenders warned of the serious risks that they run, including the lack of recognition of their role and work as human rights advocates, their marginalisation and systematic exclusion; their social discrediting, stigmatisation and attacks on their honour and reputation; risks, threats and attacks in the private sphere and against family members and people close to them; physical aggression, sexual violence, torture, murder and forced disappearance; harassment, violence and attacks over the Internet; judicial harassment and criminalisation; denial of participation, restrictions and reprisals for collaborating with international and regional human rights systems; threats to legal status; physical imprisonment; and attacks against female human rights defence groups and movements. The report also indicated the specific risks faced by groups of female human rights advocates, such as girls; women who do not conform to hegemonic gender norms; indigenous female advocates and defenders of minority groups; human rights defenders with disabilities; female journalists and lawyers; female advocates in leadership positions; female activists in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations; female refugees defenders, female migrants and victims of human trafficking; female activists deprived of their freedom; environmental activists; female defenders of women's human rights; and female activists who defend the rights of sex workers.

In **Ukraine**, a new gender report issued by the OSCE special monitoring mission (SMM) noted that the armed conflict had increased the risks and prevalence of gender-based violence in the country.³¹ Published in December 2018 and analysing the years 2017 and 2018, the report describes the specific impacts of gender-based violence on internally displaced persons. It also indicates that during the period under review, the number of people given the status of victims of human trafficking rose significantly. Most of the

29. The executing partners are actors that implement activities of United Nations agency programmes through agreements and resources and include government institutions, intergovernmental organisations and civil society organisations.

30. Human Rights Council, *Situation of women human rights defenders. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Women Human Rights Defenders*, 10 January 2019, A/HRC/40/60.

31. OSCE, *Thematic report. Gender Dimensions of SMM Monitoring, 1 January 2017- 1 November 2018*. OSCE, December 2018.

reported female victims had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. According to the report, some government and civil society sources identified an increase in trafficking for the purpose of exploiting their labour, which often affected men. According to the sources consulted by the SMM, the rise in the number of trafficking victims was due to factors linked to the conflict, such as the difficult economic situation resulting from the war in eastern Ukraine, especially for the displaced population, as well as factors unrelated to the conflict, including greater knowledge among the population about aid services. Furthermore, there were several attacks against LGBTI people in Ukraine during the year, as pointed out by the OSCE and the OHCHR. According to the OHCHR, the Ukrainian police rarely classify these types of attacks as hate crimes, which makes the motivations of the perpetrators invisible.

Many women's organisations denounced the violence and criminalisation of feminist organisations in **Nicaragua** during the serious political crisis and violence rocking the country in 2018. UN Women expressed its concern about attacks against female human rights defenders and women's organisations and demanded an end to them. Among other repressive actions, dozens of women activists and human rights advocates were arrested and the march organised to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was banned. The Network of Women Against Violence (RMCV) condemned the violence committed by the security forces and related armed actors, including cases of murder, injury, sexual abuse, harassment and rape, and said that it is part of a pattern of other forms of violence against women, as 402 women have been reportedly killed in the last six years. The platform *Articulación Feminista* also denounced cases of kidnapping, rape and torture against women since April 2018, when the crisis began, in addition to intimidation, threats, arrests and harassment against feminist activists. Feminist networks and organisations in Latin America, the Caribbean and other parts of the world called for an end to the government's attacks against the Nicaraguan feminist movement and human rights advocates, which have included intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, attacks against their physical and sexual integrity, expulsion from the country, the withdrawal of residency permits and legally obtained citizenship and the withdrawal of the organisations' legal personality and the freezing of their bank accounts.

A report published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in March 2018 that analysed the year 2017, revealed serious violations of human rights in **Turkey** as part of the state of emergency in the country and the erosion of the rule of law.³² Among the many forms of abuse, the report mentioned the arrest of 100 women who were pregnant or had recently given birth on charges of collaborating with their husbands, who are accused of having connections with terrorist

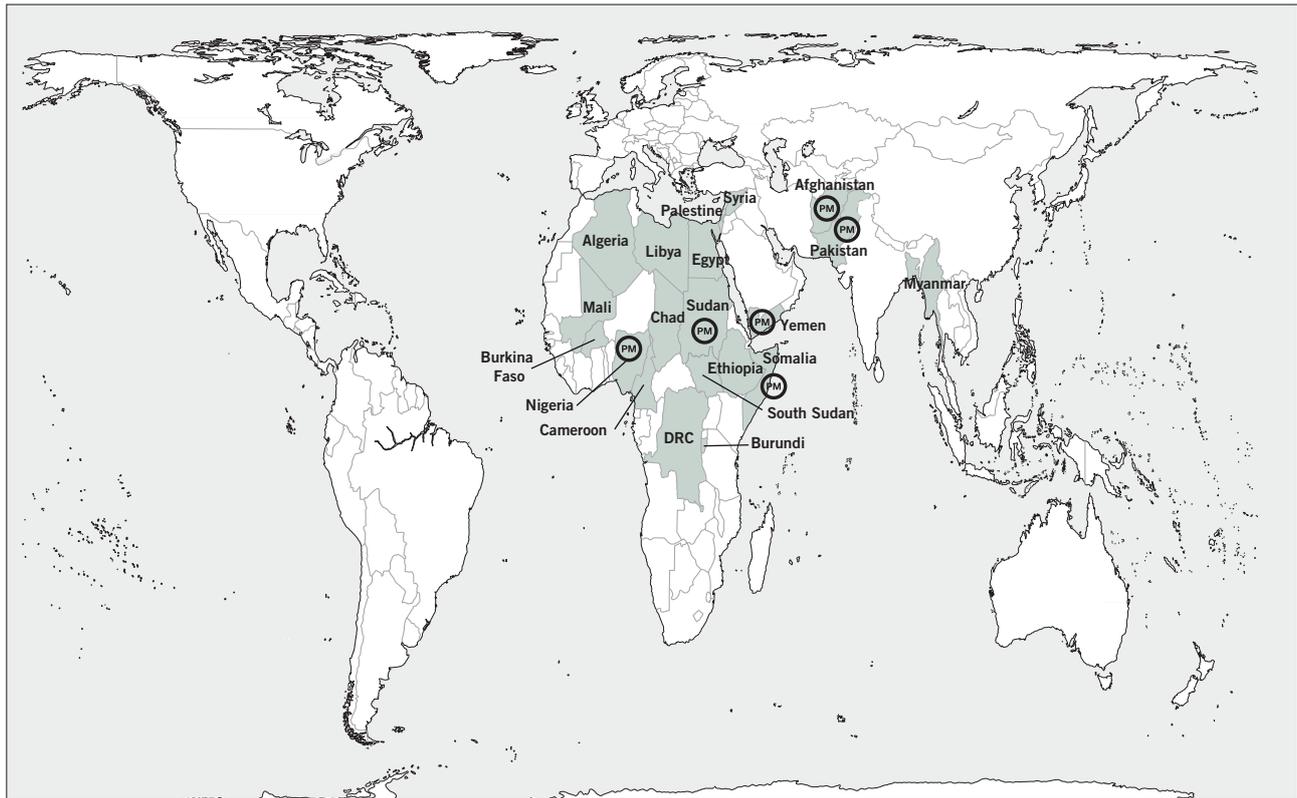
organisations. In relation to the conflict over the Kurdish issue, the report points to allegations of human rights violations specific to the conflict and perpetrated by the state security forces, including but not limited to the use of sexual violence against women, the destruction of homes and the blocking of access to emergency medical aid, potable water and means of life. These are consequences with specific gender impacts. The report also voiced concern about the central government's designation of administrators to replace elected mayors and other members of municipal councils. Eighty-seven (87) elected mayors of Kurdish origin (35 women and 52 men) from a total of 105 municipalities in the southeast were imprisoned between September 2016 and the end of 2017 and were replaced by 94 administrators, all of them men.

The kingdom of **Saudi Arabia** continued with its repressive policies and human rights violations in 2018 and launched an unprecedented campaign of arbitrary arrest against prominent women's rights activists. The first wave of arrests took place in May, weeks before the regime lifted the ban on driving for Saudi women (June), which paradoxically targeted several activists who had demanded an end to the ban. These women included Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan and Aziza al-Yousef, who have also spoken out against the male guardianship system in the country, which forces women to request permission from a man in their family to engage in various activities, such as travelling, obtaining a passport, entering the university and getting married. Two other well-known leaders were arrested in August: Nassima al-Sadah, a political activist and women's rights activist in the Eastern Province, where most of the country's Shia minority lives and which has been the scene of recurrent protests by dissident sectors, and Samar Badawi, who is also recognised for her criticism of the male guardianship system and for being one of the main promoters of Saudi female political participation. Saudi women were authorised to run as candidates in municipal elections for the first time in 2015. Badawi was one of the women who wanted to run, but her candidacy was vetoed by the Saudi authorities at the time.

Amnesty International reported that all these activists remained in prison at the end of the year, awaiting the formal filing of charges or a trial. Some human rights NGOs warned that several of the detainees are accused of serious crimes, including "suspicious contacts with foreign agents", and that pro-government media launched a campaign against them, calling them traitors. According to the local media, at least nine of them could be prosecuted by a special criminal court originally established to prosecute people accused of terrorist offenses and face sentences of up to 20 years in prison. Several reports said that other activists have been banned from travelling abroad. In late November, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also

32. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East, January – December 2017*, OHCHR, March 2018.

Map 3.2. Conflicts and rights of the LGBTI population



■ Countries in armed conflict in 2018 with discriminatory legislation against LGBTI population (this includes criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts, legal barriers to freedom of expression on sexual orientation issues and barriers to the establishment of NGOs).

PM Countries in armed conflict in 2018 where death penalty for LGBTI population is codified.

Source: Prepared by the authors, with data from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2019. Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019; and Lucas Ramon Mendos, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2019*, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), Genva: ILGA, 2019

Table 3.2. Armed conflict in 2018 in countries with discriminatory legislation against LGBTI population

AFRICA	ASIA	MIDLE EAST
Algeria Burundi Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) DRC (east) DRC (east – ADF) DRC (Kasai) Ethiopia (Ogaden) Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) Libya Mali Somalia South Sudan Sudan (Darfur) Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) Western Sahel Region	Afghanistan Myanmar Pakistan Pakistan (Balochistan)	Egypt (Sinai) Israel - Palestine Syria Yemen Yemen (AQPA)

Source: Prepared by the authors, with data from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2019. Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria 2019; and Lucas Ramon Mendos, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2019*, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), Genva: ILGA, 2019

reported that human rights activists, including several women, were being subjected to torture and sexual harassment during interrogations in Saudi Arabia.

Finally, in **Yemen**, over 100 Yemeni women and prominent Nobel Peace Prize laureates sent a letter to the new UN special envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths,

condemning the significant rise in gender violence after the conflict escalated in March 2015. The letter warned that by July 2017, there had been 2,447 documented cases of dead or wounded women and that 76% of the over two million internally displaced people were women or legal minors. It also cautioned that the incidence of child marriage had risen by 66% as a resource

employed by many families to cope with poverty given the economic deterioration of the country.

Scores of **LGTBI** individuals organised as their own group as part of a caravan of Central American migrants headed for the United States to seek refuge in 2018. They formed as a specific group after the march was already under way. Some of its members complained of verbal abuse and specific difficulties along the way, as well as violence in their countries of origin. Around 80 LGTBI people from Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador arrived in Tijuana (Mexico) in November, with the Texan-based organisation RAICES providing transportation support along a stretch to Tijuana. Some media reports estimated that about 120 LGTBI people were in the caravan, which included around 3,600 Central Americans in all.

3.3. Peacebuilding from a gender perspective

In this section some of the most notable initiatives are analysed to incorporate the gender perspective into the various aspects of peacebuilding.

3.3.1. Resolution 1325 and the agenda on women, peace and security

The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was marked by two monographic debates on the Security Council. The first one, in April, dealt with sexual violence and armed conflicts. The Secretary General presented his annual report on this matter.³³ Civil society once again highlighted the importance of understanding sexual violence in armed conflicts within a broader framework of gender violence perpetrated by both military and civilian actors in a context of profound international inequalities between men and women, aggravated by the arms race and militarism.

The **UN Security Council's annual debate on women, peace and security** was held in October, coinciding with the submission of the UN Secretary-General's yearly report to evaluate implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. The debate featured the participation of Palestinian activist Randa Siniora as a civil society representative, who highlighted the gender dimension in Israel's occupation of Palestine, the effects of the occupation and the armed conflict on Palestinian women and the resulting increase in gender inequalities. Siniora also spoke about the exclusion of women from official peacebuilding efforts.

The Secretary-General's report expressed concern about the lack of progress made on basic commitments to peace and security, human rights and gender equality. Among the aspects analysed, the report noted that gender parity was achieved for the first time in the United Nations Senior Management Group, a high-level body chaired by the Secretary-General that brings together leaders of UN departments, offices, funds and programmes. Gender parity was also achieved among the resident coordinators. For the first time in the history of the UN, a woman was appointed to head the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (Rosemary A. DiCarlo, the Under-Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs). Regarding the participation of women in peace processes, the report indicated that specialised technical knowledge about gender was required in three of the four (75%) peace processes in which the United Nations was involved as a main mediator or co-mediator and that women were included in all United Nations mediation support teams. In 2016, the demand for technical expertise fell compared to previous years, occurring in 57% of mediation processes led or co-led by the UN, compared to 89% of those processes in 2015, 67% in 2014 and 88% in 2013. Thus, this aspect deserves detailed follow-up, since it has not yet been fully established. In addition, consultations with women's civil society organisations were guaranteed in all UN-supported processes in 2017, such as in Syria, Cyprus, West Africa and the Sahel. Only three of 11 peace agreements (27%) signed in 2017 included provisions on gender equality. This figure is particularly worrying, as it consolidates and aggravates the trend that began in 2016, when gender issues were included in only 50% of the agreements, compared to 70% in 2015.

Six countries presented national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for the first time in 2018: Luxembourg, Albania, Poland, Tunisia, Moldova and Mozambique. Thus, according to the data compiled by WILPF, a total of 79 countries had an action plan at the end of 2018. However, WILPF points out that only 43% of these plans have a specific budget associated with implementing the plan, which it describes as a severe obstacle to achieving the objectives of the gender, peace and security agenda and reveals a notable lack of governments' commitment to it. Georgia approved the third Resolution 1325 action plan in 2018. This plan lacks any specific budget and does not include references to financing plans, as noted by WILPF. However, it does establish the promotion of women's participation in peacebuilding as a government priority.

Thus, it maintains mechanisms of consultation between government representatives participating in peace negotiations and representatives of civil society, including women, an important element in the peace

In recent years, there has been a decline in the inclusion of gender equality-related aspects in peace agreements: they were included in 70% of the agreements in 2015, but in 50% in 2016 and in only 27% in 2017

33. See section 4.2.1. of this chapter.

process between Georgia and the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the other hand, Moldova adopted its first national action plan on women, peace and security in March, which covers the period from 2018 to 2021. This is the result of dialogue in previous years between institutional and civil society representatives. The action plan has no associated specific budget and is almost entirely focused on security and defence, with only one of the eight objectives referring to women's participation in peacebuilding and in peacekeeping missions. Meanwhile, the Afghan government presented its annual report to evaluate implementation of its national action plan. Although some progress was noted, civil society organisations highlighted the ambitious nature of the plan and the weakness of its execution.

Moreover, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, formed in 2016 to coordinate the work of the UN Security Council and other United Nations agencies on the women, peace and security agenda, met during the year to assess the situation in the Lake Chad region, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, the DRC and the CAR.

In December 2018, the **Council of the European Union** ratified new Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security and adopted the **Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security**, added as an unofficial and non-binding working document appended to the Conclusions. The Strategic Approach gathers the EU's commitments and priorities in this area and replaces the previous Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, of 2008.³⁴ The Strategic Approach indicates the binding nature of the women, peace and security agenda and its necessary implementation by all actors in the EU and the member states, setting priorities in participation, prevention, protection and assistance and recovery. Despite other limitations, the document incorporates contributions from EU civil society, including those channelled through the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office's (EPLO) Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security, including some references to intersectionality, more emphasis on issues related to women's organisations' agency and effective participation, an enhanced human rights approach and emphasis on the internal and external dimensions of the EU women, peace and security agenda. The Council of Europe's Conclusions call for the creation of a concise, specific, measurable and feasible action plan in the first quarter of 2019.

3.3.2. Gender issues in peace negotiations³⁵

Several peace processes were relevant from a gender point of view during the year 2017. Women's organisations

demanded greater participation in different negotiations around the world as well as the inclusion of gender agendas. However, in most of the negotiating processes, significant changes were not implemented to include the participation of women in a significant way.

Afghanistan

The exploratory peace process in Afghanistan achieved remarkable progress and rapprochement between the parties, especially between the Taliban insurgency and the US government. With regard to female inclusion and the women, peace and security agenda, the president of Afghanistan publicly approved of having women take an active role in these negotiations in line with their growing role in the government and the 12-person team formed to conduct negotiations with the Taliban would be composed of men and women. The Taliban may also be softening its position on women, as evidenced by different events that happened throughout the year. During the June truce, different photographs emerged of Taliban fighters with civilians, including women, and even female media professionals. In July, the media reported a meeting in Qatar between Taliban leaders and a US delegation led by diplomat Alice G. Wells. Also, during the meeting in Moscow in November, Taliban representatives agreed to give interviews to female journalists. At the same meeting, Habiba Sarabi, a member of the High Peace Council and the only woman in attendance, asked the Taliban when they planned to add a woman to the talks. The Taliban delegation responded that they were willing to recognise the rights of women in Islam, education, work and property, and that the only requirement was that they wear a veil.

Colombia

Regarding implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC in Colombia, the Special Body to Contribute to Guarantee the Gender Approach in the Implementation of the Final Agreement continued its activity to advise and monitor compliance with the peace agreement. The Special Body presented its First Management Report, describing its activity since its creation until the end of 2017.³⁶ The report contains some of the main concerns regarding the application of the gender approach, especially those related to the lack of mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the Implementation Framework Plan and the confusion between gender and ethnic approaches, as well as the lack of impact and result indicators that would allow for more appropriate measurement of progress in implementation.

Several follow-up reports were presented on implementation of the gender approach in the peace agreement between the government of Colombia

34. Council of the European Union, *Women, Peace and Security*, Council Conclusions, 10 December 2018, 15086/18, CFSP/PESC 1150.

35. For more exhaustive information on integration of the gender perspective in the currently active peace processes, see the Escola de Cultura de Pau's yearbook, *Peace talks in focus 2019: report on trends and scenarios*.

36. Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component. *First report on the implementation of the gender approach in the Peace Agreements*, June 2018.

and the FARC. The first was the one prepared by the Technical Secretariat of the International Verification Component.³⁷ Among other issues, the report highlights the delays found in the fulfilment of gender commitments in the political and socio-economic reincorporation process. It also indicates that in general terms, progress can be identified in the implementation of nationwide and regional measures that seek to ensure the effective participation of women and the LGBTI population, although with gaps in the mechanisms to make such involvement a reality. Second, a report jointly prepared by the Kroc Institute and several members of the international verification component of the agreement –UN Women, the Swedish Embassy in Colombia and the International Democratic Women’s Federation (FDIM)– highlighted the gaps in implementation between the provisions contained in the agreement and the provisions with a gender focus.³⁸ Thus, only 4% of the 130 provisions of the agreement that the Kroc Institute has identified as having a gender focus had been fully implemented, while implementation of 51% had not begun. Thirty-eight per cent (38%) had achieved minimum levels of implementation and 7% had achieved an intermediate level of implementation. These figures contrast with the overall levels of implementation of the agreement, with 37% of the provisions whose implementation has not begun, compared to 51% of the specifically gender-related provisions. In addition, 22% of the provisions of the agreement have been fully implemented, compared to 4% of the gender provisions. With regard to the content of the agreement, the report indicates that the points that have a lower level of implementation are those related to comprehensive rural reform, political participation and the solution to the problem of illicit drugs. The report also includes a set of recommendations to improve implementation of the gender approach: 1) maintain normative and institutional progress in including the gender approach and developing positive measures to guarantee the rights of women and the LGTBI population; 2) ensure budget allocation in the Implementation Framework Plan and the National Development Plan; 3) strengthen the institutional architecture for incorporating a gender approach in institutions with responsibilities for implementation; 4) guarantee implementation of specific measures to protect the rights of indigenous and Afro women and the LGTBI population, ensuring the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the ethnic indicators of the Implementation Framework Plan; and 5) provide mechanisms that help to generate information disaggregated by ethnicity, sex and sexual orientation.

The civil society platform Gpaz also presented a report monitoring its implementation, studying 109 of the 122 measures with a gender approach established in the text of the agreement, in accordance with its

monitoring methodology.³⁹ Gpaz’s report drew attention to the normative development resulting from the peace agreement and stated that 72% of the related measures in this field have begun to be implemented satisfactorily. With regard to the operational development of the agreement, however, only 17% of the measures have begun implementation satisfactorily. The recommendations made by Gpaz include: 1) accelerate implementation of the agreement by the authorities and the state in general; 2) establish further support for the peace process among the international community; and 3) prioritise a gender approach in implementation by both the state and the international community.

Georgia

For the first time, the peace process in Georgia had a woman in the position of chief co-mediator. In July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Ayse Cihan Sultanoglu (Turkey) to be the UN representative in the Geneva International Discussions (GID), the negotiating format for the peace process between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia that also involves Russia and has the UN, OSCE and EU as co-mediators. Furthermore, the December round of the GID included a session on women, peace and security, also for the first time.

The Philippines

Ratified in July 2018 by the Philippine government and the MILF, considered a milestone for the peace process and pending a vote in a referendum to be held in 2019, the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARM) includes various gender provisions. The law includes some elements of affirmative action, such as the reservation of one seat for each of the following population groups: women, youth, traditional leaders and the ulama (Muslim scholars), as well as two seats for the non-Moro indigenous population and two for settler communities. It also stipulates that at least one woman must be appointed in the executive branch of government in the Bangsamoro region and establishes that an office on women may be created as part of the administrative organisation of the government. According to the OLBARM, women will be represented in the Council of Leaders (in numbers and mechanisms to be determined by Parliament), will advise the chief minister on governance in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. Likewise, Congress must approve a law that recognises the role of women in regional development and nation-building and guarantees their participation in other decision-making and policy-making bodies of the Bangsamoro government. The law establishes that Parliament must pass a law to create a commission on women and define

37. Special Body to Contribute to Guarantee the Gender Approach in the Implementation of the Final Agreement, *First management report*, 31 May 2018.

38. Kroc Institute, UN Women, FDIM and Swedish Embassy in Colombia, *Special Report of the Kroc Institute and the International Accompaniment Component, UN Women, FDIM and Sweden on the Monitoring of the Gender Perspective in the Implementation of the Colombian Final Peace Accord*, 2018.

39. Gpaz. *Peace advances with women: observations on the incorporation of the gender perspective in the Peace Accord*, October 2018.

its powers, functions and composition. The OLBARMM obliges the government to defend the fundamental rights of women, expressed in the CEDAW, and stipulates that Parliament must approve the pertinent legislation to implement what appears in the section of the law regarding the protection of women. It also sets a budget threshold of 5% that should be allocated for gender and development programmes. During the year, several women's organisations, such as the Bangsamoro Women Organisation, urged both houses of Congress to approve the OLBARMM, presenting proposals and participating in public hearings and discussions organised by the Senate and House of Representatives committees responsible for processing the law.

Libya

Throughout 2018, Libyan women criticised their exclusion from civic and public spaces, which has prevented integration of the narrative of female civil society activists into analysis on the root causes of the conflicts affecting the country. As part of the 39th meeting of the UN Human Rights Council, the Libyan organisation Together We Build It drew attention to the frustrations over the effective inclusion of women in the consultation process promoted by the UN action plan for Libya and made specific recommendations for their substantive inclusion. Likewise, a joint investigation conducted by Cordaid, Human Security Collective and eight civil society organisations in Libya revealed the disconnect between the formal agenda of the discussions on the future of Libya and the Libyan population's (and especially women's) concerns about security and the need for justice. In this regard, Libyan women raised various issues that from their point of view should have a more central place in the negotiating agenda, including strengthening the arms embargo, withdrawing the weapons of war, demobilising combatants, reforming the security sector to place the many armed actors in Libya under civilian control, preventing sexual and gender violence and fighting against impunity for crimes against women.

Western Sahara

During 2018, the government of Morocco and the POLISARIO Front held their first direct meetings since 2012. In the talks held in December, under the auspices of the UN, one woman participated in each of the delegations. Rabat sent Fatima Adli, described by the official Moroccan press as a community representative and member of the municipal council of Smara. Meanwhile, Fatma Mehdi, secretary general of the Union of Sahrawi Women (UNMS), joined the POLISARIO Front's negotiating team. In civil society, **independent Sahrawi women recalled the impacts of the conflict on women and their role as peacemakers, calling for more active participation in the talks.** In a message addressed to Köhler and supported by international women's

NGOs for peace, such as WILPF, these Sahrawi women asked both the UN and the countries participating in the dialogue to take the steps necessary to guarantee female involvement in the meetings, to organise parallel meetings between Sahrawi and Moroccan women and to move forward on multiple issues that can help to establish a lasting peace, including action to eradicate all types of violence against women.

Yemen

The UN special envoy's office promoted the formation of the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group. Composed of eight women, the group reportedly aims to represent a variety of voices under the principles of neutrality, independence and professionalism, and to support the work of the Gender, Peace and Security Unit under the office of the special envoy. This technical group supported Griffiths' work during the meetings held in Sweden between the main parties to the conflict in Yemen, which led to the Stockholm Agreement in December.

3.3.3. Civil society initiatives

Different peacebuilding initiatives led and carried out by women's civil society organisations took place in 2018. This section reviews some of the most important ones.

The **Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus** (NWMSC) was formally established with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2018. Composed of a dozen female peace activists from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as the disputed regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and promoted by the International Centre on Conflicts and Negotiation (ICCN), this network aims to promote female participation in the various peace processes in the region.

In **Cameroon**, hundreds of women staged demonstrations in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon in August and September to demand a peaceful solution to the conflict between the central government and the armed actors of the Anglophone regions and to condemn the violence.⁴⁰ The security forces have been accused of committing serious human rights violations, such as employing disproportionate force, committing extrajudicial killings and setting villages on fire. Rebel groups have also been accused of attacking the security forces, civilians and infrastructure, such as schools. There have also been reports of sexual violence linked to the conflict.

With regard to the tension between **North Korea** and **the United States** and between **North Korea** and **South Korea**, female civil society activists demonstrated to demand the denuclearisation of the peninsula. A few weeks before the historic summit between North

40. See the summary on Cameroon in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Korea and the US, at a time of diplomatic tensions that were about to lead to the cancellation of the summit, Women Cross DMZ and Women's Peace Walk, bringing together more than 30 women's organisations, and the Nobel Women's Initiative, led by Mairead Maguire, organised a trip to the Korean peninsula by an international delegation of more than 30 female academics and activists from various countries. The delegation organised the International Women's Peace Symposium, held meetings with representatives of the South Korean government and civil society and crossed the Unification Bridge in the Demilitarised Zone together with more than 1,000 women on the same day in late May that the leaders of North Korea and South Korea met a few kilometres away in Panmunjom. To mark the visit, the aforementioned women's organisations issued a statement requesting that some demands be taken into account during the summit between North Korea and the US, such as the replacement of the 1953 armistice with a peace treaty; the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, appealing not only to North Korea but also to other nuclear states; the conversion of the Demilitarised Zone into a Peace Park, which would involve the removal of more than one million mines in the region; the reunification of families separated by war; and the reduction of both countries' military budgets and an end to their arms race. Furthermore, in December, Women Cross DMZ and the Nobel Women's Initiative organised an event in Beijing (China) on women, peace and security with female peacebuilders from North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and Canada to address issues of female participation in the negotiating process. Moreover, Women Cross DMZ also met in December with South Korean MPs prior to planned meetings between North Korean MPs and US legislators in March 2019.

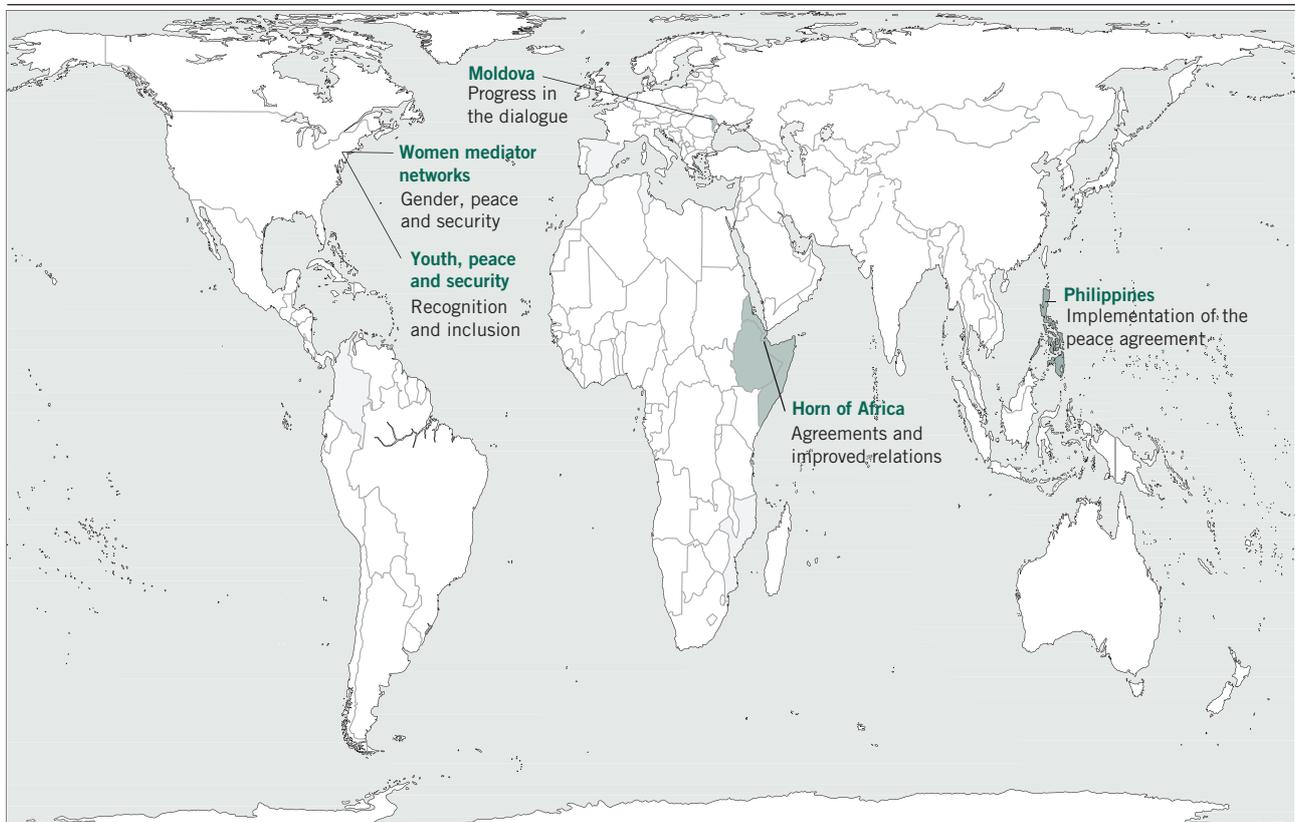
During 2018, a group of **Yemeni** women promoted a series of initiatives to articulate their proposals for transforming the conflict and making their voices heard in formal spaces. Created in 2015 with the help of UN Women, the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security, which represents a diverse group of Yemeni women committed to ending violence in their country and convinced of the need to play a greater role in the negotiations, held meetings in Amman (Jordan) in February to plan response strategies in the different scenarios planned for Yemen. Another dozen Yemeni women participated in a working group led by UN Women, together with women from Syria and Iraq, to discuss how to promote peace in their respective countries. In March, a total of 145 women, including more than 100 female Yemeni leaders, Nobel peace laureates and representatives of international organisations, sent a letter to the newly appointed UN special envoy asking him to take advantage of the opportunity to support the effective participation of Yemeni women in peacebuilding. The letter asserted that despite the situation, Yemeni women had been unflinching in their efforts to achieve peace, especially at the community level, on issues such as local truces, the reintegration of child combatants and humanitarian aid management. The group of Yemeni women complained about the exclusion of women from initiatives promoted to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict in recent years and recommended prioritising roughly a dozen issues, including an immediate cessation of hostilities; the end of the siege of Ta'izz; the resumption of the peace negotiations and mechanisms to put an end to child recruitment and support transitional justice with a gender approach, among other issues. They also demanded support for effective female participation by adding gender experts to the delegations, holding regular consultations with leaders of women's organisations across the country and ensuring at least 30% female representation at all levels of the peace process.

4. Opportunities for peace in 2019

After analysing the year 2018 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 2019. 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. Opportunities identified for 2019 include the window of opportunity for peace that has opened in the Horn of Africa following the historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the process to implement the peace agreement between Manila and the MILF in the southern Philippines; progress made in the peace process in Transdniestria; networks of women mediators created to implement the gender, peace and security agenda; and the possibilities of recognising and including young people as peacemakers after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 and implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda.

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 4.1. Opportunities for peace in 2019



4.1. Window of opportunity for peace in the Horn of Africa

The historic peace agreement reached between Eritrea and Ethiopia in September 2018 has been the result of much goodwill on both sides of the Red Sea and important changes in Ethiopia that have produced an extraordinary scenario, giving rise to various peace initiatives and new agreements among their neighbours. Stemming from improved relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, these initiatives had not taken shape previously because both countries had been engaged in a cold war against each other through their regional geopolitical alliances in the Horn of Africa and their policy of proxy war by supporting respective insurgencies. The new scenario resulting from this process has created momentum for peace in the Horn of Africa, though not without risk, since it is based on endogenous elements of fragility and a complex network of relations between the countries of the region and their neighbours in the Arabian Peninsula, which are competing to expand their areas of influence.

The peace agreement reached between Eritrea and Ethiopia has put an end to 20 years of confrontation between both countries, putting several countries in the region on edge because of the framework of existing alliances between the neighbours in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia in 1993, although the 1,000-km border between the two countries was not clearly defined, which brought them to blows between 1998 and 2000, causing over 100,000 deaths. Ethiopia did not accept the opinion of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) that assigned the disputed border town of Badme to Eritrea. When the EEBC's decision was not respected, Eritrea pressured the established UN mission (UNMEE) to supervise separation of the troops, forcing its withdrawal in 2008. From then on, a permanent pre-war atmosphere prevailed in both countries, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers gathered on the shared border, sporadic clashes and belligerent rhetoric. Both sides actively armed and welcomed their rival's respective insurgencies, leading to a proxy war. Ethiopia has also been an important US ally in the Horn of Africa, so in 2009 the UN Security Council decided to impose a host of sanctions and an arms embargo on Eritrea for its alleged support of the Somali al-Shabaab insurgency and other insurgent movements that attacked Ethiopia. Eritrea's occupation of Ras Doumeira in 2008, which had been under the sovereignty of Djibouti, but without a definitive agreement on the border issue, coupled with its refusal to accept a solution to the situation in 2011, led to tougher sanctions and isolation.

Since early 2018, in less than six months, this situation has taken a 180-degree turn. Ethiopia announced the acceptance of the border demarcation in June and peace was formalised between both countries between July and

September. The speed with which these changes have taken place would not have been possible without the vision and political determination of new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The appointment of the new Ethiopian prime minister was crucial for the development of this situation, although according to some sources the process had already begun to take shape during the last year of Hailemariam Desalegn's government. In February 2018, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned under internal social pressure and in March, Abiy Ahmed was appointed by the ruling coalition, the EPRDF. A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the ruling coalition (EPRDF). The Oromo community is the largest in Ethiopia. It has also been the most marginalised community from the country's economic development in recent years, which has been one of the main causes of the massive protests rocking the country since 2015. As early as his inaugural address, in April, Abiy Ahmed promised peace with Eritrea. On 5 June, the ruling coalition (EPRDF) announced that it would accept the EEBC's ruling. In a few months, Abiy lifted the state of emergency in the country, ordered the release of thousands of prisoners, allowed dissidents to return home and unlocked hundreds of websites and television channels. In addition, it reached peace agreements with the historical insurgencies of Oromia (OLF) and Ogaden (ONLF).

The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia is also due to the culmination of non-public talks and contacts last year promoted by the US, and above all, by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its ally Saudi Arabia, which have become more prominent in the Horn of Africa.¹ This growing Arab political role is underpinned by economic motivations and above all by their geopolitical strategy to expand their influence in the region and to limit the influence of other actors as a result. According to several analysts, the war in Yemen and the rivalries between the Persian Gulf countries are among the main phenomena demonstrating this growing regional influence and tension, as three groups of countries vie for regional hegemony: the Arab axis (led by Saudi Arabia and UAE and including countries such as Egypt and Bahrain), the Iranian axis and the Turkey-Qatar axis. This interest has taken shape through political alliances, humanitarian aid, investment projects, agreements to establish military bases and contracts for building or expanding commercial ports. The isolation of Eritrea by the international community has enabled the UAE's influence to grow in the country over the course of the last decade. Saudi Arabia is building a military base in Djibouti and the UAE already has a military base in Assab (Eritrea), from where both countries launch their military operations against Yemen. The Abu Dhabi

1. See Allo, Awol, "Ethiopia: Exploiting the Gulf's Scramble for the Horn of Africa", *African Arguments*, 13 August 2018; *African Arguments*, "Ethiopia-Eritrea Peace: Some Unanswered questions", *African Arguments*, 11 July 2018; Fick, Maggie, Cornwell, Alexander, "In Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, UAE Lends a Helping Hand", *Reuters*, 8 August 2018; International Crisis Group, "The United Arab Emirates and the Horn of Africa", *Crisis Group Middle East Briefing No. 65*, 6 November 2018.

company DP World has million-dollar contracts to develop the Somali ports of Berbera (Somaliland) and Bosaso (Puntland). Qatar and Turkey are also heavily involved in Somalia: in addition to various investment projects, Turkey has control of the capital's port and airport, as well as a military base. Somalia is coming under heavy pressure from these two axes, which is causing an internal crisis between the Federal Government of Somalia (allied with Qatar and Turkey) and the federal states (supported by the UAE). Ethiopia has kept out of these regional rivalries and has managed to attract the necessary investment for its country through the incentives proposed by the UAE and Saudi Arabia stemming from the peace with Eritrea, and especially the diversification of the growing economy's access to the Red Sea, which also has an impact on economic incentives for Eritrea. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia wanted this peace agreement, but both countries needed economic and diplomatic incentives to convince the most recalcitrant groups on both sides.

The peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia has also led to the normalisation of relations between Eritrea and Djibouti. The port of Djibouti accounts for 95% of Ethiopia's exports and imports. Qatar had tried to mediate between Eritrea and Djibouti in the dispute over Ras Doumeira since 2008, reaching an agreement in 2010 according to which both countries agreed on the establishment of a Qatar-led ceasefire observation mission in the disputed area. However, Qatar withdrew its mission in June 2017 after both countries supported Saudi Arabia's accusation that Qatar was supporting radical Islamism and Iran. Doha denied the accusation, which led to a major diplomatic crisis between the countries of the Persian Gulf and forced the different actors to align around the different regional leaders. Although the dispute is ongoing, on 7 September 2018, both countries announced the normalisation of their relations after a visit to Djibouti by the Eritrean foreign minister. This was preceded in July by the restoration of diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Somalia (Ethiopia has been an important ally of Somalia in its fight against al-Shabaab, so peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea opens the door to improved relations with their mutual neighbour) after years of accusations by the Somali government of Eritrean support for the Somali insurgent group that had been reflected in the UN sanctions on Eritrea. This normalisation of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea was also preceded by a meeting of the Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian foreign ministers in Asmara in early September. The resolution of this dispute was the last obstacle to lifting of UN sanctions on Eritrea and ending its international isolation. Meanwhile, Djibouti's peace with Eritrea reduces the risks of its isolation in the regional context due to its high dependence on Ethiopia and its uncomfortable international alliances (the French, US, Chinese and

The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia reflects internal changes in Ethiopia and the culmination of contacts promoted by the US and, above all, by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, countries that have become more prominent in the Horn of Africa

Japanese military bases in Djibouti bring strategic income to the country, but are also subjects of domestic criticism).

However, this important progress may be overshadowed by different issues still to be taken into account. First, at the domestic level, the decisions taken in Ethiopia have not been supported by the old guard dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), one of the four parties of the ruling coalition, and have been met with misgivings by parts of the military, but enjoy major popular support. In this regard, on 24 June, days after the prime minister's announcement of accepting the border decision, an attack occurred at one of his meetings in which two people were killed and dozens were injured. Thus, the important steps taken must be grounded in implementation of structural legislative and institutional reforms to strengthen democracy and governance in the country, as stressed by Berhanu Nega, a major political leader who returned to Ethiopia in September. The opening of the border with Eritrea has prompted thousands of Eritreans to seek refuge in Ethiopia in recent months due to the poverty and lack of freedoms in the country, exposing the reality of the situation there.

Second, in relation to the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia, although both countries have taken many steps to foster a climate of trust in recent months, such as the resumption of flights, the opening of telephone communications and the organisation of family reunions, the border continues to be one of the most militarised areas on the planet with hundreds of thousands of soldiers from both countries and unknown amounts of antipersonnel mines. Quick regional and international supervision of the demilitarisation of this border is essential to prevent backsliding in the process. Third, it should be noted the alliance policy that has helped to weave together the different peace initiatives and that has also helped to stoke rising tensions, as the situation in Somalia demonstrates, which teeters on the brink of conflict between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal states resulting from this regional geopolitical struggle, to which the UAE could make a positive contribution.

Despite the many challenges and difficulties, the countries of the region and the international community must take advantage of this historic regional scenario of peace. It is essential to strengthen the peace initiatives and promote the agreements to give them enough domestic support to no longer depend on the favourable political winds, help to democratise and improve the governability of Eritrea and Ethiopia, provide fresh impetus to promoting peace in other situations of political violence and open conflict the region and prevent the old guard from perceiving these processes as a loss of their privileges that could potentially lead to regression.

4.2. Implementation of the peace agreement in the southern Philippines

The MILF and the Philippine government, as well as a large part of the international community (United Nations, the EU, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and many countries), described President Rodrigo Duterte's signing of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARMM) in July as a historic opportunity for peace in Mindanao. Both sides consider this law the core and politically most sensitive part of the peace agreement signed by Manila and the MILF in 2014 after 17 years of negotiations. According to both sides, the enactment of this law opens the door to full implementation of the peace agreement and establishes the structural conditions to overcome a conflict whose armed activity dates back to the late 1960s and has led to the deaths of 120,000 to 150,000 people, according to sources.

Indeed, after six months of intensive sessions and many hearings, a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Representatives approved the final version of OLBARMM, initially known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law and commonly known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which the president ratified days later. This committee had to standardise the versions of law presented by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (a body made up of 21 members, led by the MILF and in charge of composing the first draft of the law), the Senate and the House of Representatives. Although the MILF publicly stated that the law that was finally passed included more than 80% of the provisions of the 2014 peace agreement, it had been highly critical of the drafts of law written by the Senate and the House of Representatives in previous years, claiming that they did not respect it either to the letter or in spirit. In fact, on one occasion the MILF had declared that the enactment of one of these two versions of the law would have led to the resumption of the armed conflict in Mindanao. Thus, some analysts have highlighted the pragmatic vision of the MILF, which has yielded in various ways to ensure that the core provisions of the peace agreement were respected, and the political will of President Duterte, who some said had to deal with massive resistance from large parts of both chambers. Notably, the law was passed three years behind schedule, during which there were episodes that generated great opposition to implementing the peace agreement, such as the so-called Mamasapano clash in January 2015, when some members of the MILF were involved in some way in the murder of over 40 policemen, and the siege of the city of Marawi between May and October 2017 by the Maute Group and other armed organisations that have pledged allegiance to ISIS, which killed more than 1,100 people and forcibly displaced 600,000.

Despite the significant delays and obstacles in passing the law and the reluctance it still elicits in Congress, the judiciary and certain parts of the MILF, the truth is that the final approved version enjoys the support of both sides, the international community, much of organised civil society in Mindanao (the League of Bangsamoro Organisations, the National Ulama Council of the Philippines) and

even the governor of the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This last point is especially important because the most important aspect of the 2014 peace agreement is the replacement of the current ARMM (which was established in 1989 and considered a failed experiment by both the Philippine government and the MILF) by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), a new political entity that should broaden and strengthen its powers, ensure access to adequate financing and expand the territorial base of the region. If the law is ratified in the plebiscite that will be held in January and February 2019, the next step will be the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, which will be in charge of governing the new region until elections are held in the BARMM in May 2022, at the same time as the upcoming national elections. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority will be made up of 80 members (the president has until late March to appoint them), although the governor and vice governor of the ARMM and 23 other members of its Legislative Regional Assembly will also form part of that transitional body until late June 2019 so they can complete the term for which they were elected. The law establishes that the MILF will lead this body and opens the possibility that the MNLF may also participate in it. It should be remembered that the MNLF has splintered into several factions. Although the faction led by the group's founder, Nur Misuari, opposes the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MILF, for fear that it would undermine the peace agreement signed by Manila and the MNLF in 1996, most of the MNLF supports the peace process between the government and the MILF and agreed to form part of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission that wrote the first draft of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. In fact, shortly after his election as president of the country in 2016, Duterte expanded the membership of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission precisely to accommodate the incorporation of the MNLF and to facilitate the harmonisation and convergence of negotiations with both groups.

Despite the hope and optimism provoked by the enactment of the OLBARMM, enormous challenges loom in the short and medium term. In the short term are the possibility of appeals to unconstitutionality before the Supreme Court regarding the text approved by Congress and the difficulties linked to ratifying the law through a plebiscite in January and February 2019. Regarding the first point, some critics of the organic law have already lodged appeals to unconstitutionality or have announced their intention to do so. The governor of Sulu, one of the provinces encompassed by the ARMM, Abdusakur Tan III, filed an appeal on the grounds that Congress does not have the authority to abolish the ARMM, and that doing so would require an amendment to the current Constitution. Similarly, other organisations have expressed doubts about the constitutionality of several precepts of the OLBARMM if there is no constitutional amendment sustaining them beforehand. Even though both chambers of Congress expressed their conviction of

the complete constitutionality of all the articles of the OLBARMM and the Supreme Court has already rejected two appeals to unconstitutionality lodged against the two peace agreements on which the OLBARMM is based in 2016 (the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, passed in 2012, and the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro, approved in 2014), some fear the effects that modifying or eliminating some content of the OLBARMM may have on the peace process, recalling how the declaration of unconstitutionality of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain of the Moro people shortly before it was signed in August 2008 caused the worst spiral of violence in Mindanao in recent years and shut down the peace negotiations for years.

Furthermore, a plebiscite will be held in early 2019 to ratify the OLBARMM in areas that are already part of the ARMM (and that will automatically become part of the BARMM) and that would eventually be incorporated into the new region—specifically, the cities of Isabela (in Basilan province, which is already part of the ARMM) and Cotabato (in Maguindanao province, which is also part of the ARMM), six cities in the province of Lanao del Norte and 39 municipalities (barangays) belonging to six cities in the province of North Cotabato. In this sense, the government's deficient public information campaign on the contents of the law has come under fire and there is concern about the impact that clientelism in some regions of Mindanao may have on the outcome of the plebiscite. There is also uncertainty about whether the thousands of people still remaining in displacement or evacuation camps as a result of the months-long fighting that took place in Marawi in 2017 will be able to vote, and there is special concern about voting patterns in areas under the influence of the MNLF or other armed groups (such as the BIFF, the Maute Group and Abu Sayyaf) that have expressed their opposition to the peace process with the MILF and have even announced their willingness to step up their attacks.

If the OLBARMM is finally ratified, the main challenges in the medium term, during the transition period until 2022, include fully implementing the peace agreement, demobilising the MILF and turning it into a political party, lowering the still-high levels of violence in the region

and empowering the Bangsamoro Transition Authority to promote public policies that result in better governance and development among the provinces that will make up the BARMM, which are among the poorest in the country. Regarding the MILF's transformation into a strictly political actor, in 2014 it notably created and registered the United Bangsamoro and Justice Party (UBJP) with the intention of becoming the main political force of the BARMM. Days after the OLBARMM was approved, MILF leader Ebrahim Murad guaranteed the complete demobilisation of the

group. According to the peace agreement, 30% of the MILF fighters will begin to disarm and demobilise following enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, another 35% after the plebiscite is held and the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority is appointed and the remaining 35% after a new government is elected in the autonomous region. Murad also claimed that six of the largest MILF camps in Mindanao were already in the process of turning into what he calls "productive civilian communities" to help reintegrate the MILF ex-combatants into civilian life. According to most media outlets, the MILF has approximately 12,000 combatants, but the group's main leaders say it has around 40,000.

Beyond the challenges that can be seen in the short and medium term and the obstacles and massive delays slowing down the peace process, especially the establishment of a new elected government in the BARMM six years behind schedule, according to the 2014 agreement, the approval of the OLBARMM provides a unique opportunity to resolve or overcome one of the most complex armed conflicts of the 20th century. The 2014 peace agreement and its legislative materialisation in the OLBARMM are part of a long historical chain of efforts to try to design an institutional arrangement that can solve the historical grievances of the Moro people and accommodate the demands made by some Moro armed organisations in the Philippines. The last phase of this historical process, which goes back to the Tripoli Agreement of 1976, signed by the government of Ferdinand Marcos and the MNLF, began in 1997 with the establishment of peace talks between the Manila and the MILF and should culminate, 22 years later, with the plebiscite sanctioning the creation of the BARMM, exactly 30 years after the plebiscite that led to the creation of the ARMM.

The approval of what is known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law opens the door to the replacement of the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with another entity with greater powers and territory and the full implementation of the peace agreement, including the demobilisation of tens of thousands of MILF combatants

4.3. Peace process in Transnistria: possible rapprochement

Transnistria, a strip of land on the left bank of the Dniester River with 500,000 inhabitants that formally belongs to Moldova, has been the scene of a peace process between the authorities of Moldova and Transnistria regarding its legal status since the 1990s. Amidst the unravelling of the USSR and fears in Transnistria about the possible unification of Moldova and Romania and the consequences that could have for the region, which has a diverse population and a Russian-speaking majority, Transnistrian and Moldovan forces engaged in a brief armed conflict in 1992 that caused several hundred fatalities and ended with a ceasefire agreement and the start of negotiations. The main issues in dispute include the status of the region: the defence of its territorial integrity with Moldova's acceptance for a special status and Transnistria's demand for models with sweeping powers, such as federalism and full independence. Other sticky points of dispute in the negotiations include cultural and socio-economic dimensions and the Russian military presence in Transnistria. Over the decades, the process has been affected by antagonistic obstacles and positions, as well as periods of deadlock. Since 2016, the negotiations have undergone a revival, with significant progress made between 2017 and 2018, providing an opportunity to move towards achieving an agreement in the years to come. The factors contributing to this progress include the pragmatic and practical approach of the current phase of the negotiations, the promotion of mediation efforts and Russia's support for the process, as Moscow has influence over the leaders of Transnistria. However, there are also obstacles, such as differences over the current phase of confidence-building measures, uncertainty about future electoral and geostrategic dynamics and risks of disagreements over the region's status.

One factor favouring progress is the gradual and pragmatic approach to the negotiations in their current phase since they were resumed in 2016, reversing their suspension since 2014. In 2016, during German OSCE chairperson-in-office, Moldova and Transnistria signed the Berlin Protocol, which included detailed steps for moving towards resolving specific issues. Thus, the process adopted what became known as the Berlin approach, based on specific and achievable objectives and a defined timetable. The negotiations focused on confidence-building measures, leaving substantial matters such as the region's legal status for later. This approach continued in 2017 and 2018, focusing on eight preferred areas, known as the "package of eight". It is an approach that has been paying off.

In these years since the process resumed, agreements have been reached in several areas, including the

environment, the reopening of the Gura Bicului-Bychok bridge, the recognition of diplomas issued by Shevchenko Transnistria State University, guarantees for the operation of schools managed by the Moldovan government that use the Latin alphabet, authorisation for Moldovan farmers to access land in the Dubasari region and the registration of Transnistrian vehicle license plates so they can circulate internationally. These measures have practical implications for the population of Moldova and Transnistria. Agreed between 2016 and 2018, they have begun to be implemented in 2018, which represents a quantitative and qualitative leap in the peace process and highlights the political desire to make tangible progress in the negotiations. The pragmatic orientation of the leaders of Transnistria has injected new life into the process, according to some analysts.

Another important factor in the dialogue's progress is Russia's support for resolution. As in other unresolved conflicts in the ex-Soviet sphere, Russia's role is ambiguous, shifting between a party in conflict and a mediating party. Thus, it supports Transnistria and maintains troops in the region, while simultaneously acting as a third-party guarantor in the 5 + 2 format of the peace process, in which the OSCE acts as mediator, Ukraine as a co-guarantor with Russia and the EU and the US as observers. However, in contrast to its position in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, whose independence it has formally recognised, and in Ukraine, where it is said to have an interest in perpetuating the country's fragility, including by dragging out the conflict in the Donbas, Russia has been in support of a special-status solution for Transnistria within Moldova and has continued to facilitate tangible agreements. This, together with the new mediating boost given by the OSCE in recent years, has contributed to further progress in the process.

There are several stumbling blocks, however, including differences between both sides on how and to what extent the agreements reached on the package of confidence-building measures are being implemented. Some analysts also question the direction that the implementation is taking and assert that the Transnistrian authorities could be instrumentalising the agreements reached to move towards their de facto secession. Thus, for example, analysts warn of Transnistria's deployment of border and customs posts on the Gura Bicului-Bychok bridge, a piece of infrastructure that was supposed to be guarded by the tri-lateral forces of the Joint Control Commission (Moldova, Transnistria and Russia).³ Also pending is an agreement of other confidence-

The negotiating process between Moldova and Transnistria has undergone significant progress, including agreements on confidence-building measures, that provide a significant opportunity to resolve the conflict

2. De Waal, Thomas, *Moldova's Conflict: Unfreezing, In a Good Way?*, Carnegie Europe, 6th March 2018.

3. Socor, Vladimir, "De-Sovereignization: Testing a Conflict-Resolution Model at Moldova's Expense in Transnistria", in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 15, no.135.

building measures and their implementation. This reveals problems in the full achievement of the Berlin approach and points to future difficulties. Yet the influence of the parliamentary elections in Moldova and the geostrategic dynamics in the peace process also remain to be seen, in a context in which the Moldovan president's pro-Russian Socialist Party is trying to gain more traction in the country before a weakened pro-EU coalition government rocked by corruption cases. Likewise, there are still risks that future negotiations about the substantive issue of status may lead to new disagreements, given the history of the conflict.

The resumption of the negotiating process between Moldova and Transnistria and the progress made in agreements on confidence-building measures between 2017 and 2018 reveal an opportunity to move forward in resolving the conflict in the years to come, supported by factors such as political desire and a practical and pragmatic approach. For all these reasons, and in order to cope with the obstacles, local and international actors involved in mediation and in support of peacebuilding should redouble their efforts to consolidate the progress made thus far.

4.4. Women mediator networks

Since 2000, when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), giving rise to the agenda of the same name, female participation in peace processes has achieved a certain international visibility. In recent decades, women's organisations have demanded to participate in all peacebuilding efforts, as established by Resolution 1325. However, these demands have not effectively resulted in international peace and security policies, as shown by the figures provided by the Council on Foreign Relations. According to this centre, women accounted for 2% of the mediators, 5% of the witnesses and signers of peace agreements and 8% of the negotiators in the peace processes that took place between 1990 and 2017. However, despite these alarming figures and the fact that the United Nations recognises that women's low participation in peace processes is one of the main obstacles to implementing the commitments established by the WPS agenda, the international standards on what peace processes with a gender perspective should look like have undergone considerable development in recent years. According to these standards, those involved in mediation efforts should always include people with technical knowledge specialised in gender issues to advise negotiators and mediation teams; they should consult periodically with women's organisations from the beginning and throughout the entire process; the agenda and agreements must explicitly address the needs and priorities of women; and there must be significant female representation in the negotiations and in the institutions responsible for implementing the agreements eventually reached.

Amidst this development of the women, peace and security agenda and alongside the lack of progress in its implementation, multiple women mediator networks have emerged since 2015, bringing together women involved in mediating and facilitating peace processes from different spheres. The first of these networks was the Nordic Women Mediators Network. Describing itself as a collaborative forum, is composed of women from the five Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland) with experience and knowledge in areas such as peace negotiations, ceasefires, constitutional amendments, human rights and others. A second network was created in 2017: the Network of African Women in

Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). Sponsored by the African Union, this network brings together women mediators from Africa, joining other initiatives promoted by the African regional organisation, such as the appointment of its special envoy on women, peace and security. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network was also created in 2017. Promoted by the government of Italy, it groups women from countries throughout the Mediterranean basin. The most recent network, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, was officially established in 2018 with the support of the government of the United Kingdom to bring together women mediators from the Commonwealth of Nations. It should also be noted that all four regional networks have been developed in parallel with other initiatives (some of them local, like the Women Network for Peace and Dialogue in Burundi and the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus) and have also joined forces in collaborative on initiatives that transcend each network's internal efforts (such as jointly asking the UN Secretary-General for greater UN commitment to the representation and participation of women in peace negotiations).

These are innovative experiences aimed at promoting the significant participation of women in peace processes, overcoming the obstacles that women have traditionally faced in order to access politically important positions, such as mediators in peace processes. Alongside research indicating that inclusiveness is one of the factors of success in peace processes, these networks of women mediators promote collaborative formulas for mutual learning and support, as opposed to the elitist and exclusionary models that have prevailed in traditional peace diplomacy. These networks are also platforms where women can meet from different spheres, combining the participation of diplomats, government officials, academics and civil society activists and strengthening collaboration between important players in any peace process. Women's networks promote a broad conception of mediation and facilitation in peace processes above and beyond the tasks carried out in traditional Track One diplomacy. Women mediator networks provide a chance to make the WPS agenda effective, boosting women's effective participation in peace processes and promoting inclusiveness and innovation as a formula for strengthening peace negotiations at the same time.

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4. Council on Foreign Relations, *Women's Roles in Major Peace Processes, 1990–2017*, <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes>
 5. Rhadika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015.

4.5. The recognition and inclusion of young people as agents of peace

Discourses and narratives about young people and conflicts are often loaded with myths and stereotypes that associate young people with violence or that portray them notably as victims, as is the case with young women. In many contexts, young people feel excluded and frustrated by the feeling that they are viewed as a problem to be solved, rather than as possible allies for driving change. However, in recent years the international community and studies on peace and conflict have paid greater attention to the role of young people as peacebuilders and as actors in the sustainable transformation of violent conflicts. The approval of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 in December 2015, which seeks to promote greater recognition and involvement of youth in preventing and resolving conflicts, has been key to giving impetus to this approach. As part of this resolution, the first global study on implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda was made public in 2018, offering a sweeping view of young people's contributions in this sphere and outlining a series of recommendations for boosting their inclusion in peace initiatives.¹ Progress made here may give young people more room to contribute to peace in the future.

Resolution 2250 was based on other previous initiatives, such as the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding and the Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security. It is considered a turning point by introducing a new narrative on youth and conflicts, ensuring visibility for peace initiatives promoted by young people, boosting the representation and participation of young people at all levels of peace processes, guaranteeing accountability by establishing a yearly discussion on their implementation and, above all and for the first time, providing a comprehensive framework for the needs and opportunities for a specific demographic group: young people. The independent progress study on youth, peace and security released in 2018 addresses some of the complexities of working with this cohort, taking into account that there is no universal and consensual definition of "youth" (Resolution 2250 defines them as people between 18 and 29 years of age) and that they should not be reduced to simplifications or romantic visions. Unlike other categories of identity, youth constitutes a transitional period in the life of all people and is not a homogeneous group. Young people are characterised by their plurality, with diverse types of interaction with aspects such as gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, political affiliations, etc.

The global study (the result of various specialised reports, a participatory process and consultation with more than 4,200 young people), analyses and questions several stereotypes linking young people with violence. On the

one hand, it notes the immense impact that conflicts have on young people. In 2016, a total of 408 million people between the ages of 15 and 29 lived in contexts affected by armed conflicts or organised violence. Estimates for 2015 indicated that more than 90% of all direct deaths from armed conflicts were young men. The report calls into question some recent theories that have attempted to establish a causal relationship between the percentage of young people in a society and the likelihood of social upheaval and violent conflict, as age does not seem to be the only factor explaining participation in acts of violence. The global study also questions representations that associate youth with violent extremism and notes that narratives framing the young displaced and migrant population as a potential threat do not take into account that many of them have preferred to flee than to fight or be recruited by armed actors. Although a majority of the members of extremist groups are identified as young people, the report also stresses that those who join them account for a very low proportion of the young population in general.

The global study and other recent research also illustrate the range of youth initiatives at different stages of the peace and conflict cycle and in the face of diverse forms of violence. Examples include initiatives led by young people to prevent the escalation of violence in different contexts (through inter-community dialogue in Kenya, peace education in Colombia and Myanmar and others) and actions carried out during open violent conflicts (by facilitating communication between the parties to the conflict in Kyrgyzstan, supporting the disengagement and reintegration of members of the al-Shabaab armed group in Somalia, conducting humanitarian aid activities amidst the withdrawal of international organisations in Yemen and documenting human rights violations in Burundi). In post-war contexts, young people have also been involved in truth and reconciliation processes, like in Liberia or Sierra Leone, and remain active in nuclear disarmament campaigns, such as in Japan. The study also addresses initiatives promoted by and for young people to make them more resilient in the face of extremist violence and prevent their recruitment by armed groups in countries such as Pakistan and Yemen, as well as actions against sexual and gender-based violence, including abuse against the LGBTBI population in India and Jamaica.

One of the pending challenges identified is related to young people's involvement in formal peace processes, as it remains very limited. Young people from different contexts feel excluded from political processes and complain about both corruption and co-optation by political elites. The global study also confirms the

Recognising that young people must be included in peace processes is not only important for the dividends for peace and because their exclusion is counterproductive, but above all because it is an issue of rights

6. United Nations, *The missing peace: independent progress study on youth, peace and security*, A/72/761-S/2018/86, 2 March 2018.

paradox (applicable to other cohorts) that young people who actively participate as armed actors tend to have better chances of reaching the negotiating table than those who have eschewed violence or have worked as peacebuilders. This stresses the advantages of young people's meaningful participation in peace processes, as the frustration caused by exclusion can lead to recurrent violence. Moreover, from a more positive perspective, the lasting validity and implementation of a peace agreement and the achievements of a peace process depend in part on their acceptance by young generations. It should be noted, however, that it is not only important to recognise that young people must be included in peace processes for the possible dividends for peace and because their exclusion is counterproductive for sustainably transforming conflicts, but above all because it is an issue of rights: specifically, the right of young people to have a voice and to participate fully in these spheres.

The analysis of some experiences of young people's participation in official negotiations sheds some light on formulas for inclusion. In some cases, like in the negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF between 1997 and 2016, their involvement was mainly based on informal relationships, including family relations, which favoured their contribution in technical and logistical terms. In South Sudan, facilitation by the UNHCR allowed a group of young refugees to serve as observers of the High Level Revitalisation Forum in the country. In Syria, young people have promoted the creation of an advisory board for direct dialogue with the UN special envoy like the one created for Syrian women. Meanwhile, Yemen is paradigmatic in showing the impact of shares of young people's involvement after the National Dialogue Conference (2011), in which 20% of the participants were young people. Despite criticism of the process, young Yemenis value its importance in changing mindsets about the participation of young people and women and their possibility of opening on complex issues and of questioning the hierarchical structures of the country. It should be noted, however, that some studies in this field have advised against putting all expectations on young people's participation in formal spheres, which are often elitist and gerontocratic, and recognising the importance of young people's contributions in informal spheres that are essential for achieving negotiations and crucial for the success of formal processes and for transforming conflicts in sustainable ways.⁷ This calls for a broad concept of

inclusion, which does not necessarily entail inviting young people to established spheres or processes already under way, but rather highlighting those that they themselves have created to advocate peace.

The international women, peace and security agenda (WPS), which was developed following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), is a benchmark for the youth, peace and security agenda. Regarding to peace processes, the lessons of the WPS agenda have pointed out the need to pay attention not only to the quantity but also to the quality of participation and women's capacity for real influence. The gender perspective in the youth, peace and security agenda has also emphasised the need to examine how gender identities fuel violent conflicts and to work particularly with masculine identities, taking into account that youth is a key stage in the construction of identity. The experience of the 1325 agenda can also be useful for identifying challenges in implementation, considering the lack of political desire for many of the commitments made to truly take shape and, in some instances, tokenistic approaches indicating superficial or merely symbolic inclusiveness.

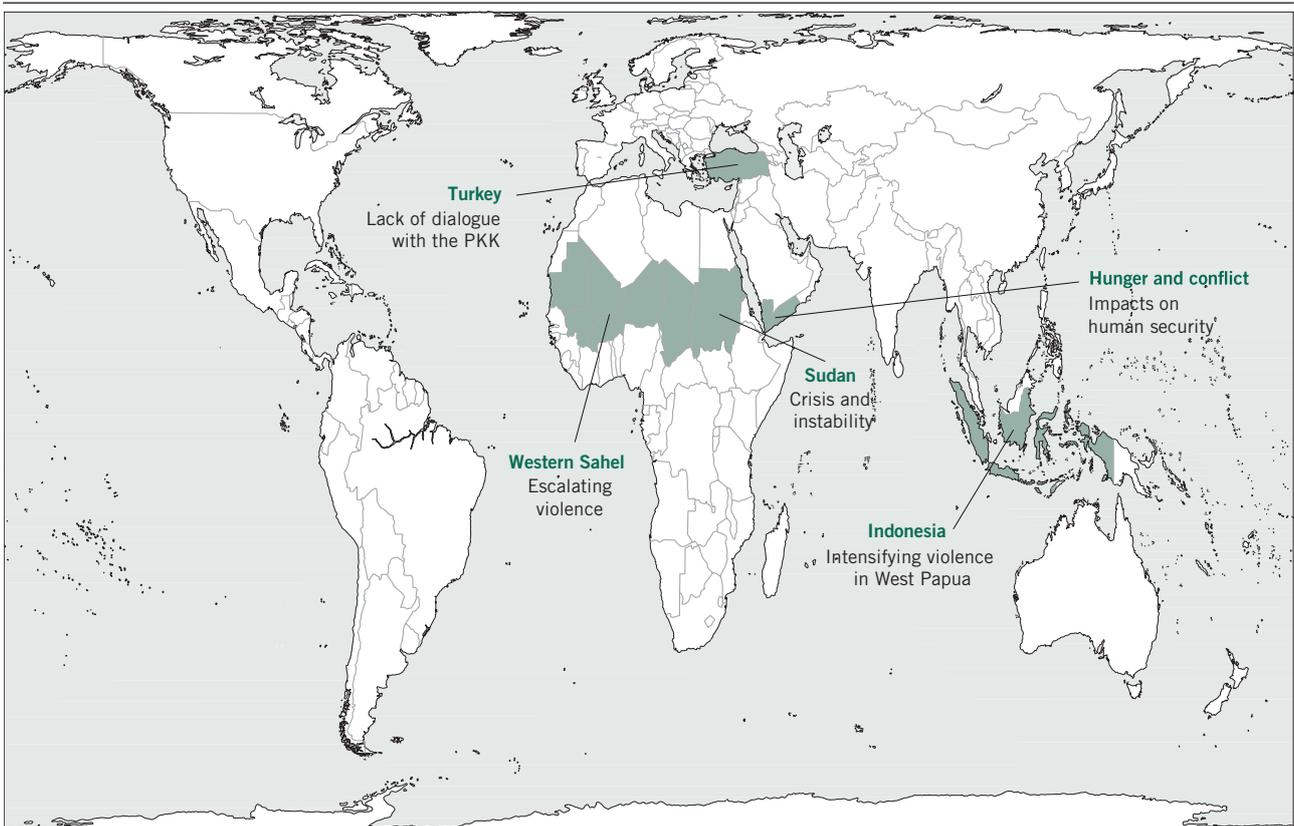
Looking ahead, the youth, peace and security agenda has recommended three complementary action strategies. The first is to invest in the abilities, agency and leadership of young people, recognising their diversity and own forms of organisation. The second is to address the structural barriers that hinder young people's participation in the sphere of peace and security. The third is to support associations and collaborative actions that recognise young people as equal allies in peacebuilding. These recommendations are outlined in a set of specific proposals that should be adopted by governments, donors and international organisations, including the ambition to invest 1.8 billion dollars (1 dollar per young person) before 2025, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of Resolution 2250; use quotas for young people, with a gender perspective, for their direct participation in all stages of peace processes and political transitions; and conduct more research and identify good practices in the field of youth, peace and security. In the years to come, periodic review of the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda will offer an opportunity to assess progress in this area, directly related to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, which highlights the interdependence between peace, justice and inclusive institutions.

7. Mir Mubashir and Irena Grizelj, *The Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation: An Exploration*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2018.

5. Risk scenarios for 2019

Drawing on the analysis of the contexts of armed conflict and socio-political crisis in 2018, in this chapter the School for a Culture of Peace identifies five scenarios that, due to their conditions and dynamics, may worsen and become a focus of greater instability and violence during 2019. The risk scenarios for 2019 refer to the escalation of violence in the Western Sahel region, to the effects of the political and economic crisis in the scenarios of instability in Sudan, to the increase in violence in the Indonesian region of West Papua 50 years after the failed referendum on self-determination, to the risks stemming from the lack of dialogue in the conflict between Turkey and the PKK and to the serious impact that hunger and conflict have on human security.

Map 5.1. Risk scenarios for 2019



5.1. Escalation of violence and instability in Cameroon

Despite several positive changes that have taken place in the different political arenas in the Western Sahel region (the peace process that is trying to resolve the armed conflict in Mali; the improvement of the political situation in Burkina Faso with the arrival of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré in 2015, who put an end to the transition after the fall of the authoritarian President Blaise Compaoré; and Niger's return to civilian rule in 2011 after the coup d'état in 2009), in recent years and especially in 2018, the region has faced a rise in political violence with many ramifications and expressions of intercommunal violence and criminality that is putting the different countries and populations of the region in check. The militarisation of the region, considered the “new frontier in the global fight against terrorism”, including the deployment of regional and international initiatives, may have serious consequences for civilians and might not resolve the fundamental issues that lie at the roots of the conflict in the area.

Various analysts have pointed to a surge in regional violence, which at first was linked to the spread of the activities of armed groups from Mali to the border with Niger and Burkina Faso, and of the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram towards Niger (Diffa region) as part of the expansion of its activities in the Lake Chad region. Later, other sources of instability were identified far from these areas that had their own agency. Thus, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies¹ conducted a study revealing the increase in violence over time, both regard to its geographical spread and to the number of actors perpetrating it. The number of violent incidents linked to jihadist armed groups has doubled every year since 2016 (90 in 2016, 194 in 2017 and 465 in 2018), in line with the casualties linked to them (218 in 2016, 529 in 2017 and 1,100 in 2018). Attacks against civilians have also multiplied, going from 18 in 2016 to 39 in 2017 and 160 in 2018. Although Mali continued to be the main focal point of the violence, accounting for 64% of the attacks in the Sahel, the remaining 36% were committed in Burkina Faso and Niger. Burkina Faso has gone from being hit by three insurgent attacks in 2015 to 12 in 2016, 29 in 2017 and 137 in 2018. Half the insurgent attacks in the region are linked to the coalition of well-known groups like the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin), created in March 2017; the Macina Liberation Front (FLM), which acted together with the GSIM in more than 40% of the insurgent attacks; and two new groups, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Ansaroul Islam, which were implicated in 26% and

The security approach could end up stoking grievances in the Western Sahel region, historically affected by high rates of underdevelopment, and aggravate the humanitarian situation there

15%, respectively, of the insurgent attacks committed in the region. The groups were spread geographically across four major theatres: the GSIM in central and northern Mali; Ansaroul Islam in the area of Djibo, in Burkina Faso; ISGS on the border between Niger and Mali; and both the GSIM and ISGS in eastern Burkina Faso. While there were four groups operating in Mali in 2012 (the MNLA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM), there are currently over 10 active armed groups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and the violence in 2018 exceeded all violent incidents that took place from 2009 to 2015 combined. The soaring violence could also be due to competition between ISIS and al-Qaeda for leadership in the area, according to various analysts.²

This increase in insurgent activity has been accompanied by the creation of regional missions and the presence of foreign forces to confront them. In 2017, the G5 Sahel Joint Force was launched, composed of around 5,000 troops from Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. It was intended to be operational during the first half of 2018. However, it suffered several military setbacks as well as a lack of foreseeable financing and shortcomings in terms of capabilities and equipment, which put a brake on its operations. In September, Mali and Burkina Faso asked the UN Security Council to entrust a mandate to the Joint Force under Chapter VII to ensure continued funding and support. Also in 2017, a Joint Task Force (JTF) composed of members from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger was set up for the Liptako-Gourma region, comprising an area of 370,000 km² between the three countries. These operations include the French military Operation Barkhane, consisting of 4,500 soldiers, which has been active since 2014 (the previous operation, Serval, which began in 2013, centred its activities in Mali).³

In addition to the UN mission (MINUSMA), the foreign presence has expanded to include the United States, Germany, Canada and Italy. In April, Niger hosted US-sponsored military exercises for Operation Flintlock, involving 1,900 soldiers from around 20 countries. The United States already has a permanent military presence throughout the Sahel, with the exception of Eritrea and Sudan, as part of counter-terrorism initiatives it developed after 9/11 in Africa, under the mandate of AFRICOM.

According to several analysts, there are three reasons for this large military presence: to assist in the fight against terrorism, to prevent migration to Europe and to protect the national interests of foreign powers. Its activities include training, counter-insurgency actions (also through

1. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel*, 15 February 2019.

2. Among other sources, see, Abu al-Maali, Mohammed Mahmoud, *The Competition between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in the Sahel and Sahara*, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies and al-Dar al-Arabi lil-Ulum, 2017; Cherbib, Hamsa, *Jihadism in the Sahel: Exploiting Local Disorders*, IEMED Mediterranean Yearbook, 2018.

3. France has been militarily active in the Sahel since 1983, with Operation Manta (in Chad), the forerunner of Operation Épervier (1986), which preceded Operation Serval (which took place in Mali). Operation Manta is considered the largest French military operation since the Algerian War.

the use of drones), the construction of military bases and intelligence gathering. Although the governments of the region have welcomed the arrival of foreign troops as part of their struggle against armed groups with jihadist agendas, it is debatable whether these operations have achieved their objective, given the expansion of insurgent activity. On the contrary, they could be having a negative impact. In Niger, the local population has begun to reject the presence of foreign troops due to the militarisation of public life and the restriction of their freedoms, resulting in demonstrations that have been repressed by the security forces, thereby increasing rejection of the government, which according to various analysts is also seeking to bolster its power via non-democratic mechanisms. Civilians in Burkina Faso came out to protest the authorities' failure in managing the situation. Moreover, as the South African think tank ISS has pointed out, the restriction of movement (including trucks and motorcycles) imposed under the state of emergency in parts of all three countries, which is aimed at halting cross-border illegal trafficking and the supply of weapons to the armed groups, has also interrupted commercial

activities, aggravating the economic situation in the region and increasing the population's vulnerability. This has led to hikes in the prices of products, negatively affecting producers who cannot move their goods to market, which has also increased the risk of food insecurity and hindered humanitarian organisations' access to the affected areas.

In the end, this security approach could end up stoking grievances in a region affected by high rates of underdevelopment and whose political, economic and social marginalisation lies at the root of its historical conflicts. These military actions, which are not proving effective in reducing violence, have also been pursued without consulting local populations. According to ISS, this has increased popular rejection of foreign intervention, since locals are caught between the military forces and the insurgents. In conclusion, the current strategy may be counterproductive in the short and long term, does not effectively help to reduce violence, proposes no substantive solutions to the structural problems causing the violence and may aggravate the consequences for the civilian population.

5.2. The effects of the political and economic crisis on the scenarios of instability in Sudan

June 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of Omar al-Bashir's ascent to power in Sudan through a coup that overthrew the elected government led by Prime Minister Sadeq al-Mahdi. Since then, the country has been ruled by the National Congress Party, which has erected an autocratic regime based on the militarisation of the state. During 2018, the country faced a bifurcated scenario coupling the reduction in the intensity of violence in the regions of Darfur (west) and South Kordofan and Blue Nile (south) with a worsening nationwide economic and political crisis that unleashed massive popular protests throughout the year that hit their high point in December and continued into early 2019. All of the above augurs a year that will be marked by uncertainty about whether Omar al-Bashir's regime can remain in power and in which, the way the different scenarios develop, will be fundamental.

First, the crisis in Darfur, whose origins date back to 2003, has been characterised in recent years by a drop in violence in much of the region due to different factors: progress in the negotiating process, the mediating role of the international and national community, the fatigue of the parties and the unilateral cessation of hostilities decreed both by the government and the main Darfuri rebel groups (the Justice and Equality Movement [JEM] and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Minni Minnawi faction [SLM-MM]). This has made progress in the peace talks possible, including the signing in late 2018 of a pre-negotiation agreement to resume the 2006 Doha agreements between the government and the rebel groups SLA-MM and JEM.⁴ In turn, the decline in violence also made it possible to reduce and reconfigure the joint AU and UN peacekeeping mission in the country, UNAMID, which, based on UN Security Council Resolutions 2363 and 2429, closed 10 bases in the country and cut its deployed military and police personnel almost by half. However, there are some risk scenarios that could cause a return to violence. Indeed, although the intensity of the clashes has subsided, they have not ended. The fighting is concentrated mainly in the Jebel Marra area,⁵ where SLA rebel forces led by Abdel Wahid (SLA-AW) have continued their struggle due to their exclusion from the peace talks. This led to heavy fighting between the rebellion and the government forces and their related militias in 2018, mainly through the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which are integrated into the state military structure. The clashes caused deterioration in the security situation and forcibly displaced people. Undoubtedly, the most pressing risk for 2019 is represented by the paramilitary RSF's announcement to launch a final offensive against the rebels at the beginning of the year, anticipating a resurgence in the fighting. Although UNAMID has strengthened its presence in Jebel Marra, its lower operational capacity should be considered in future

scenarios of resurging violence. The failure to bring all the armed actors to the negotiating table, as has happened at other times, is another risk, not only for ending the situation of insecurity, but also for effectively implementing any measure adopted.

Second, the armed conflict pitting the government against the rebel forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) in the southern regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile has also witnessed a decline in violence over the past few years, with unilateral ceasefires on both sides. This has enabled the resumption of peace talks that had been deadlocked since October 2016.⁶ However, there are also some risk factors to take into account. Furthermore, the growing fragmentation of the SPLM-N, whose internal struggles led to its split in 2017, resulting in one faction led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu and the other under the command of Malik Agar, makes resolving the conflict difficult, in part due to the initial exclusion of the faction headed by Agar from the peace talks. Meanwhile, the RSF's presence and attacks in the area remain a source of insecurity and instability. Finally, the lack of agreement on humanitarian access to the Two Areas perpetuates this insecurity and the humanitarian crisis threatening civilians there.

Third, the worsening economic and political crisis in 2018 has highlighted the instability of Omar al-Bashir's regime and the people's growing discontent and discomfort. The political tension centred around two episodes at the beginning and end of the year, and originated in the structural adjustment plan put in place by the Sudanese government to dispel the IMF's doubts about the country's economic stability. As part of the economic adjustment measures, Khartoum eliminated the flour subsidy, which tripled the price of bread, increasing the vulnerability of the poorest people in the country. This sparked major public demonstrations in January that were harshly repressed by the security forces, with hundreds of detainees reported. The economic situation worsened throughout the year and was further aggravated by the fuel crisis. Khartoum took different political steps to contain the situation, starting with reshuffling the cabinet and subsequently dissolving it; reducing the number of MPs and the number of ministries; boosting subnational representation in the legislative chamber, etc. Although these demonstrations tapered off during the year, parliamentary approval of the constitutional amendment submitted by the ruling party to extend presidential term limits in early December 2018 triggered a new wave of popular protests. These began on 19 December in the northeastern city of Atbara and quickly spread throughout the country. Though at first they protested the elimination of the flour subsidy and the consequences of the economic crisis, by the end of

4. These future negotiations will be based on the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), signed in 2006. See the summary on Sudan (Darfur) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*. Icaria, 2019.

5. See the summary on Sudan (Darfur) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

6. See the summary on Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

the year they had expanded and taken on a marked anti-Bashir tone, demanding his resignation. Once again the government responded with a crackdown, using live ammunition against the protestors that left at least 37 people dead at the year's end. The government also took other measures, such as shutting down the Internet and several newspapers and schools, including universities, decreeing a state of emergency for the entirety of 2019.⁷

All this has pushed the country to a turning point whose consequences will depend on the Sudanese regime's strategies of repression or dialogue, which will undoubtedly mark its future development. In this context, there are different factors to consider. The first is the open negotiating process between Khartoum and Washington to normalise their diplomatic relations and remove Sudan from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism. The US State Department has demanded progress from the al-Bashir government in six different areas, including the peaceful resolution of the armed conflicts in the country, the improvement of the human rights situation and measures that may shape

The situation in Sudan augurs a year that will be marked by uncertainty about whether Omar a-Bashir's regime can remain in power and in which the way the different scenarios develop will be fundamental

how the regime responds to the growing social discontent. The second involves the ICC's arrest warrant for al-Bashir, which accuses him of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity and may present a major obstacle, both in measuring his response and in relation to encouraging him to stay in power in an attempt to guarantee his impunity, as has happened so far. The third is the evolution of the peace negotiations in the war-torn regions, which can be substantial not only in prolonging or ending the violence in the three areas, but also in relation to their effect on national dynamics. The fourth is the potential for a contagious effect in Sudan due to the various regional crises that remain active, especially in South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Ethiopia, as well as the development of bilateral relations between the Sudanese government and neighbouring countries, as there were significant tensions between the governments of Egypt and Ethiopia during 2018. The fifth and final factor to consider is the evolution of popular protests in the country and the ability of the different national political and social opposition groups and movements to express themselves.

7. See the summary on Sudan in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises)

5.3. Rising violence in West Papua, 50 years after the failed referendum on self-determination

Tension increased significantly in the Indonesian region of Papua at the end of 2018 after the killing of between 17 and 31 people (mostly workers who were building a road) and the subsequent start of a counterinsurgency campaign in which the Indonesian Armed Forces was accused of using air strikes and chemical weapons. Although both sides have denied or minimised their responsibility in the aforementioned episodes of violence, with the Indonesian Army denying that it had used chemical weapons and the OPM claiming that the people killed were soldiers, and not civilians, at the beginning of 2019 the international community's concern grew regarding the human rights situation in West Papua, as attested by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, in her trip to West Papua to learn about the situation first-hand.

In addition to the seriousness of the aforementioned episodes of violence, there are several reasons to pay attention to developments in West Papua. The first of these is the fact that the year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the referendum (called the Act of Free Choice) that sanctioned the annexation of the Papua region by Indonesia. Some NGOs and church groups claim that between 300,000 and 500,000 people have lost their lives since then. Both the Papuan independence movement and many human rights organisations have stated that even though the referendum was supervised by the United Nations, it lacked legitimacy because only 1,000 people selected by the dictatorship of General Suharto participated in it. They think that West Papua has not exercised its right of self-determination and that it is a region still pending decolonisation. It is very likely that the event will provide the Papuan nationalist movement and those countries or organisations that advocate the self-determination of West Papua with a very good opportunity to make their demands visible on an international scale. In this regard, the government of Vanuatu (undoubtedly the most proactive country in defending the self-determination of the Papuan people) has launched an ambitious diplomatic campaign to gain as much support as possible to submit a motion for a resolution to the General Assembly of the United Nations of 2019 that calls for holding a new referendum in West Papua and including it on the UN list of territories pending decolonisation. Bachelet also delivered a petition signed by 1.8 million people (a very significant proportion of the Papuan population) requesting an internationally supervised vote on independence for Papua.

Furthermore, the upcoming presidential election in April, is also a source of uncertainty. There are two reasons for this. The first is because levels of violence have been high around previous elections, especially in West Papua. The second is due to the possibility that one of the two candidates with the best chances to win, the retired General Prabowo Subianto, may prevail. Human rights organisations have repeatedly

called for investigations into the many allegations of rights violations committed by Prabowo, who was the son-in-law of former dictator Suharto. These accusations include his alleged participation in a massacre of almost 300 civilians in East Timor in the 1980s, in the kidnapping and torture of 23 pro-democracy activists in the midst of the transitional crisis after the Suharto regime and the orchestration of protests in 1998 that caused the deaths of over 1,000 people and the rape of 168 women. Prabowo, who was responsible for the Indonesian Army's special forces, later led an operation to rescue 11 scientists kidnapped by the OPM in Papua that ended with the deaths of several people and accusations of human rights violations. Although none of these charges have been proven and Prabowo has categorically denied them all, the National Human Rights Commission formally requested that he be prosecuted and the US government denied him a visa to enter the country in the year 2000. The other main contender in the presidential elections, incumbent President Joko Widodo, began his term in 2014 promising a new approach towards Papua, one more conciliatory and respectful of human rights, but by the close of 2018, one of the main human rights organisations in the country, KontraS, indicated that the human rights situation had not improved substantially since 2014, criticised the restrictions on foreign media access to the region

and stated that some of the main problems are conflicts between indigenous populations and businesses over land. Some have warned that one of Widodo's strategies to improve the region's development included the authorisation of major projects (such as the construction of a 4,600-kilometer highway) and the promotion and protection of large concessions to foreign companies, such as the mining company Freeport McMoran and British Petroleum.

If Prabowo wins, some analysts have predicted more tension in the relationship between the governments of China and Indonesia, which has already experienced some disagreements

in recent times as a result of their territorial claims in the South China Sea, protests in Indonesia over Beijing's treatment of the Uighur Muslim minority and the impact that the growing presence and influence of Islamic conservatism (especially in Prabowo's candidacy) can have on the community of Chinese descent in Indonesia. According to some media sources, OPM leaders have stressed the possibility of Beijing's support for their cause. From a geopolitical perspective, China's approach to the strategy already pursued by some Pacific islands, which consists of demanding a referendum of self-determination and involving the United Nations in resolving the conflict, could significantly boost its influence in a region that is not only abundant in natural resources, but is also geo-strategically important for the country because it would provide a passage and navigation route between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and would serve as a base of support for Beijing's policy in the South China Sea, one of the most important lines of current Chinese foreign policy.

The 50th anniversary of the referendum that sanctioned the annexation of Papua by Indonesia may provide the Papuan independence movement with a good opportunity to make its demands visible

5.4. Turkey and the PKK: the risks of a conflict with no scenarios of dialogue

Since the failed peace process between Turkey and the PKK crashed in 2015, the prospects for a solution to this armed conflict over the status and political, cultural and linguistic rights of the Kurdish minority in Turkey have seemed to move further and further away. Active since 1984, the conflict has claimed more than 40,000 lives, mostly of Kurds, and produced high levels of trauma. The deterioration of the domestic situation in recent years, the military strengthening of the actors involved and the regional dynamics are just a few factors adding to the risk of destabilisation.

The general situation in Turkey has undergone serious drift in recent years, including the deterioration of the human rights situation and the erosion of the rule of law under the state of emergency. As denounced by the UN,⁸ this has included human rights violations against hundreds of thousands of people, including arbitrary deprivation of the right to work and of the freedom of movement, torture, mistreatment and arbitrary detention. In the Kurdish areas of Turkey, this deterioration has included killings, torture, violence against women, the excessive use of force, the destruction of homes and cultural heritage, impediments to access to emergency medical care, potable water and means of sustenance, serious restrictions on freedom of expression and others. Imposed after the failed coup d'état of 2016, the state of emergency was lifted in 2018, but replaced by a reform of the antiterrorist law that establishes new restrictions. It increases the period of police detention without charges and extends the grounds for restricting demonstrations and the powers of provincial governors, among other aspects, with repercussions for the conflict over the Kurdish issue.

Overall, the political and social space for the Kurdish population has shrank significantly, as they are actively mobilised around their identity and demand for cultural, linguistic rights, decentralisation and guarantees of political participation. By early 2019, more than 5,000 members of the pro-Kurdish HDP party remained in prison, including its leaders, and more than 2,000 NGOs and 200 media outlets, many of them Kurdish, had been banned. In contrast, the central government and the office of the presidency have enhanced their power, taking measures such as the aforementioned antiterrorist reform and changing to a presidential regime after the constitutional referendum of 2017, which reduced powers of parliamentary control. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, re-elected in 2018, is consolidating his power, with no indications for now that his hegemony and political leadership will be used to reinvigorate new peace negotiations after the previous processes failed on his watch. Various factors are involved in this decision, including the influence exerted by the political partner of the AKP, the Turkish ultranationalist MHP, which advocates a hard-line policy against the Kurdish movement, including political and social actors, and the

total rejection of dialogue. The local elections in Turkey in March 2019 are the last in the recent cycle of elections and open a new scenario in the struggle for political control.

Another risk factor is the military strengthening of Turkey and the PKK. Turkey went from spending 15.412 billion dollars on the military in 2015 (1.8% of GDP), the year when the peace process ended, to 19.58 billion in 2017 (2.2% of GDP). In recent years, Ankara has justified the rise in defence spending on the need to deal with security threats and to increase its deterrent capacity. The increase in military spending has been accompanied by a boost to the Turkish defence industry for the purpose of reducing external dependence. Meanwhile, the PKK has increased its potential access to more sophisticated weapons due to regional dynamics and the war in Syria. In both cases, rearmament and greater access to weapons increases the risks of instability and has serious impacts on civilians. Thus, the regional context constitutes another risk factor. The conflict in Syria, with its many different dimensions and actors, is another theatre where the war between Turkey and the PKK is currently being waged. The expansion into Syria of the Kurdish YPG forces, the predominant actor of the SDF coalition, which is supported by the US in its campaign against ISIS and controls extensive territory where it implements a de facto self-government in areas bordering Turkey, is viewed by Ankara as a threat to its national security. The PKK and the YPG have historically been linked since the YPG was created in 2004. Turkey considers them one and the same and analysts have pointed to the PKK's influence in the leadership of the YPG.⁹ The United States has delivered weapons and military equipment to the YPG as part of the war in Syria, becoming a key ally. Turkey strongly criticises US support for the YPG, warning of the risks of US weapons being used by the PKK against Turkey. In this context, Turkey's military operations on Syrian soil, its threats to expand them to new areas in both Syria and Iraq and the intensification of its military siege of the PKK command in 2018¹⁰ add uncertainty to the risks of further military drift in the region and in Turkey.

The accumulation of internal and regional factors currently weighing on Turkey, including those related to the deterioration of its domestic situation, a more sophisticated rearming of its actors in conflict, and the influence of the dynamics of the war in Syria, point to future risks of more violence in the conflict. At the same time, factors that may help to reduce those risks include the impossibility of a military victory, the risk of more indiscriminate impacts and the fatigue that this would cause among the population, the counterweight that the powers involved in Syria can exercise, the opportunities of the peace dividend for an economically depressed Turkey and the efforts of local and international actors mobilised for a negotiated solution in the country.

8. OHCHR, *Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East. January – December 2017*, OHCHR, March 2018.

9. International Crisis Group, *The PKK's Fateful Choice in Northern Syria*, Middle East Report No. 176, 4 May 2017.

10. See the summary on Turkey (southeast) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

5.5. Hunger and conflict: challenges of a relationship with serious impacts on human security

A disturbing trend has recently been identified with regard to the situation of hunger in the world. The number of people affected by food insecurity had been falling despite the growing population, but in recent years this trend has reversed. Therefore, the 21st century has witnessed an increase in the total global population suffering from hunger. In 2016, this figure exceeded 815 million people, 37 million more than the previous year. Most of them lived in areas affected by conflict and violence. According to data from the UN World Food Programme (WFP), 60% of the more than 800 million people who suffered from chronic hunger in the world lived in countries in conflict. Various sources suggest that the rise in hunger in recent years is related to the impact of armed conflicts and warns of the challenges presented by the relationship between hunger and conflict, since both phenomena feed off each other: food insecurity can aggravate situations of conflict and violence and armed conflicts create conditions for growing food insecurity. Furthermore, in various current armed conflicts, hunger has been used systematically as a weapon of war.

The data collected by various United Nations agencies and programmes depict an alarming scenario. In the last decade, more than 80% of the resources requested by the UN for humanitarian aid were aimed at correcting the situation in conflict zones. According to the FAO's Global Report on Food Crises (2017), 10 of the 13 most serious humanitarian crises were conflict-related: Afghanistan, Burundi, the CAR, the DRC, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The WFP notes that acute food insecurity has increased by 11% in recent years and can be largely attributed to the dynamics of conflict, violence and insecurity in places such as Myanmar, Nigeria, the DRC, South Sudan and Yemen. This organisation also stresses that 75% of girls and boys with stunted growth problems (122 million of a total of 155 million) live in countries affected by conflicts. Data from the WHO, meanwhile, indicate that people who live in areas with prolonged crises are 2.5 times more likely to suffer from severe malnutrition.

One of the most iconic current cases is that of Yemen. During 2018, images of Yemeni children affected by severe malnutrition circulated in international media, highlighting the impact of the armed conflict in the country, which has become the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Even though it was already the poorest country in the Arab world before the escalation of violence in 2015, its population has become impoverished and affected by unpaid wages, while food prices have skyrocketed. Yemen is a net importer of goods and food (more than 80%). Consequently, Yemeni population has been directly affected by the blockade of its ports imposed by the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia, as well as by other practices such as the destruction of markets as part of many attacks on civilian targets. At the

end of 2018, according to OCHA data, a total of 20 million Yemenis were in a situation of food insecurity, of which 10 million were suffering severe food insecurity, meaning that they were at risk of famine. Approximately 3.2 million people required treatment for severe malnutrition, including two million children under the age of five and one million pregnant and lactating women.

Syria is another case to be highlighted, considering the serious impact of the conflict in humanitarian terms, the systematic use of sieges against civilians and hunger as a weapon of war and many other practices that violate international humanitarian law. The conflict has forcibly displaced millions of people and has pushed more than 80% of the population under the poverty line. At the end of 2018 it was estimated that around 6.5 million people, or 33% of the population, were unable to obtain basic food to meet their needs. The conflict has had serious impacts on the agricultural sector and has turned Syria into a net food importer, when it was once one of the largest agricultural producers in the Middle East. Added to this are the direct

consequences of the sieges used to force the surrender of adversaries, a practice used by various armed actors, but above all by the regime of Bashar Assad, which has been denounced by NGOs and the UN during the course of the conflict and constitutes a war crime. Another particularly serious case was that of South Sudan, where violence and food shortages put 6.1 million people (about 60% of the population) in a situation of extreme hunger. In Syria, Yemen and South Sudan,

there were warnings that the delivery of humanitarian aid was being blocked.

In this context, in May 2018 the UN Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 2417, which for the first time explicitly acknowledges that conflicts can cause food insecurity, which in turn can aggravate them. Promoted by the Netherlands, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait and Sweden, the resolution also condemns the use of hunger as a weapon of war and threatens sanctions against those who block the delivery of humanitarian aid aimed at alleviating food shortages and famines. Several actors hailed the initiative for paying attention to this problem and stressing the interconnections between conflict, forced displacement and food insecurity. However, others warned that the resolution ran the risk of becoming worthless if effective mechanisms for monitoring and implementing it were not established. Still others insisted that the resolution provides tools to address a situation that is conceived as transitory (the access of humanitarian aid to people affected by conflicts), yet it is essential to intensify efforts to reverse the dynamics of violence at the same time. In this vein, in 2018 the WFP warned that armed conflicts were the main obstacle to achieving the goal of "zero hunger" in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Most of the people affected by hunger in the world lives in areas affected by conflicts, according to data from the UN World Food Programme

Glossary

- ABM:** Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis
- ADF:** Allied Democratic Forces
- ADF-NALU:** Allied Democratic 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:** Baloch Liberation Army
- BLF:** Baloch Liberation Front
- BLT:** Baloch Liberation Tigers
- BNUB:** Bureau des Nations Unies au Burundi (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
- EPR:** Ejército Popular Revolucionario (Revolutionary People's Army)
- ERPI:** Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente (Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army)
- 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 DRC
EUSEC RD CONGO: EU Security Sector Reform Mission in DRC
EUTM Mali: EU Training Mission in Mali
EUTM SOMALIA: EU Somalia Training Mission
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
FAR-LP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Liberación del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces – People’s Freedom)
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 Ivoirien (Ivorian Popular Front)
FPR: Front Populaire pour le Redressement (Popular Front for Recovery)
FPRC: Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic)
FRF: Forces Republicaines et Federalistes (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
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
IMN: Islamic Movement in Nigeria
IMU: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INLA: Irish National Liberation Army
IOM: International Organization for Migrations
IPOB: Indigenous People of Biafra
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
MASSOB: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
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 / DRC)

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 DRC

MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC

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)

PDKI: Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan

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/A: Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition

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 / DRC)

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 DRC

MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC

MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People

MOVADDEF: 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

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SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army

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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
UPC: Union pour la Paix à Centrafrique (Union for Peace in the Central African Republic)
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
WPNL: 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 School for a Culture of Peace was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through research, Track II diplomacy, training and awareness generating activities.

The main fields of action of the Escola de Cultura de Pau are:

- Research. Its main areas of research include armed conflicts and socio-political crises, peace processes, human rights and transitional justice, the gender dimension in conflict and peacebuilding, and peace education.
- Track II diplomacy. The ECP promotes dialogue and conflict-transformation through Track II initiatives, including facilitation tasks with armed actors.
- Consultancy services. The ECP carries out a variety of consultancy services for national and international institutions.
- Teaching and training. ECP staff gives lectures in postgraduate and graduate courses in several universities, including its own Graduate Diploma on Culture of Peace at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. It also provides training sessions on specific issues, including conflict sensitivity and peace education.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising. Initiatives include activities addressed to the Spanish and Catalan society, including contributions to the media.

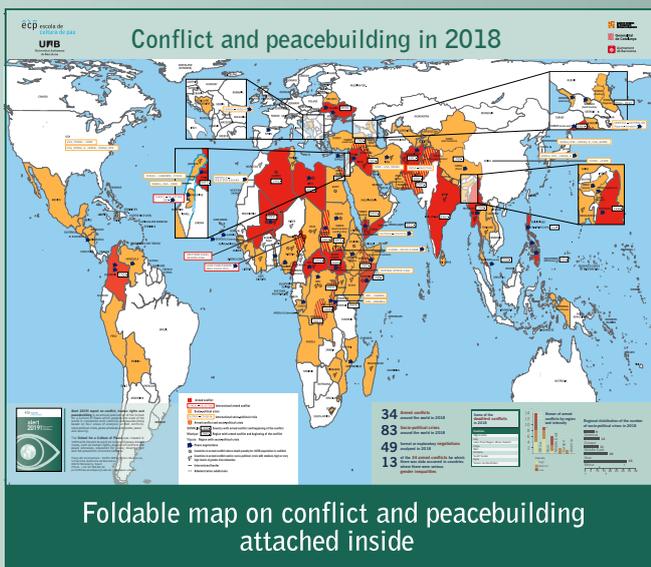
Escola de Cultura de Pau

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Alert 2019! 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 three perspectives: armed conflicts, socio-political crises and gender, peace and security. The analysis of the most important events in 2017 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.



With the support of:



The *Alert!* report has a strong reputation as a reliable resource for practitioners and policy-advocates seeking to prevent and resolve violent conflict. *Alert 2019!*, like its predecessors, rightly places gender, peace and security at the heart of its analysis and so provides a nuanced understanding of conflict and opportunities for peace.

Dr. Laura Davis,
Senior Associate, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)

While it is practically impossible to predict the exact moment when a social conflict may turn violent, we can analyse the different trends, dynamics and scenarios surrounding a given conflict. The *Alert 2019!* report conducts a rigorous analysis of these factors and provides us with a series of tools for everyone working in the field of armed conflict prevention and resolution so they may more effectively manage the risks associated with various conflicts. The yearbook has become a work of reference that is essential for understanding what lies behind the escalation of violence affecting different countries, as well as the various political and programming options that we can use to help to create the conditions necessary for building a lasting and sustainable peace.

Darynell Rodríguez Torres,
Executive Director, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

For more than 10 years, the yearbooks of the Escola de Cultura de Pau have been a source of analysis and valuable information for various organisations and agencies in Colombia that are committed to understanding the dynamics of armed conflicts and to seeking similarities with others in distant regions despite their particularities. The yearbook of peace is a fundamental tool for rigorously placing not only armed conflicts, but also possibilities for peace in an academic and practical perspective and gives a wonderful account of the difficulties and progress made in peacebuilding.

Juanita Millán Hernandez,
Advisor to the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (Colombia)

