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Report on conflicts,
human rights
and peacebuilding

Icaria editorial

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Executive Summary

Alert 2020! 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 2019 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 2020!* report are listed below:

- 34 armed conflicts were reported in 2019, 32 of them remained active at the 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 total number of armed conflicts has remained fairly stable and without significant fluctuations in the last five years.

- In 2019 the situation in Algeria and Kasai region in the DRC were no longer considered an armed conflict because of significant reductions of violence. On the other hand, a new case –Mozambique (north)—was analyzed as an armed conflict because of the drastic increase of hostilities in the province of Cabo Delgado between the armed jihadist organisation Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) and the security forces.

- Regarding the intensity of violence, 38% of the conflicts were low (13 cases), 32% high (11 cases) and another 30% medium (10 cases).

- The 11 most serious cases in 2019 were Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, 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 24,000 deaths in the first ten months of 2019–; Yemen (Houthis) –around 23,000 deaths–; Syria –ranging from 11,200 to 15,000 deaths–;

Western Sahel Region –4,000 deaths, the fatality rate quintupled compared to 2016–; or Somalia –around 4,000 deaths.

- 36% of armed conflicts experienced an escalation of violence: Burundi, Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West), Libya, Mali, Mozambique (North), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the DRC (east), Colombia, Afghanistan, India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Turkey (southeast).

- 32% of the conflicts experienced a decline in hostilities and levels of violence over the previous year, while another 32% of the cases did not face significant changes.

- Beyond the multi-cause nature of armed conflict, 73% of conflicts (25 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 internationalised internal 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.

- OCHA warned that many more people than expected were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019 due to conflicts and extreme weather events. According to its prospective data as of December 2019, almost 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, the highest number in decades.

- Yemen remained the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in 2019, with 24 million of its citizens in need of assistance, representing 80% of its population.

- The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflicts, covering the year 2018, identified an alarming increase in serious violations of the human rights of children by state agents and international forces compared to the previous year, while those attributed to non-state actors remained stable.

- In Afghanistan, for example, there were 3,062 verified cases of children killed and mutilated in 2018. The death toll (927) was the highest ever reported in the country.

- The 2019 UN Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence contained verifiable information for 19 countries, involving more than 50 actors. Most of the perpetrators of sexual violence in these cases were non-state actors, but sexual violence had also been verifiably perpetrated by the national armed forces, police or other security actors in Myanmar, Syria, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.

- According to UNHCR, at the end of 2018 there were 70.8 million people forcibly displaced around the world. Of that total, 41.3 million were internally displaced persons, 25.9 million were refugees (20.4 million under the UN mandate and another 5.5 million under the mandate of the UNRWA) and 3.5 million were asylum seekers.

- Of the total forcibly displaced people, 13.6 million were newly displaced: 10.8 million new internally displaced persons and 2.8 million new refugees and asylum-seekers.

- 57% of the refugee population came from three countries, Syria (6.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million), followed by Myanmar (1.1 million) and Somalia (900,000).

- There were 41.3 million internally displaced people at the end of 2018. 6.1 million of them were in Syria, followed by Colombia (5.8 million), the DRC (3.1 million), Somalia (2.6 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), Yemen (2.3 million), Nigeria (2.2 million), Ethiopia (2.1 million), Sudan (2.1 million) and Iraq (2 million).

- There were 94 socio-political crises around the world in 2019. The largest number of them were concentrated in Africa (36 cases), followed by Asia (23), the Middle East and Latin America (12 cases in each region) and Europe (11).

- With regard to the intensity of the socio-political crises, during 2019 half of them were of low intensity (49%), one third were of medium intensity (34%) and only 18% of the cases had high levels of intensity (17 cases).

- More than half of the crises in the world were internal in nature (51 crises, or 54%), more than one fourth were internationalised (25 crises, or almost 27%), and around one fifth were international (18 cases or almost 19%).

- Regarding the causes of the crises, 71% of them were mainly caused had to do with opposition to internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments and 40% of the crises 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.

- 83 per cent of the armed conflicts for which data on gender equality exist took place in contexts with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination.

- The UN Security Council recognised the links between forced displacement and sexual violence in conflict. According to the UNHCR, women and girls represent around half the population of internationally displaced persons.

- With regard to the national action plans regarding Resolution 1325, during 2019 four countries adopted new plans: Bangladesh, Namibia, Lebanon and Armenia. Therefore, a total of 83 countries had a plan in place by the end of 2019, representing 43 per cent of UN member countries.

- The UN Security Council passed a new resolution on sexual violence in armed conflict amidst controversy over the exclusion of the sexual and reproductive rights of the survivors of such violence

- *Alert 2020!* report identifies four opportunities for peace in Afghanistan, southern Thailand, Sudan and South Sudan and former Yugoslavia.

- The report highlights four warning scenarios in Ethiopia, Yemen, Mozambique and the specific risks of the LGBTI population in the context of forced displacement.

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 socio-political crises.

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 2019 are analyzed, as well as the impacts of such conflicts on the civilian population.

During 2019, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, a figure that follows the trend observed in previous years (34 cases in 2018, 33 cases in 2016 and 2017, 35 conflicts in 2015, 36 in 2014, 35 in 2013). Of the 34 armed conflicts in 2019, 32 were still active by the end of the year, given that the situation in Algeria was no longer considered an armed conflict because there has been a drop in hostilities between the security forces and

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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 2019*

AFRICA (16)	ASIA (9)	MIDDLE EAST (6)
Algeria (AQIM) -1992- Burundi -2015- Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) -2018- CAR -2006- DRC (east) -1998- DRC (east-ADF) -2014- *DRC (Kasai) -2017-* Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011- Libya -2011- Mali (north) -2012- Mozambique (north) -2019- Somalia -1988- South Sudan -2009- Sudan (Darfur) -2003- Sudan (South Kordofan & Blue Nile) -2011- 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 2019

jihadist armed groups (mainly AQIM) in recent years. The other conflict considered to have ended in 2019 was the Kasai region in the DRC, pitting the state security forces against various militias and each in turn against the civilian population. Large-scale surrenders in 2019, mainly from the Kamwina Nsapu group, led to the end of the conflict. Compared to 2018, a new armed conflict was reported. In Mozambique (north), in the province of Cabo Delgado, an armed jihadist organisation Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) fought against the security forces amidst the marginalisation and grievances of the Muslim minority in the country, as well as extreme poverty in the province.

Regarding to the geographical distribution of armed conflicts around the world, the data from 2019 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). 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 internationalised internal 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.

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

During 2019, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, 32 of which were still active by the end of the year

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 73% of the conflicts in 2019 (25 of the 34 cases), in line with the previous year (71% of the conflicts in 2018). 19 of these 25 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, Lake Chad Region, Western Sahel Region, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries; the various branches of al-Qaeda operating in North Africa and the Middle East, including AQIM (Algeria, Sahel and Lybia) and AQAP (Yemen); the Taliban militias active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia, among others. Another prominent

Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2019

major cause included disputes about identity-related demands and self-government, present in 59% of the conflicts (20). Finally, struggles over the control of resources and territory were a main cause of almost one third of the conflicts (11), though it was indirectly present in many others, perpetuating the violence through wartime economies.

With regards to the evolution of armed conflicts in 2019, the hostilities and levels of violence subsided in around one third of the conflicts compared to the previous year (11 cases). There were no significant changes in another 32% of the conflicts (11), while the violence escalated in 36% of the cases. The conflicts that witnessed rising levels of violence in 2019 took place in Burundi, Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, Mozambique (North), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the DRC (east), Colombia, Afghanistan, India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Turkey (southeast).

With regards to intensity, the violence was low in 38% of the conflicts (13), medium in 30% (10) and high in 32% (11). The 11 most serious cases in 2019 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali,

The 11 most serious conflicts in 2019 were Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)

the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, 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 24,000 deaths in the first ten months of 2019–; Yemen (Houthis) –around 23,000 deaths–; Syria –ranging from 11,200 to 15,000–; Western Sahel Region –4,000 deaths, the fatality rate quintupled compared to 2016–; or Somalia –around 4,000 deaths.

As in previous years, the armed conflicts in 2019 had serious impacts on the civilian population and the territories in which they occurred. In the year marking the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council's first open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as the 70th anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions, the UN Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians stressed that the situation was tragically similar to that of 20 years ago and that civilians continued to constitute the vast majority of casualties in conflict situations. They also continued to face short and long-term impacts due to forced displacement, the use of hunger as a strategy of war, the denial of access to humanitarian aid, attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel,

Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2018
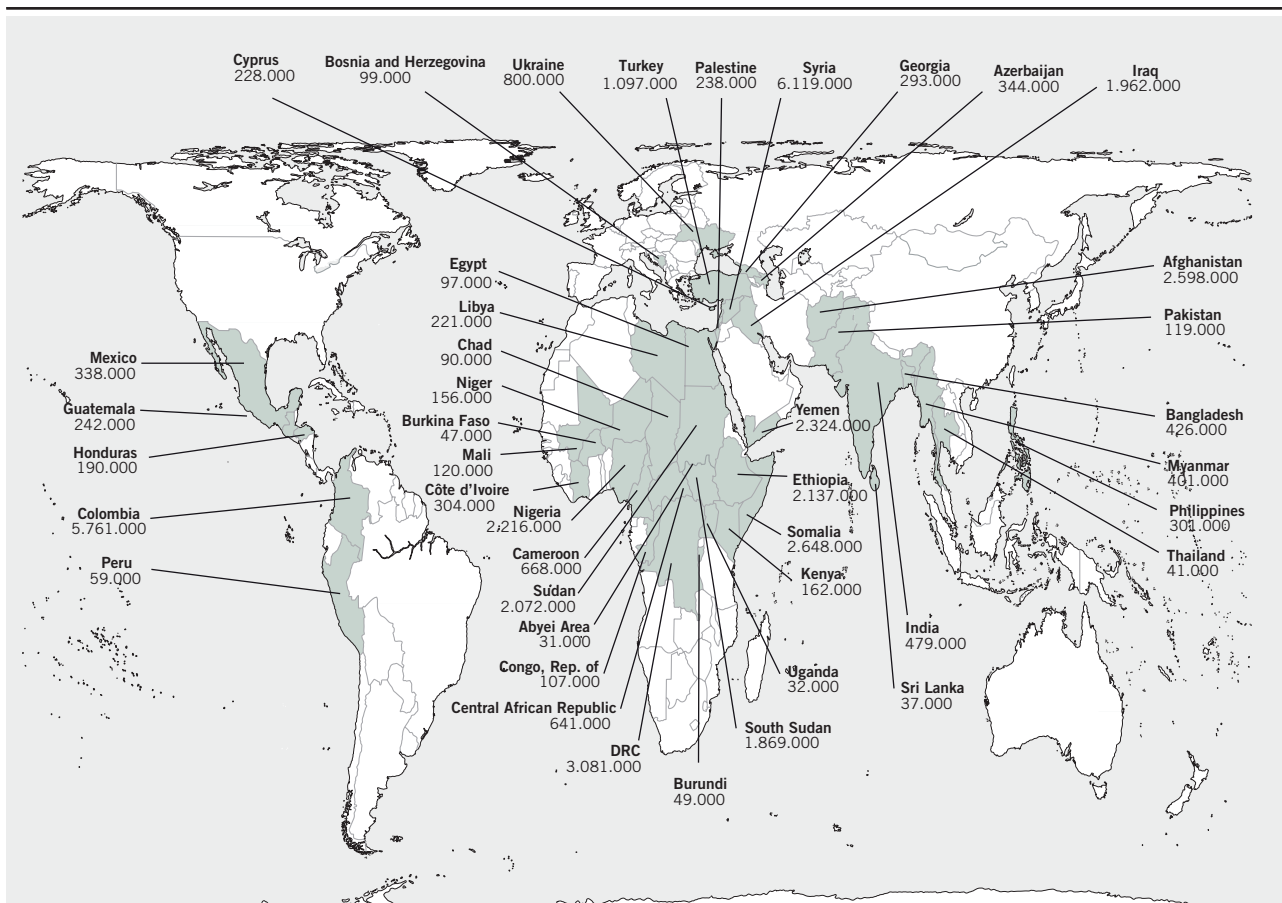
Source: IDMC, *GRID 2019: Global Report on Internal Displacement,* May 2019.

attacks and damage to medical facilities and other civil infrastructure, the use of sexual and gender violence and other forms of abuse.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or exacerbate humanitarian crises. OCHA warned that many more people than expected were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019 due to conflicts and extreme weather events. According to its prospective data as of December 2019, almost 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, the highest number in decades. Yemen remained the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in 2019, with 24 million of its citizens in need of assistance, representing 80% of its population, according to OCHA.

Furthermore, armed conflicts continued to have specific impacts on certain specific population groups, such as children. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflicts, published in 2019 and covering the year 2018, identified an alarming increase in serious violations of the human rights of children by state agents and international forces compared to the previous year, while those attributed to non-state actors remained stable. The report also verified an unprecedented threshold for the death and mutilation of children in 2018 since the UN established a monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and conflicts after UN Resolution 1612 (2005). In Afghanistan, there were 3,062 verified cases of children killed and mutilated in 2018. The report also corroborated other human rights violations against children, such as the forced recruitment and use of children (Somalia was the country with the highest number of cases, 2,300, followed by Nigeria, with 1,947), attacks on schools and hospitals, sexual violence against children and kidnappings (in which Somalia also stood out, with 2,493 verified cases).

The 2019 UN Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence, which covered the year 2018, contained verifiable information for 19 countries, involving more than 50 actors. Most of the perpetrators of sexual violence in these cases were non-state actors, but sexual violence had also been verifiably perpetrated by the national armed forces, police or other security actors in Myanmar, Syria, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Furthermore, one fifth of refugee or displaced women suffered sexual violence.

Armed conflict continued to cause forced population displacement. According to figures from the UNHCR

UNHCR estimates that there were 70.8 million people forcibly displaced around the world at the end of 2018

Intensity of the armed conflicts by region

annual report published in mid-2019, at the end of 2018 there were 70.8 million people forcibly displaced around the world. Of that total, 41.3 million were internally displaced persons, 25.9 million were refugees (20.4 million under the UN mandate and another 5.5 million under the mandate of the United Nations Agency for the Refugee Population of Palestine in the Middle East, UNRWA) and 3.5 million were asylum seekers. Of the total forcibly displaced people, 13.6 million were newly displaced, broken down by 10.8 million new internally displaced persons and 2.8 million new refugees and asylum-seekers. Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of the refugee population came from three countries, Syria (6.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million), followed by Myanmar (1.1 million) and Somalia (900,000). In absolute terms, the main host countries were Turkey (3.7 million, compared to 3.5 million in 2017), Pakistan (1.4 million, as in the previous year), Uganda (1.2 million, which fell from 1.4 million in 2017), Sudan (1.1 million, compared to just over 900,000 the previous year) and Germany (1.1 million, up from 970,400 in 2017). Likewise, in its global report published in 2019, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicated that the 41.3 million internally displaced people at the end of 2018 represented an increase of 1.4 million compared to 2017. This figure was headed by Syria (6.1 million), followed by Colombia (5.8 million), the DRC (3.1 million), Somalia (2.6 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), Yemen (2.3 million), Nigeria (2.2 million), Ethiopia (2.1 million), Sudan (2.1 million) and Iraq (2 million).

Socio-political crises

The second chapter (**Socio-political crises**)[2] looks at the most relevant events regarding social and political tensions recorded during the year and compares global

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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.

Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2019
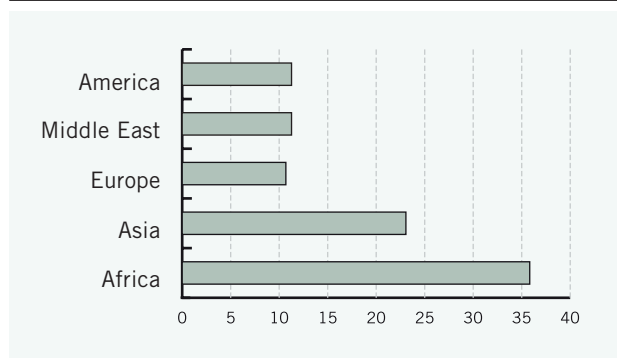
and regional trends. There were 94 socio-political crises around the world in 2019. The largest number of them were concentrated in Africa (36 cases), followed by Asia (23), the Middle East and Latin America (12 cases in each region) and Europe (11).

While socio-political crises may be caused by many factors, analysing the scope of the crises in 2019 allows us to identify trends as regards their causes or motivations. In keeping with data observed in previous years, at global level 71 per cent of the crises were mainly linked to opposition to domestic or international policies implemented by a given government (Government) (which led to a struggle to seize or erode power), or to opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective state system (System). At the same time, 40 per cent of the socio-political crises worldwide had as one of their main causes demands for self-government and/or identity. Note that around a third of the socio-political crises (31 per cent) involved disputes over control of territory and/or resources as a particularly important element, although this is a factor that fuels many crises to varying degrees.

Africa and Asia were the continents with the largest number of socio-political crises in 2019 (36 and 23, respectively)

In line with previous years, more than half of the crises in the world were internal in nature (51 crises, or 54%), more than one fourth were internationalised (25 crises, or almost 27%), and around one fifth were international (18 cases or almost 19 per cent). With regard to the evolution of the socio-political crises, in 37 per cent of the conflicts (35 cases) there was no significant change, while in 41 cases (44 per cent) there was a deterioration with respect to 2018, and in only 19 per cent of the settings was there some improvement in the crisis (18 cases). With regard to the intensity of the socio-political crises, during 2019 half of them were of low intensity (49 per cent, a percentage similar to the 51 per cent recorded in 2018), one third were of medium intensity (34 per cent, equivalent to last year's figure) and only 18 per cent of the cases had high levels of intensity (17 cases).

Gender, peace and security

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

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 comparing the data from this indicator with that of the countries that are affected by situations of armed conflict reveals that 14 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2019 occurred in countries where serious gender inequalities exist, with high or very high levels of discrimination; 6 in countries with medium levels of discrimination; and that 10 armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data in this regard –Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan. Thus, 58 per cent of the armed conflicts for which gender equality data is available took place in contexts with high or very high levels of discrimination. This figure rises to 83 per cent if countries with medium levels of discrimination are included. Similarly, in four other countries where there were one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some

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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	Sin datos
Armed conflict[4]	Burkina Faso DRC (3) India (2) Thailand	RCA Chad Mali Myanmar Nigeria	Afghanistan Cameroon Iraq Pakistan (2) Philippines (2) Yemen (2)	Argelia Burundi Egypt Israel Libya Níger Palestine Somalia Sudan (2) South Sudan Syria
Socio-political crises	Chile DRC (4) Haiti India (5) Kenya Senegal Thailand Tajikistan Zimbabwe	Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia Malawi Madagascar Nigeria (2) Philippines Sri Lanka Togo Tunisia Uganda (2)	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Iraq (2) Lebanon (2) Morocco Pakistan (2)	Angola Argelia Bahrein China (5) Congo, Rep. Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Gambia Guinea Bissau Israel (2) Kosovo Palestine Saudi Arabia Somalia South Sudan Sudan (2) Syria Taiwan Uzbekistan Venezuela

* 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.

cases with low levels (Mozambique, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low levels (Colombia) of discrimination, according to the SIGI. As regards socio-political crises, at least 42 of the 94 active cases of socio-political crisis during 2018 took place in countries where there are severe gender inequalities (medium, high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 57 per cent of the cases of socio-political crisis for which data were available. 21 socio-political crises took place in countries for which no data are available (Angola, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Burundi, China, Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Gaza and the West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Taiwan, Uzbekistan and Venezuela).

As in previous years, during 2019 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

83 per cent of the armed conflicts for which data on gender equality exist took place in contexts with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

issue. The Secretary-General's report covered the year 2018 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.

The ACLED research centre also published a toll on the impact of sexual violence in conflict, noting that between the beginning of 2018 and June 2019, 400 incidents of sexual violence in conflict zones had been recorded globally, of which 140 took place in 2019. Sexual violence accounted for more than a quarter of the political violence targeted specifically against women. According to ACLED, women and girls represented 95 per cent of the victims of sexual violence in conflict zones. As regards conflict zones, during 2018 the most affected countries were: DRC, South Sudan, Burundi, India and Sudan; and during the first months of 2019: DRC, India, South Sudan, Burundi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Throughout the year there were different initiatives to respond to sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts. In relation to the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel serving under his command, the strategy promoted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres continued to be implemented, although allegations continued to be received. According to the Secretary-General's 2019 report, progress has been made in reinforcing the victim-centred approach, with new tools to prevent the recruitment of personnel with a history of sexual exploitation or abuse; increased collaboration with civil society and external experts, including the launch in 2019 of a Civil Society Advisory Board, which has a mandate to make proposals to intensify the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. However, many obstacles remained, such as difficulties for Member States to follow up on complaints from non-United Nations forces. In his report, the Secretary-General identified the progress made and the commitments in the peacekeeping and humanitarian sectors, while urging greater efforts in development programmes.

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and crises had other serious gender impacts. Impunity for human rights violations continued to be a recurring theme. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights, published in July 2019, examined the continued impunity for human rights violations committed against human rights defenders, including female human rights defenders and defenders of the rights of the LGBTI population. It examined the main obstacles, compiled a list of best practices and proposed guidelines and recommendations. At the intersectional level, the report highlights the specific risks of violence faced by individuals, groups or movements depending on the type of rights they defend and also the economic or political interests they challenge. In relation to violence against the LGBTI population at global level, the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, made an appeal in July to States and other actors involved in the protection of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees to recognise their particularly vulnerable status and special requirements, and identified access to asylum as a basic element of protection against the disproportionate levels of arbitrary detention, police abuse, violence and extrajudicial killings by state and non-state actors to which the LGBTI population is subject in the countries from which they are forced to flee. They also face rights violations in the form of forced sterilisations, so-called "conversion therapies" and restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association. The independent expert therefore urged the States to ensure that well-founded fears of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual characteristics are accepted as grounds for the recognition of refugee status. According to their data, only 37 States granted asylum on such grounds

In relation to resolution 1325 and the international agenda for women, peace and security, there were 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. 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. In October, the annual debate on women, peace and security was held at the UN Security Council to coincide with the presentation of the UN Secretary-General's assessment report on the implementation of the agenda relating to this matter. The Secretary-General's report collected the results of the independent assessment promoted by UN Women regarding the fulfilment of the commitments acquired in 2015 by the United Nations during the high-level review of the women, peace and security agenda; of the peacekeeping operations; and of the structure for peace consolidation. The independent assessment of the implementation of the commitments to the women, peace and security agenda noted that 50 per cent had been achieved or were on track to be achieved, 40 per cent were being implemented unevenly and 10 per cent had suffered setbacks or had made no progress at all. It should be noted that among the commitments and recommendations established in 2015 that have not moved forward in recent years is that of including the gender perspective in peace agreements

In 2019, only 34 per cent of the national action plans relating to Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security had a specific budget devoted to the issue and only 30 per cent contained references to the issue of disarmament

With regard to the national action plans regarding Resolution 1325, during 2019 four countries adopted new plans: Bangladesh, Namibia, Lebanon and Armenia. Therefore, a total of 83 countries had a plan in place by the end of 2019, representing 43 per cent of UN member countries. According to the analysis of these plans carried out by the international organisation WILPF, of the 83 existing plans, only 34 per cent of them had a specific budget allocated to the implementation of the plan and only 30 per cent of the plans in force included references to the issue of disarmament. During 2019, nine countries committed to developing their first national action plan with an eye on the 2020 review: Uruguay, Cyprus, Malta, Egypt, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

Ex Yugoslavia
Transitional justice

Afghanistan
Peace process
between the US
and the Taliban

Thailand (South)
New peace process
with the main armed
group in the south

Sudan and
South Sudan
Transitional processes

Peace Opportunities and Risk Scenarios for 2020

Chapter four of the report (Peace Opportunities for 2020) identifies and analyzes four scenarios that are favourable for positive steps to be taken in terms of peacebuilding in 2020. The opportunities identified in 2019 refer to different regions and topics:

- Taliban-US negotiations, an opportunity for peace in Afghanistan?

- Prospects for transition in Sudan and South Sudan

- The new negotiating process between the Thai government and the BRN, the main armed group in the south of the country

- Civil society's drive for transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia in the face of political deadlock: towards a regional registry of victims

Chapter five of the report (Risk Scenarios for 2020), identifies and analyzes four scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen and become sources of more severe instability and violence in 2020.

- Challenges and risks in the Ethiopian transition facing a turbulent 2020

- Rising violence in Mozambique and the risks for the new peace agreement

- Yemen in the abyss: five years of escalating violence and fragile peace initiatives

- Forced displacement in the global context: specific risks for the LGBTI population

Forced displacement
and LGBTI people

Yemen
Violence and
humanitarian crisis

Ethiopia
Risks in
the transition

Mozambique
Rising instability
in central and
northern
Mozambique
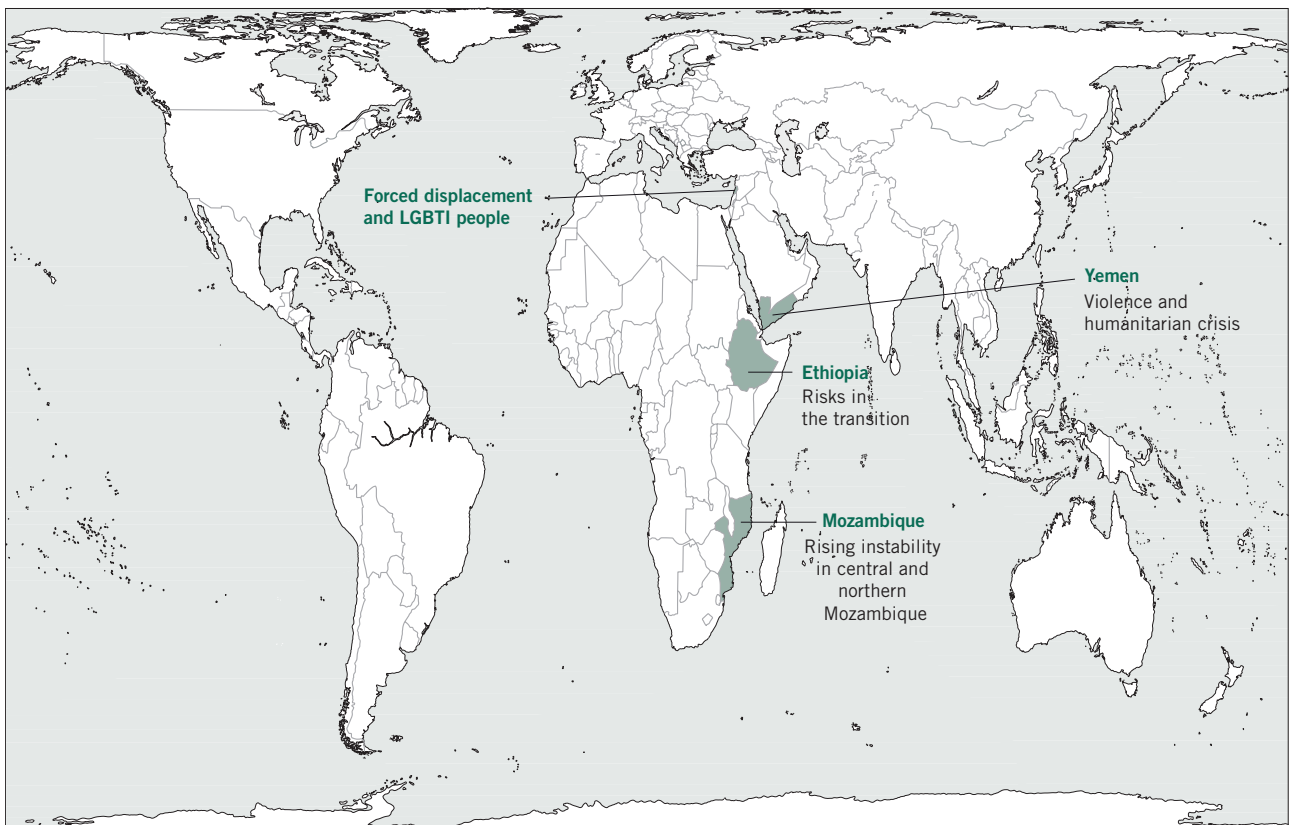
Conflict overview 2019

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	**Medium**	**Low**	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	
Africa	Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) *Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)* *Libya* *Mali* *Somalia* *South Sudan* West Sahel Region	Mozambique (north) *CAR* DR Congo (east) DR Congo (east-ADF)	Algeria* *Burundi* DR Congo (Kasai)* *Sudan (Darfur)* *Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)*	Chad Ethiopia Ethiopia (Oromia) Kenya Nigeria *Sudan*	Algeria Eritrea Guinea *Mozambique* *Nigeria (Delta Niger)* *DR Congo* Rwanda Rwanda – Burundi Rwanda – Uganda Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland)	Angola (Cabinda) Benin Central Africa (LRA) Congo Côte d'Ivoire DR Congo – Rwanda DR Congo – Uganda Equatorial Guinea Eritrea – Ethiopia *Gambia* Guinea-Bissau Madagascar Malawi *Morocco – Western Sahara* *Senegal (Casamance)* Sudan – South Sudan *Togo* Tunisia Uganda Zimbabwe	
SUBTOTAL	**7**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**10**	**20**	**52**
America			*Colombia*	*Haiti* Mexico Venezuela	Bolivia Chile Colombia Ecuador El Salvador Honduras *Nicaragua*	Guatemala Peru	
SUBTOTAL			**1**	**3**	**7**	**2**	**13**
Asia and Pacific	*Afghanistan*	India (Jammu and Kashmir) Pakistan *Philippines (Mindanao)*	India (CPI-M) *Myanmar* Pakistan (Balochistan) *Philippines (NPA)* *Thailand (south)*	India – Pakistan Indonesia (West Papua) Sri Lanka	Bangladesh China (Hong Kong) India *India (Assam)* *Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea* Pakistan Tajikistan	*China (Tibet)* China – Japan China – Taiwan China (Xinjiang) India (Manipur) *India (Nagaland)* Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan *Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea* Lao, DPR South China Sea Thailand Uzbekistan	
SUBTOTAL	**1**	**3**	**5**	**3**	**7**	**13**	**32**
Europe		Turkey (southeast) *Ukraine (east)*			*Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)* *Serbia – Kosovo* Turkey	Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina *Cyprus* *Georgia (Abkhasia)* *Georgia (South Ossetia)* *Moldova, Rep. of (Transdniestria)* Russia (North Caucasus) Spain (Catalonia)	
SUBTOTAL		**2**			**3**	**8**	**13**
Middle East	Iraq *Syria* Yemen (Houthis)	Egypt (Sinai)	*Israel – Palestine* Yemen (AQAP)	Egypt Iran *Iran – USA, Israel* Iraq Israel – Syria – Lebanon	Iran (northeast) Iran (Sistan Baluchistan) Lebanon	Bahrein Iraq (Kurdistan) *Palestine* Saudi Arabia	
SUBTOTAL	**3**	**1**	**2**	**5**	**3**	**4**	**18**
TOTAL	**11**	**10**	**13**	**17**	**30**	**47**	**128**

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics. With asterisk, armed conflicts ended during 2019 For more information on negotiations and peace processes, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2020. Report on trends and scenarios,* Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

Map 1.1. **Armed conflicts**

Countries with armed conflicts

End of armed conflict in 2019

Philippines
Myanmar
Thailand
India
Afghanistan
Pakistan
Yemen
Somalia
Burundi
Mozambique
Iraq
Syria
Turkey
Ukraine
Palestine
Israel
Egypt
Sudan
South Sudan
CAR
DRC (Kasai)
Libya
Chad
Niger
Nigeria
Benin
Cameroon
Algeria
Mali
Burkina Faso
Colombia
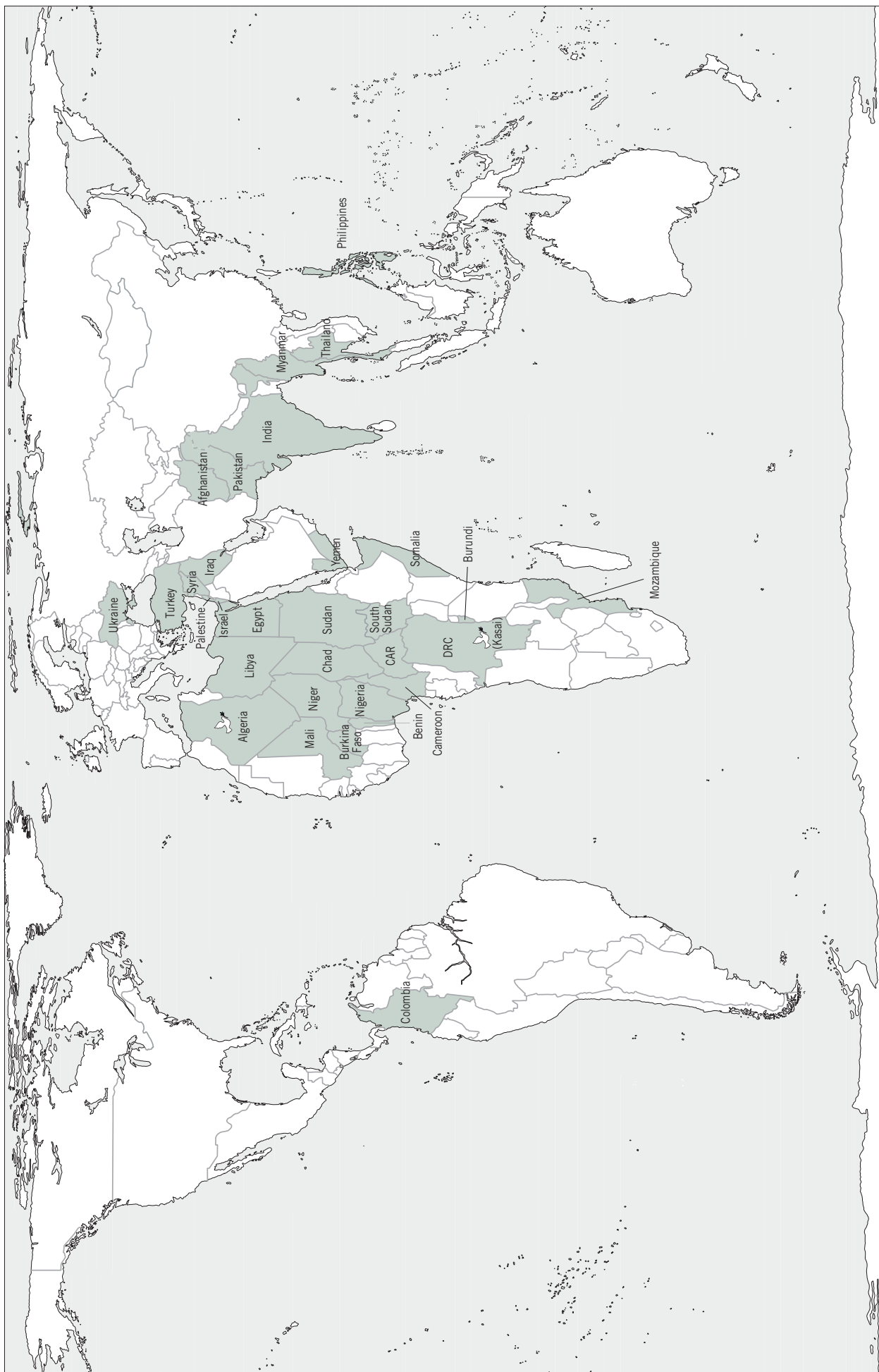
1. Armed conflicts

- 34 armed conflicts were reported in 2019, 32 of them remained active at the 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).
- Repression by the Burundian government and the youth wing of the ruling party CNDD-FDD, the Imbonerakure, intensified prior to the 2020 elections.
- The widespread reduction of violence and the beginning of the demobilisation of armed groups led to the end of the armed conflict in the Congolese region of Kasai.
- There was an escalation of violence by the ADF in eastern DRC as a result of a military operation conducted by the Congolese Armed Forces in the last quarter of the year.
- Various analysts highlighted that ISIS would be seeking a greater role in the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which mainly affects northeast Nigeria and the neighbouring regions of Chad, Cameroon and Niger, due to the increase in the group's actions.
- Violence in the Cabo Delgado province in northern Mozambique increased due to the presence of armed groups calling themselves jihadists.
- South Sudan, with 2.21 million refugees, ranked as the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the third largest in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan.
- Violence in the Liptako-Gourma region (Western Sahel) has increased fivefold since 2016, with around 4,000 people killed in 2019.
- The armed conflict in Libya worsened in 2019, with clashes and airstrikes in various parts of the country encouraged by continued violations of the arms embargo.
- With a body count of 42,000, according to ACLED, Afghanistan became the armed conflict with the highest number of fatalities in 2019.
- In line with the trend in recent years, violence in southern Thailand fell again and was at its lowest levels since the start of the conflict in 2004.
- The Turkish government stepped up pressure against the PKK in Iraq and Syria, while repression against Kurdish political actors inside Turkey continued.
- The armed conflict in Iraq was marked by persisting hostilities between the security forces and ISIS and by the growing projection of the struggle between Iran and the United States in the country.
- The Syrian armed conflict continued to be characterised by high levels of violence, the participation of many armed actors, the strong influence of regional and international actors and very serious impacts on the civilian population.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2019. 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 2019, 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 2019.

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 2019

Conflict[1] -beginning-	Type[2]	Main parties[3]	Intensity[4] / Trend[5]
Africa			
Algeria -1992-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS, governments of North Africa and the Sahel	1
	System		End
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, Imbonerakure Youth branch, political party CNDD-FDD, political party CNL, armed groups RED-TABARA, FPB (previously FOREBU), FNL	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	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, RPRC, MPC, UPC, MLCJ), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, LRA armed Ugandan group, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, EUFOR	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	Govenrment of DRC, Government of Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	2
	System, Resources		↑
DRC (Kasai) -2017-	Internal	Government, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)	1
	Government, Identity		End
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of Nigeria, Boko Haram (BH), Boko Haram-ISWAP, Boko Haram-Abubakar Shekau, civilian militias, MNJTF regional force (Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)	3
	System		↑
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, numerous armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA), militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Bengazi Defence Brigades (BDB), ISIS, AQIM, mercenaries; USA, France, UK, Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Russia, among other countries	3
	Government, Resources, System		↑

1. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. This last option is used in cases involving more than one armed conflict in the same state or in the same territory within a state, for the purpose of distinguishing them.
2. This report classifies and analyses armed conflicts using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following main causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the internal or international policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or the struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). In respect of the second type, the armed conflicts may be of an internal, Internationalised internal or international nature. An internal armed conflict is defined as a conflict involving armed actors from the same state who operate exclusively within the territory of this state. Secondly, an internationalised internal armed conflict is defined as that in which at least one of the parties involved is foreign and/or in which the tension spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Another factor taken into account in order to consider an armed conflict as internationalised internal is the existence of military bases of armed groups in neighbouring countries (in connivance with these countries) from which attacks are launched. Finally, an international conflict is one in which state and non-state parties from two or more countries confront each other. It should also be taken into account that most current armed conflicts have a significant regional or international dimension and influence due, among other factors, to flows of refugees, the arms trade, economic or political interests (such as legal or illegal exploitation of resources) that the neighbouring countries have in the conflict, the participation of foreign combatants or the logistical and military support provided by other states.
3. This column shows the actors that intervene directly in the hostilities. The main actors who participate directly in the conflicts are made up of a mixture of regular or irregular armed parties. The conflicts usually involve the government, or its armed forces, fighting against one or several armed opposition groups, but can also involve other irregular groups such as clans, guerrillas, warlords, armed groups in opposition to each other or militias from ethnic or religious communities. Although they most frequently use conventional weapons, and more specifically small arms (which cause most deaths in conflicts), in many cases other methods are employed, such as suicide attacks, bombings and sexual violence and even hunger as a weapon of war. There are also other actors who do not directly participate in the armed activities but who nevertheless have a significant influence on the conflict.
4. The intensity of an armed conflict (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation of violence, reduction of violence, unchanged) are evaluated mainly on the basis of how deadly it is (number of fatalities) and according to its impact on the population and the territory. Moreover, there are other aspects worthy of consideration, such as the systematisation and frequency of the violence or the complexity of the military struggle (complexity is normally related to the number and fragmentation of the actors involved, to the level of institutionalisation and capacity of the state, and to the degree of internationalisation of the conflict, as well as to the flexibility of objectives and to the political will of the parties to reach agreements). As such, high-intensity armed conflicts are usually defined as those that cause over 1,000 fatalities per year, as well as affecting a significant proportion of the territory and population, and involving several actors (who forge alliances, confront each other or establish a tactical coexistence). Medium and low intensity conflicts, with over 100 fatalities per year, have the aforementioned characteristics but with a more limited presence and scope. An armed conflict is considered ended when a significant and sustained reduction in armed hostilities occurs, whether due to a military victory, an agreement between the actors in conflict, demobilisation by one of the parties, or because one of the parties abandons or significantly scales down the armed struggle as a strategy to achieve certain objectives. None of these options necessarily mean that the underlying causes of the armed conflict have been overcome. Nor do they exclude the possibility of new outbreaks of violence. The temporary cessation of hostilities, whether formal or tacit, does not necessarily imply the end of the armed conflict.
5. This column compares the trend of the events of 2019 with those that of 2018. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2019 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

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity	Trend
Africa				
Mali[6] -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), MSA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, JNIM/GSIM, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP), Katiba Macina, MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso)	3	
	System, Self-government, Identity			↑
Mozambique (North) -2019-	Internationalised internal	Government, Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ), Russian mercenaries (Wagner Group)	2	
	System, 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, REMNASA, 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 *janjaweed*, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, UNAMID	1	
	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 (FML), Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups	3	
	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 (ISIS-KP)	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 Conference	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			↓

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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 (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlay Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF	2
	Self-government, System, Identity		=
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, USA, Iran, Turkey, Israel	3
	System, Government, Identity, Resources		=
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the YPG/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, AL Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP/Ansar Sharia), ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias/Ansar Allah	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, United Arab Emirates (UAE), 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 2019

This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2019. 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 forced displacement due to situations of conflict and violence.

1.2.1 Global and regional trends

The previous years' trend regarding the number of armed conflicts was maintained in 2019, **with 34 cases, the same number as in 2018 and one more than in 2017 and 2016 (and similar to previous periods**: 35 in 2015, 36 in 2014 and 35 in 2013). Thirty-two of the 34 cases reported in 2019 remained active at the end of the year and two others were no longer considered armed conflicts. This was the case in Algeria, where there has been a drop in hostilities between jihadist armed groups (mainly AQIM) in recent years and in the mortality associated with the conflict, although AQIM stepped up its activity in the armed conflict in the Western Sahel. The other conflict considered to have ended in 2019 affected the Kasai region in the DRC, pitting the state security forces against various militias and each in turn against the civilian population. Large-scale surrenders in 2019, mainly from the Kamwina Nsapu group, led to the end of the conflict. Compared to 2018, a new armed conflict was reported, considered a socio-political crisis in previous years. It took place in Mozambique (north), in the province of Cabo Delgado, where the armed jihadist organisation Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) fought against the security forces amidst the marginalisation and grievances of the Muslim minority in the country, as well as extreme poverty in the province.

Regarding the geographical distribution of armed conflicts worldwide, most of the cases occurred in Africa, which was the scene of 47% of the armed conflicts (16 cases) and Asia, with 26% (nine cases), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (two) and the Americas (one).

Regarding the relationships between the actors involved and the scenario of the dispute, the conflicts were identified as being of an internal, international and, mainly, internationalised internal nature. Like in 2018, 12% of the armed conflicts (four) were internal in 2019, meaning that they were conflicts between armed actors

Most of the armed conflicts in 2019 were reported in Africa (16) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (two) and the Americas (one)

Graph 1.1. **Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2019**
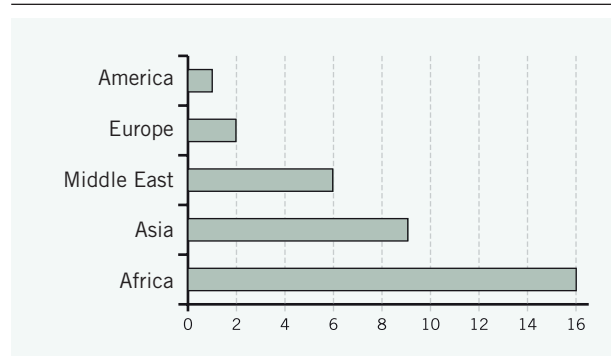
of the same state operating exclusively within its borders: the DRC (Kasai), which ended that year, the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). 6% were considered international: the conflict in the Western Sahel region and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The remaining 82% were internationalised internal, 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 in the role of conflict parties, including international missions, regional and international ad-hoc military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders and others**.

Regarding the role of third countries, Syria stood out for another year in 2019, where Russia and the Syrian regime intensified their offensive in Idlib, with serious impacts on forced population displacement. Another notable development was the withdrawal of US troops from northeastern Syria, which opened the door for Turkey to launch an air and ground offensive in the north against Kurdish forces, seriously affecting the civilian population. In Yemen (Houthis), the conflict was influenced by increasing tensions between the US and Saudi Arabia on one side and Iran on the other. The Hadi government accused the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of supporting the military campaign of secessionist actors in southern Yemen amidst escalating tensions among the anti-Houthi side. In relation to Iraq, another notable case of internationalisation, rising tensions between Washington and Tehran and a series of acts of violence that affected both US and Iranian interests in Iraq aggravated the situation in 2019. Israel also increased its armed attacks in Iraq, which were described as a declaration of war by the pro-Iranian parliamentary bloc in Iraq. In relation to the conflict in the Western Sahel, France announced the deployment of ground troops as part of Operation Bourgou IV, led by its Operation Barkhane, and which will also have troops from the G5-Sahel Joint Force (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

Some of these states and other countries intervened militarily through various channels, individually and

as part of regional and international coalitions such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which is involved in northern Mali and in the conflict affecting the Western Sahel region, in the area known as Liptako-Gourma. The G5 Sahel requested greater cooperation from the UN under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, while also planning to expand its military deployment. Other coalitions included the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), consisting of Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, which fought Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region; the conglomerate of military forces led by Saudi Arabia and made up of a dozen countries that are fighting in Yemen; the US-led international anti-Islamic State (ISIS) coalitions militarily involved in Iraq and Syria; and the US-led coalition fighting the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.

The military involvement of UN missions continued, particularly in conflicts in Africa, including MINUSMA in Mali and in the Western Sahel Region, MINUSCA in the CAR, MONUSCO in the DRC (east), AMISOM in Somalia, UNAMID (hybrid UN-AU mission) in Sudan and UNMISS in South Sudan. In Mali, MINUSMA suffered one of its worst attacks ever in 2019, with the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM) claiming responsibility. AMISOM, which supported the Somali Army in offensives to regain territory controlled by al-Shabaab, was also the target of many attacks during the year. In turn, the UN Security Council decided to shrink AMISOM, following the 2017 plan for the Somali Army to gradually assume its responsibilities, although the AU warned that the situation could deteriorate in 2020 due to the elections. In relation to the conflict in Darfur (Sudan), the UN went ahead with its road map to reconfigure and reduce the mission in the country, which was planned to be completed in 2020, while international human rights NGOs questioned the plan due to the continued violence in the country. In addition, regional organisations continued to be militarily involved in various conflicts through missions or operations, such as the AU (AMISOM in Somalia), the EU (EUFOR RCA, EUNAVFOR in Somalia) and NATO (Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan). Hybrid missions were also active, such as Operation Ocean Shield, a military operation in the waters of the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, led by the United States and involving the EU, NATO and other countries such as Japan, India and Russia.

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 elements was present in 73% of the cases in 2019 (25 of 34), in line with previous years (71% in 2018 and 73% in 2017). 19 of these 25 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, Lake Chad Region, Western Sahel Region, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries; the various branches of al-Qaeda operating in North Africa and the Middle East, including AQIM (Algeria, Sahel and Lybia) and AQAP (Yemen); the Taliban militias active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia, among others.

In 2019, in some cases, self-styled jihadist armed groups intensified their trend of proliferation. Thus, the increase in violence in northern Mozambique, pitting jihadist fighters, mainly from the Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) group, against the security forces, led to classify the situation as an armed conflict. In addition, ISIS announced that it had established itself in that country for the first time, although analysts and security forces denied that there was evidence of any effective presence. In Mali, however, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) first formally appeared in 2019, while the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM) claimed responsibility for one of the most serious attacks suffered by the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA), which killed 10 troops and wounded 25. In the Lake Chad Region, some analysts indicated that ISIS was making a global call to join its branch ISWAP. In October, ISIS claimed its first lethal action in northwestern Nigeria. Likewise, the media pointed out that Afghanistan was the country in which ISIS was the most active during 2018 and 2019, except for Iraq and Syria. In Egypt (Sinai), the ISIS branch announced plans to expand its actions to the governorate of South Sinai, including the Red Sea area.

Other main causes of the conflicts were over identity-related issues and demands for self-government, which were main factors in 59% (20 cases), the same percentage as in 2018. These included the armed conflict in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India. After the most serious attack in years against the Indian security forces there, which claimed the lives of 45 troops, the authorities deployed an additional 40,000 security forces and revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomous status and state status, splitting it in half and lowering its administrative rank. The conflict over the status of Cameroon's English-speaking majority regions also faced serious escalation in 2019. As part of

Thirty-two of the 34 armed conflicts in 2019 remained active until the end of the year following the drop in violence between jihadist groups and security forces in Algeria and the mass surrender of insurgents in the Congolese region of Kasai

73% of the armed conflicts had among its main causes an attempt to change the government or the system

the peace process in the Philippines, a new autonomous region was established in Mindanao and ratified by a referendum in 2019. The region also faced dynamics of violence associated with jihadist groups. Finally, struggles over the control of resources and territory were a main cause of 32% of the conflicts (11 cases), though it was indirectly present in many others, perpetuating the violence through wartime economies.

36% of the conflicts deteriored compared to the previous year (12 cases). 66% of the conflicts with increasing violence in 2019 raged in Africa (eight of the 12). The conflicts in which violence increased in 2019 included: Burundi, Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West), Libya, Mali, Mozambique (North), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the DRC (east), Colombia, Afghanistan, India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Turkey (southeast). Another 32% (11 cases) did not undergo any significant changes. 32% experienced a decrease in hostilities and levels of violence (11 cases). Of this latter group, two conflicts were considered to have ended at the end of the year: Algeria and the DRC (Kasai).

The intensity of the violence was low in 38% of the conflicts (13 cases), high in 32% (11) and medium in 30% (10). The high-intensity conflicts were characterised by more than 1,000 deaths per year, as well as by serious impacts on the population, including in terms of large-scale forced displacement, and on the territory. In 2019, high-intensity conflicts increased compared to the previous year (27% or nine cases in 2018), due to the rising violence in Cameroon and in the Western Sahel Region. The 11 most serious cases in 2019 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West), Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Some of these conflicts far exceeded 1,000 deaths in a year, such as in the Western Sahel Region, where the fatality rate quintupled compared to 2016, with more than 4,000 lives lost in 2019, according to UN records; in Somalia, where over 4,000 died that

32% of the conflicts in 2019 were high-intensity: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)

year, according to the ACLED research centre; and, on a much larger scale, in Afghanistan, with 24,000 deaths in the first ten months of 2019, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program; in Yemen (Houthis), with death tolls of 23,000 in 2019, according to ACLED; and in Syria, with different body counts in 2019 that ranged from 11,200 according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights to 15,000 according to ACLED. All were scenes of significant internal or international population movements.

1.2.2. Impacts of the conflicts on civilians

As in previous years, the armed conflicts in 2019 had serious impacts on the civilian population and the territories in which they occurred. In the year marking the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council's first open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as the 70th anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions, the UN Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians stressed that the situation was tragically similar to that of 20 years ago and that civilians continued to constitute the vast majority of casualties in conflict situations. They also continued to face short and long-term impacts due to forced displacement, the use of hunger as a strategy of war, the denial of access to humanitarian aid, attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel, attacks and damage to medical facilities and other civil infrastructure, the use of sexual and gender violence and other forms of abuse. The report also raised the urgency of advancing the protection of civilians in contemporary conflicts, characterised by the proliferation and fragmentation of non-state armed groups in increasingly asymmetric struggles and increasingly urban settings. The report also noted the need to pay more attention to armed conflict and hunger, to the specific impacts of conflicts on people with functional diversity and to the environmental impact of conflicts.

The analysis of the development of the 34 armed conflicts in 2019 that appear in *Alert! 2020* confirms

Graph 1.2. **Intensity of the armed conflicts**
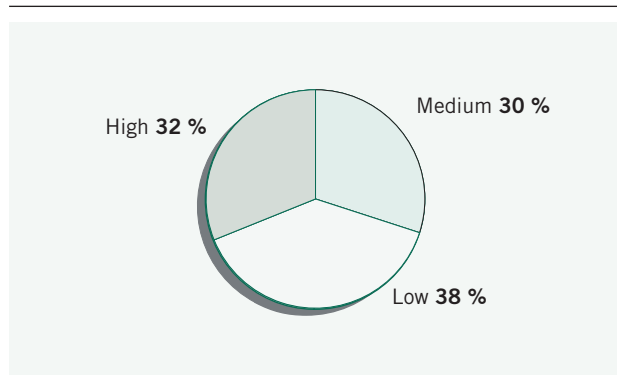
Graph 1.3. **Intensity of the armed conflicts by region**

Box 1.1. Regional trends in armed conflict

AFRICA	• Africa reported the highest number of cases of armed conflict in the world, with 16 of the 34 (equivalent to 47%). These are the same figures as in 2018, although there were changes regarding the contexts. While in 2018 the armed conflict in Ethiopia (Ogaden) had ended, in 2019 the situation of violence in Mozambique (north) was considered a new armed conflict. The reduction in violence in Algeria and DRC (Kasai) led to them being classified as conflicts that had ended by the end of the year. • 44% of the conflicts in Africa were high-intensity (seven of the 16): Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), which rose in intensity compared to 2018, Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia and South Sudan. • Half the armed conflicts in Africa deteriorated in 2019 compared to 2018 (with the situation worsening by one fourth in 2018 compared to 2017). Likewise, 38% of the conflicts (six) witnessed a reduction in hostilities, including two conflicts considered to have ended at the end of the year, and there were no significant changes in 12% (two). • African armed conflicts were characterised by their high level of internationalisation. 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 81% of the cases. Demands for identity and/or self-government were found in 56% and factors related to controlling resources were observed in 50%.
AMERICAS	• There was only one armed conflict in the Americas, in Colombia. As such, only 3% of the armed conflicts in the world in 2019 took place in America. • The sole armed conflict in the Americas (Colombia) worsened in 2019. The peace talks between the government and the ELN were cancelled early in the year after the deadliest attack in the capital in the last 15 years, for which the armed group claimed responsibility. • While the Americas were the scene of a single armed conflict, they were more affected by homicide-related violence.
ASIA	• The continent had the second most armed conflicts after Africa, with 26% (nine cases). • More than half of the armed conflicts in Asia were of low intensity (five of the nine). One third (three) were of medium intensity and one was of high intensity: Afghanistan. Forty-four per cent (44%) of the conflicts did not undergo any significant change, one third reported a drop in hostilities and 22% deteriorated, in Afghanistan and India (Jammu and Kashmir). • One third of the conflicts in Asia were internal, as were 75% of the armed conflicts around the world. • In terms of causes, five conflicts had among its main causes 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	• Europe counted two conflicts, in Turkey (southeast) and Ukraine (east), which accounted for 6% of all armed conflicts worldwide, in line with the previous year. • Violence in the conflicts in Europe was of medium intensity, although the armed conflict in Turkey deteriorated during 2019, while conflict-related deaths in Ukraine continued to fall. • 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	• The Middle East was the scene of 18% of the conflicts in the world in 2019, with six of the 34 cases, as in 2018. It was the third region with more active armed conflicts. • 27% of the high-intensity armed conflicts in the world took place in the Middle East. This was true of Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Although all three were somewhat less deadly than in 2018, they continued to generate very serious impacts in terms of lives lost, forced displacement and other consequences for the population and the territory. • While 83% of the conflicts (five) maintained levels of violence and hostilities similar to those of the previous year, they fell in one, in Israel-Palestine, which in 2018 had experienced the most serious incidents since 2014, but which saw the fatalities drop by over half over the previous year in 2019. • The main motivations for 83% of the conflicts included control of the government or attempts to change the system (in the latter case, mostly by jihadists), while identity-related issues and/or demands for self-government were prominent causes of 67% of them.

that the trends highlighted by the UN Secretary-General are ongoing. The armed conflicts in 2019 continued to kill and wound many civilians. There were many attacks against civilian targets during the year, including homes, places of worship, markets, camps for displaced people, health care staff and centres, teachers and schools, agricultural areas and hotels, some of which were seriously affected. Such attacks were reported in places and conflicts such as Cameroon, Nigeria as part of the conflict in the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, Pakistan, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), Thailand (south), Ukraine, Iraq and Syria. Kidnappings were carried out and civilians went missing, as in the conflict in the Lake Chad Region, where 22,000 people were still missing in 2019, according to the ICRC, the highest number reported by the organisation around

The UN warned of the need to make progress in protecting the civilian population in a context of conflicts characterised by the fragmentation of armed groups in increasingly urban settings

the world. Regarding other impacts or strategies of war, international humanitarial law continued to be violated in various contexts. In Syria, the use of weapons such as chlorine gas was reported. In Libya, various violations of the arms embargo and the increasing use of airstrikes were reported and in 2019 25% more civilian casualties were reported than in 2018, according to UN data. In Yemen, acts of violence constituting war crimes were reported, including indiscriminate airstrikes, sieges and torture.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/ or exacerbate humanitarian crises. OCHA warned that many more people than expected were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019 due to conflicts and extreme weather events. According to its prospective data as of December 2019, **almost 168 million people will need**

humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, the highest number in decades. Yemen remained the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in 2019, with 24 million of its citizens in need of assistance, representing 80% of its population, according to OCHA. In its report in late 2019, OCHA also warned of the crises in Syria, the DRC, Somalia and South Sudan, as well as rising food insecurity in Sudan due to the economic crisis, an increase in forced displacement in the Sahel Region and the continued humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad region. In addition to the African crises, OCHA warned of growing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan and other countries, the worsening crisis in Venezuela and the entrenchment of the political and socio-economic crisis in Haiti, with serious impacts for the food security of its population. Furthermore, as it is echoed in *Alert! 2020*, 4.3 million people were in need of humanitarian aid in Cameroon in 2019, representing a 30% increase compared to 2018. In the DRC, 15.9 million people faced serious food insecurity in 2019, while the WHO declared the Ebola outbreak in the eastern part of the country a global public health epidemic in July. In some cases, the population in need of humanitarian assistance shrank, such as Burundi, which dropped from 3.6 million in 2018 to 1.8 in 2019.

In late 2019, OCHA warned that almost 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection by 2020

Furthermore, **armed conflicts continued to have specific impacts on certain specific population groups, such as children**. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflicts, published in 2019 and covering the year 2018, identified an alarming increase in serious violations of the human rights of children by state agents and international forces compared to the previous year, while those attributed to non-state actors remained stable. The report also verified an unprecedented threshold for the death and mutilation of children in 2018 since the UN established a monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and conflicts after UN Resolution 1612 (2005).

In Afghanistan, there were 3,062 verified cases of children killed and mutilated in 2018. The death toll (927) was the highest ever reported in the country. In Syria, a total of 1,106 deaths and 748 cases of mutilation of children were verified in 2018. In Yemen, the 576 children were verified as killed and 1,113 were mutilated. The report also corroborated other human rights violations against children, such as the forced recruitment and use of children (Somalia was the country with the highest number of cases, 2,300, followed by Nigeria, with 1,947), attacks on schools and hospitals, sexual violence against children and kidnappings (in which Somalia also stood out, with 2,493 verified cases).

Map 1.2. **Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2018**
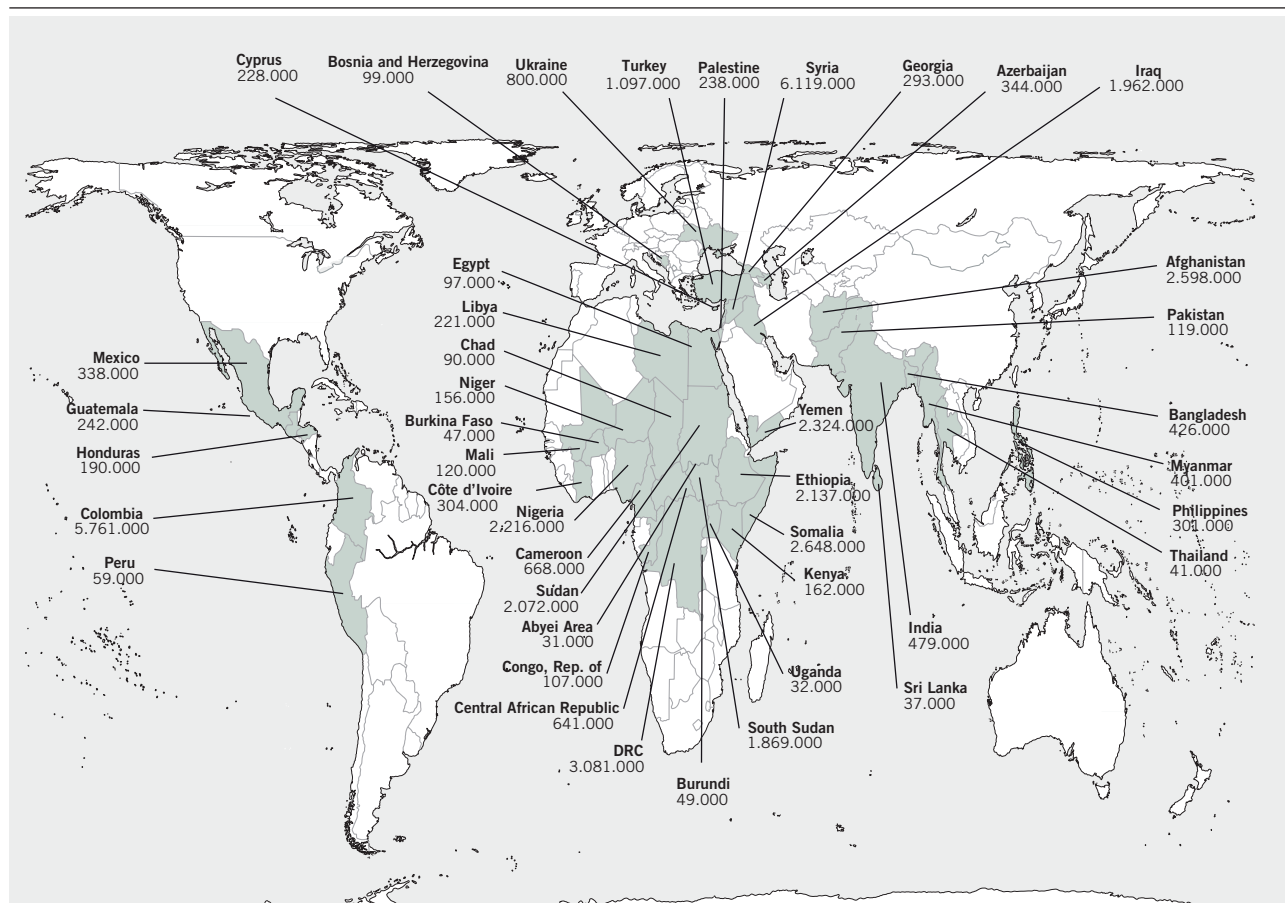
Source: IDMC, *GRID 2019: Global Report on Internal Displacement,* May 2019.

Likewise, state and non-state armed actors continued to perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence against civilians, significantly women and girls. In 2019, **the UN confirmed for yet another year that it was still difficult to determine the exact prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence, but 2018 data showed that its use continued to be part of broader strategies of conflict and that it especially affected women and girls**. The 2019 UN Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence, which covered the year 2018, contained verifiable information for 19 countries, involving more than 50 actors. Most of the perpetrators of sexual violence in these cases were non-state actors, but sexual violence had also been verifiably perpetrated by the national armed forces, police or other security actors in Myanmar, Syria, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The report identified several factors regarding sexual violence and conflict, including the links between sexual violence, human trafficking and terrorism, the interrelation between sexual violence linked to conflicts, murder and exploitation of natural resources as a cause and result of forced displacement and the prevalence of sexual violence in contexts of political and electoral violence. Men and boys were also victims of sexual violence in countries in conflict such as Burundi, Syria, the DRC, the CAR and South Sudan, mainly in villages and detention centres. Furthermore, according to the UN Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security, submitted in October 2019, one fifth of refugee or displaced women suffered sexual violence. The analysis of the dynamics of violence in *Alert! 2020* revealed that these human rights violations continued in 2019. Among other cases, Somali activists reported that sexual and gender-based violence continued to be widespread and silenced in the country. In other countries, such as Burundi, DRC and Yemen, cases of sexual violence were also reported in 2019.

Armed conflict continued to cause forced population displacement. According to figures from the UNHCR annual report published in mid-2019, at the end of 2018 there were 70.8 million people forcibly displaced around the world. Of that total, 41.3 million were internally displaced persons, 25.9 million were refugees (20.4 million under the UN mandate and another 5.5 million under the mandate of the United Nations Agency for the Refugee Population of Palestine in the Middle East, UNRWA) and 3.5 million were asylum seekers. Of the total forcibly displaced people, 13.6 million were newly displaced, broken down by 10.8 million new internally displaced persons and 2.8 million new refugees and asylum-seekers. **Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of the refugee population came from three countries, Syria (6.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million), followed by Myanmar (1.1 million) and Somalia (900,000).** Approximately half the refugee population was under 18 years of age. Lebanon was once again the country with the highest percentage of the refugee population compared to the country's total population (one in six inhabitants,

the same as in 2017). In absolute terms, the main host countries were Turkey (3.7 million, compared to 3.5 million in 2017), Pakistan (1.4 million, as in the previous year), Uganda (1.2 million, which fell from 1.4 million in 2017), Sudan (1.1 million, compared to just over 900,000 the previous year) and Germany (1.1 million, up from 970,400 in 2017). Likewise, in its global report published in 2019, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicated that **the 41.3 million internally displaced people at the end of 2018 represented an increase of 1.4 million compared to 2017. This figure was headed by Syria (6.1 million), followed by Colombia (5.8 million), the DRC (3.1 million), Somalia (2.6 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), Yemen (2.3 million), Nigeria (2.2 million), Ethiopia (2.1 million), Sudan (2.1 million) and Iraq (2 million)**. Likewise, according to IDMC figures covering January to June 2019 there were 3.8 million new internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and violence (rising to 10.8 million if the causes of conflict and disaster are taken into account). The highest number of the 3.8 million IDPs in the first half of the year were in Syria, with 804,000 new IDPs, followed by the DRC (718,000), Ethiopia (522,000), Yemen (282,000) and Afghanistan (213,000).

The analysis of the development of the conflicts in 2019 revealed the continuation of trends on the impact of armed conflict in terms of both internal and external forced displacement. In Cameroon, for example, more than half a million people had fled their homes due to violence, according to UN figures. The humanitarian NGO Norwegian Refugee Council called it the main forgotten displacement crisis, after the DRC and the CAR. Likewise, in late 2019, more than 200,000 people were internally displaced and over 138,000 had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. Around 900,000 people had also been forcibly displaced by the conflict in the Western Sahel Region. In Somalia, drought and conflict displaced more than 300,000 people between January and November, adding to the 2.6 million internally displaced persons in the country. In the DRC, the cumulative figure for internal displacement was 4.8 million people in 2019. South Sudan had the largest refugee crisis in Africa in 2019, with 2.21 million refugees in neighbouring countries, 62% of them children. It was also the third worst in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan. In Libya, movements of between 120,000 and 200,000 people had been reported since April. In Afghanistan, almost 350,000 people were internally displaced by the conflict in 2019, according to the UN. In Myanmar, around 100,000 people were displaced in Rakhine State between November 2018 and November 2019. Syria continued to lead the countries with the largest displaced population in the world in 2019, both internally and beyond its borders. By the end of the year, the Russian and Syrian offensive against the opposition stronghold in Idlib had forcibly displaced 200,000 people in just two weeks.

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, Imbonerakure youth wing, political party CNDD-FDD, political party CNL, armed groups RED-TABARA, FPB (previously FOREBU), FNL
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 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.

During 2019, the climate of repression towards the political opposition and civil society perpetrated by the government and the youth wing of the ruling CNDD-FDD party, the Imbonerakure, intensified on the eve of the 2020 elections. Preparations for the general elections continued to affect the political evolution of the country. At the same time, clashes continued between state security forces and the armed groups RED-TABARA, FOREBU (currently the Forces Populaires de Burundi, FPB) and the FNL, and between the Imbonerakure and members of the main opposition party, the Congrés National por la Liberté (CNL, formerly the FNL, led by Agathon Rwasa) throughout the country and especially in the western provinces of Cibitoke, Bubanza, Rumonge and Bujumbura Rural, bordering the DRC. **The ACLED database identified 297**

The climate of harassment and repression and the silencing of political opposition by the government of Burundi and the Imbonerakure intensified prior to the 2020 elections

fatalities as a consequence of political violence in the country. Other provinces were also affected by violence, repression and the prevailing climate of intimidation, tolerated or encouraged by the local authorities and security forces. However, diplomatic sourcesnoted in October that there had been a slight drop in violence. Insecurity was constant on Burundi's borders with Rwanda and with the DRC. The most outstanding actions of the year took place in January, when the Burundian Armed Forces supported by theyouth wing Imbonerakure clashed with Burundian insurgent groups in the territory of Uvira, in South Kivu (DRC) causing dozens of fatalities; in April, when the Congolese Armed Forces announced that they had killed 36 members of the FNL and FPB in Uvira; and at the end of October in Musigati, in the province of Bubanza, in which a dozen members of the security forces and another 10 members of the RED-TABARA group were killed. The Burundian Armed Forces began their withdrawal from the DRC in February. The Congolese Armed Forces confronted Burundian armed groups at various times of the year in the Congolese province of South Kivu.

The climate of harassment and repression and the silencing of the political opposition and organised civil society was constant, with continuous reports of torture, dozens of arbitrary arrests, abuses and human rights violations from various sources, such as civil society organisations in exile likethe Iteka League and the Observatory to Fight Corruption. In June, the government suspended PARCEM, one of the few remaining independent local human rights organisations in the country, accusing it of providing a distorted image of the country and its leaders. Those same reports noted that most victims of human rights violations were predominantly members of political parties or coalitions opposed to the ruling party, members of civil society and those who opposed the president's third term and voted against the constitutional amendment in the June 2018 referendum. The main culprits were the National Intelligence Service, the police, local administrative officials and Imbonerakure. In January, the government announced that 84 of the 130 international NGOs operating in the country had registered before 31 December, complying with the new conditions imposed (such as including ethnic quotas for their staff), but others rejected the new conditions and left the country. In February, the government closed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and in March it withdrew the BBC's license to operate in the country. In June, HRW[7] expressed its concern about the serious human rights violations committed in the country, evidenced in a study carried out with exiled human rights organisations and with the UN Commission of Inquiry, to which the government also blocked access. In addition, the government threatened

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7. HRW, "Burundi: Rampant Abuses Against Opposition", 12 June 2019.

to sever relations with the UN Secretary-General's special envoy. In August, the CNL denounced that more than 10 party offices had been burned down or damaged in recent months and concluded that these acts were part of the ruling party's strategy to intimidate the opposition. The fighting took place for much of the year, causing nearly 300 fatalities by the end of November, according to ACLED. However, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance fell from 3.6 million in 2018 to 1.8 million in 2019. France resumed sending aid to the country inlate 2018 in the defence and education sectors in order to help to create a positive dynamic ahead of the 2020 elections, a decision criticised by the EU for breaking with the consensus on the European sanctions policy.

As highlighted by the UN Secretary-General's annual report on Burundi, the Humura Centre, which serves survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, reported 875 new cases between January 2019 and September 2019. The report noted that estate and inheritance rights were denied to women and remain highly politicised, with women representing only 17% of landowners with property titles.

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups of the former Séléka rebel coalition (FPRC, RPRC, MPC, UPC, MLCJ), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, Ugandan armed group LRA, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, EUFOR
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

Summary:
Since independence in 1960, the situation in the Central African Republic has been characterised by continued political instability, which has resulted in several coups and military dictatorships. The keys to the situation are of an internal and external nature. Internal, because there is a confrontation between political elites from northern and southern ethnic groups who are competing for power and minorities that have been excluded from it. A number of leaders have attempted to establish a system of patronage to ensure their political survival. And external, due to the role played by its neighbours Chad and Libya; due to its natural resources (diamonds, uranium, gold, hardwoods) and the awarding of mining contracts in which these countries compete alongside China and the former colonial power, France, which controls uranium. Conflicts in the region have led to the accumulation of weaponry and combatants who have turned the country into regional sanctuary. This situation has been compounded by a religious dimension due to the fact that the Séléka coalition, which is a Muslim faith organisation formed by a number of historically marginalised groups from the north and which counts foreign fighters amongst its ranks, took power in March 2013 after toppling the former leader, François Bozizé, who for the past 10 years had fought these insurgencies in the north. The

inability of the Séléka leader, Michel Djotodia, to control the rebel coalition, which has committed gross violations of human rights, looting and extrajudicial executions, has led to the emergence of Christian militias ("anti-balaka"). These militias and sectors of the army, as well as supporters of former President Bozizé, have rebelled against the government and Séléka, creating a climate of chaos and widespread impunity. France, the AU and the UN intervened militarily to reduce the clashes and facilitate the process of dialogue that would lead to a negotiated transition.

There was a general drop in violence and clashes between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces in 2019, as well as against international MINUSCA troops due to the signing and start of the implementation of the February peace agreement, though a climate of insecurity and sporadic acts of violence against the civilian population persisted throughout the year. Violence between armed groups and between self-defence groups and militias and against the civilian population continued in many parts of the country. **On 6 February, the government led by Faustin Touadéra and the 14 main armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in Bangui** after having held peace talks since the end of January in Khartoum (Sudan) with the facilitation of the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR and the United Nations. Various sources highlighted Russia's decisive role in obtaining the commitment of various ex-Séléka groups and its growing influence in the Central African country, which is part of its geopolitical and economic strategy to increase its presence in Africa. The agreement includes integrating the armed groups into the government and the security forces andmaking progress on decentralisation and the responsible management of natural resources. According to the UN Secretary-General's report on the situation in the country, violations of the agreement decreased from 230 in April to 104 in September. However, the report also indicated that armed groups continued to carry out activities contrary to the peace agreement, such as committing violence against the civilian population, collecting illegal taxes and obstructing the authority of the state, as well as using violence to obtain concessions in the peace process. Despite the announcements of definitive cessations of hostilities, the groups continued to harass civilians andset up roadblocks, while the Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) militia reinforced its position around some mining operations. On 12 September, the UN Security Council partially lifted the arms embargo on the country.

After declining in June and July, violence resumed in August and September, even in areas that had not previously been affected by the conflict. According to ACLED, there were 594 fatalities by the end of 2019, a figure significantly lower than the 1,187 in 2018 and 2,011 in 2017. The 3R militia and the Patriotic Front for the Renaissance of the CAR (FPRC)

were responsible for most of the violations reported against civilians, followed by anti-balaka groups that had signed the agreement and others that had not signed it. The most serious armed activity of the year took place in May, when 3R fighters killed 42 people, mostly civilians, in several villages near Paoua (Ouham Pendé prefecture, northwest). The government and the international community condemned the attacks and demanded that the leader of 3R Sidiki hand over the perpetrators. After local and international pressure, the 3R confirmed that its fighters had participated in the aforementioned attack, three of which were handed over to the government on 23 May to begin legal proceedings. The 3R group publicly condemned the attack and reiterated its commitment to peace and reconciliation. Subsequently, the most important clashes since June took place in the Vakaga prefecture (far north) between the Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ) and the FPRC. On 14 July, the two groups clashed in Am-Dafock and nine fighters died. On 31 August, the FPRC killed the son of the Sultan of Birao, sparking two days of fighting. As a consequence, one civilian and 24 fighters were killed. Subsequently, the FPRC attacked the positions of the MLCJ on 14 September and 39 combatants lost their lives, displacing 24,000 civilians by early October. These clashes were replayed in December in Am-Dafock.

The humanitarian situation improved during the year. In particular, there was an increase in returns and greater access. The number of people needing humanitarian assistance fell from 2.9 million to 2.6 million. One fifth of the population is still displaced, with 581,000 internally displaced persons and more than 605,000 refugees reported as of 31 August, although around 355,000 displaced persons made movements to return and more than 90,000 refugees returned spontaneously. Anti-balaka groups, the FPRC and the MPRC attacked humanitarian organisations on various occasions throughout the year. Conflict-related sexual violence continued, and most rapes of girls and women were allegedly perpetrated by members of the armed groups that signed the peace agreement, although the Central African Armed Forces and security forces were also involved. According to the UN Secretary-General's report in June, most of the rapes were committed by ex-Séléka groups in the Ouham-Pendé and Nana-Gribizi prefectures in the northwestern and north-central parts of the country. Reports of widespread rape were received in the Kaga Bandoro sub-prefecture (Nana Gribizi) and in the transhumance corridors, where access is difficult.

There was a general reduction in fighting between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces, as well as against international MINUSCA troops due to the signing and start of the implementation of the peace agreement in February

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 continued to be affected by a climate of violence and instability stemming from the electoral process[8], although it improved over the course of the year due to the evolution of the Ebola epidemic and the many armed groups in the eastern part of the country. These groups continued to fight among themselves for control of the territory, communciation channels and access to natural resources, becoming involved in clashes with the FARDC, and committing abuses against the civilian population, including acts of extortion, forced recruitment, sexual violence and many other human rights violations. Although the activities of the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA were reduced in Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé (northeastern part of the country)[9], the situation in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu (east) continued to be marked by the activities of the different Mai Mai militias, the FDLR and its splinter groups (CNRD), by

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

the spread of the armed conflict in Burundi into the DRC due to Burundian armed actors and by the armed conflict stemming from the activities of the Ugandan origin group ADF, which operates especially in thenorthern part of North Kivu province[10]. Violence fell significantly in the region of Kasai[11], though the outbreak of intercommunity violence during the presidential election in Yumbi (Mai-Ndombe) in December 2018 claimed 900 lives. The fatalities caused by the various acts of violence connected to the conflict in the eastern part of the country (except the victims caused by the conflict with the ADF) rose to over 2,600 from January to late November, according to ACLED. The WHO declared the Ebola epidemic in the east a global public health epidemic in July. In November, the organisation said that the disease was beginning to retreat due to fewer new cases. To date, a total of 3,298 cases had been reportedand 2,197 people had died (67%). Of the total cases, 56% (1,859) were women, 28% (931) were under the age of 18 and 5% (163) were medical workers. As the report of the UN Secretary-General in November 2019 pointed out, an estimated 15.9 million people face severe and acute food insecurity, especially in the eastern provinces. The situation is more critical in Ituri, Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental, South Kivu and Tanganyika, where between 12% and 15% of the population is in the highest phase of emergency. In addition to an estimated internally displaced population of 4.8 million people, as of 31 March, the DRC was accommodating around 540,000 refugees (from Burundi, the CAR, Rwanda and South Sudan). The country is also facing the worst measles outbreak in its history, affecting all 26 provinces. As of November, there were 209,211 cases, including 4,189 deaths. Since the beginning of 2019, there have been over 22,931 cholera cases and 407 deaths. The situation is particularly worrying in South Kivu, Upper Lomami, North Kivu and Tanganyika.

First, the capacity of the Rwandan Hutu armed group FDLR continued to decline following the repatriation of most of its ex-combatants from the camps in eastern DRC in 2018, in addition to sustained joint FARDC and MONUSCO operations against the group. The death of historical FDLR leader Ignace Murwanashyaka in Germany on 16 April had no effect on the group's operational structure and morale, according to the UN. The FDLR remained active and continued to pose a threat to North and South Kivu through local and regional networks. The number of cases of conflict-related

In July, the WHO declared the Ebola epidemic in the eastern DRC a global public health epidemic, as it has already killed 2,197 people

One of the Rwandan FDLR factions, the CNRD-Ubwiyunge, was forced to flee due to harassment by various armed groups, militias and the Congolese Armed Forces

sexual violence allegedly committed by FDLR fighters increased in Nyiragongo, where most victims were attacked while on their way to collect firewood and charcoal in Virunga National Park. Cases of conflict-related sexual violence continued to be reported in Rutshuru amidst clashes between the FDLR and the Nyatura group. In Rutshuru (North Kivu), the FDLR continued to rape and abuse civilians. On 10 November, the FARDC announced that Musabimana Juvenal, the leader of the Rwandan group RUD-Urunana, a splinter groupof the FDLR, had been killed in an operation. On 18 September, the FDLR military leader, Sylvestre Mudacumura, who was wanted by the ICC, was killed in North Kivu province. On 30 April, the P5 coalition, an armed group composed of Rwandan opposition political organisations, was weakened after the arrest and extradition from the Comoros of Callixte "Sankara" Nsabimana, the leader of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the military arm of the Rwandan Movement for Democratic Change (RMDC), a political group founded byPaul Rusesabagina.[12] On 23 May, Callixte Nsabimana was charged with 16 crimes, including terrorism, kidnapping, murder and denial of genocide. Nsabimana pleaded guilty to all charges. The FLN is also an ally of the FDLR.

The situation regarding the Rwandan armed group CNRD-Ubwiyunge, a division of the FDLR, also evolved. This group, operating in North and South Kivu, has been the target of various attacks by armed groups (NDC-R, Mai Mai, Nyatura militias) since December 2018, which forced it to leave its headquarters in Faringa, Rutshuru (North Kivu) and move to South Kivu, amid clashes that killed 18 civilians and 15 fighters, according to various sources. At least 4,000 people linked to the CNRD armed group mobilised, including some 400 fighters, and they also left Masisifor South Kivu to regroup with the rest of the armed group. During the journey, they clashed with the FARDC and other armed groups, causing the death of an undetermined number of people. The UN Group of Experts on the DRC noted that the group had settled in Kalehe (South Kivu) and that its leader, Wilson Irategeka, had fled to South Kivu. There were also reports of meetings between the FDLR and the CNRD. Meanwhile, as a result of the operations against the CNRD and its expulsion from North Kivu, the armed group NDC-R, active in the area around Masisi (North

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10. See the summary on the DRC (east-ADF) in this chapter.
11. See the summary on the DRC (Kasai) in this chapter.
12. Paul Rusesabagina is a former Hutu manager of the Hotel Mille Collines in Kigali whose conduct in saving 1,268 Tutsi people there during the genocide in 1994 gave rise to the film Hotel Rwanda. In 1996, his criticism of Paul Kagame's government forced him into exile in Belgium, where he also suffered death threats, for which he moved to the United States.

Kivu), expanded its sphere of control during the year, giving rise to a climate of impunity as a consequence of human rights abuses and violations, including sexual violence. The frequent clashes between the NDC-R and the APCLS, the Rwandan armed group FDLR and the Nyatura armed groups further increased insecurity and led to the deaths of dozens of civilians and fighters (over 150 in the first quarter of the year), rapes of women and displacement of civilians. In October, the FARDC launched military operations in Masisi to try to control the situation. Various reports indicated possible collusion between the FARDC and the NDC-R group.

In the areas around Fizi and Uvira in South Kivu province, the incursion of Burundian militias and the operations conducted by the Burundian Armed Forces (which are officially not recognised or permitted), the Imbonerakure youth wing and the FARDC against these groups and their local allies led to clashes involving fatalities, looting, sexual violence and the displacement of the population. In these same areas, ethnic violence against civilians in the highlands and plateaus around Fizi and Uvira continued to be of great concern, particularly in the Minembwe (Uvira) area. Between March and November, Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups killed around 50 civilians and destroyed 89 villages. The UN highlighted that what is worrying is that these attacks against civilians allegedly originated from members of the same community as the victims, with the Banyamulenge, Bafuliro, Babembe and Banyindu being particularly affected. An estimated 125,000 civilians were displaced by the fighting. The situation has deteriorated considerably since October and the risk of violence spreading to neighboring provinces is increasing, according to the UN. With the support of MONUSCO, the Congolese government deployed FARDC contingents and launched political mediation initiatives, but these efforts failed to reduce the climate of violence due to the authorities' politicisation of the conflict and lack of impartiality attributable to the authorities involved, according to the UN Secretary-General's report. In Shabunda (western South Kivu), the redeployment of the FARDC to other areas increased the freedom of action of the Mai-Mai Raya Mutomboki militias, leading to deteriorating security and an increase in abuse against civilians.

Finally, Congolese artisanal gold continued to be smuggled through neighbouring countries with Dubai as the main destination. The lack of a traceability system for artisanal gold continued to hamper efforts to control the sector. The UN Group of Experts on the DRC also investigated and documented several cases of smuggling of minerals containing tin (cassiterite), tantalum (coltan) and tungsten (wolframite). Thus, the Group of Experts documented that some armed groups continued to fund their activities through illegal mining, thereby contaminating the supply chain, demonstrating that illicit markets and smuggling networks persist and that public officials responsible for fighting fraud are involved in the illicit trade, among other issues.

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

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

Operations conducted by the ADF, an armed group of Ugandan origin based in the North Kivu region, persisted throughout the year, mainly around Beni (Grand Nord), but also in the border area of Irumu (Ituri province, north of Beni). Thus, the ADF carried out many attacks against civilians, the Congolese security forces and MONUSCO, in addition to recurrent kidnappings of civilians, causing several hundred fatalities during the year. According to ACLED, 500 people lost their lives. Led by Seka Musa Baluku, the ADF regrouped and rebuilt its capacity after the operations carried out in 2014, according to the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, which highlighted the group's recruitment capacity in Uganda and in eastern DRC. The Group of Experts also found that the group continued to recruit minors and use them in combat actions and that **the ADF had committed many acts of conflict-related sexual violence**, particularly through forced marriage. The most serious action took place at the end of the year, following an operation by the FARDC against the ADF that started in late October in the area north of Beni. The FARDC concentrated more than 20,000 troops in the town and along key roads during the previous weeks. Although several episodes of intense fighting were observed and the FARDC indicated that they had seized various strategic positions, the ADF deliberately attacked the civilian population in order to undermine the offensive. In response to the FARDC offensive, the ADF killed about 100 civilians in

November, forcibly displacing thousands of people. The military operation carried out by the FARDC in late May killed 26 ADF fighters in Ngite (North Kivu).

As stated in the UN-Secretary General's report, MONUSCO prepared contingency plans to protect civilians amidst the FARDC operations against the ADF, such as by increasing patrols, in order to minimise the risk of retaliatory attacks against civilians. Following the deteriorating situation, MONUSCO and the national authorities renewed their efforts to cooperate more closely on protecting civilians. MONUSCO also continued to provide logistical and medical support to the FARDC to help to sustain the latest operations against the ADF and weaken its ability to harm civilians. However, despite these efforts, **the increase in ADF attacks sparked a series of increasingly violent protests against the security situationon 20 November** that were largely directed against MONUSCO and the failure of the Congolese government, the FARDC and MONUSCO to guarantee the safety of the civilian population. These protests led to the Beni City Council fire and attacks on MONUSCO facilities, which had to relocate its personnel. Clashes between the security forces and protesters in Beni, Butembo and Oicha killed two policemen and at least seven protesters between 23 and 26 November. Consequently, President Tshisekedi decided to increase the FARDC's presence in Beni and agreed to carry out joint FARDC and MONUSCO operations against the ADF.

However, speculation about possible links between the ADF and ISIS raised serious concern in the region. On 18 April, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack suspected of being carried out by the ADF at an FARDC camp in Bovata, North Kivu, two days earlier. The attack claimed the lives of two soldiers and a civilian. Since then, ISIS has claimed responsibility for more attacks that were also blamed on the ADF. However, as the report of the Group of Experts on the DRC indicated, the ADF remained a closed organisation that did not publicly share its targets or claim responsibility for attacks. During a media appearance on 29 June, President Tshisekedi expressed concern about the ADF's adoption of ISIS-related terrorist tactics. However, in its latest report, the Group of Experts on the DRC did not confirm any direct link between the ADF and ISIS, although its radical interpretation of Islam and its recent propaganda indicated a desire to ally with other Islamist groups.

DRC (Kasai)	
Start:	2017
Type:	Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	DRC, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	End

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 Kasai region (affecting the provinces of Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental, Sankuru and Lomami) improved significantly during the year after the spontaneous large-scale surrenders that took place in early 2019, mainly by the Kamwina Nsapu group, thereby ending the armed conflict that has affected the region. Sporadic acts of violence caused around 50 fatalities, according to ACLED. The most significant event took place on 24 February, when a clash between the FARDC and Kamwina Nsapu in Kamako (Kasai) caused 19 fatalities during an attempt to free a kidnapped Tetela community leader held in the home of a Kamwina Nsapu leader. One of the main perpetrators of violence in recent years, his group remained practically inactive after the surrender of its militias, and in many cases its members demobilised and returned to their areas and communities of origin. Thousands of civilians also returned to their places of origin. However, the demobilisation of the Tshokwe community's Bana Mura militia is still pending. Following increased tensions during the governor's election, the political and security situation in Sankuru province also improved, in part thanks to MONUSCO's efforts to promote reconciliation between communities and the local disarmament of youth groups, according to the UN. However, the risk of local conflicts persists, as several thousand people, including members of the displaced Lulúa and Luba

communities, crossed the border into Angola to return to their places of origin, mainly in Kasai-Central, where the Pende and Tshokwe militias had not yet been disarmed. MONUSCO supported the provincial authorities' inter-community dialogue and reconciliation efforts, as well as the reintegration of the former members of Kamwina Nsapu into their communities.

Sudan (Darfur)	
Start:	2003
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, pro-government militias *janjaweed*, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, UNAMID
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

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

The armed conflict in the Darfur region, Sudan, was once again characterised by a lower intensity of violence throughout 2019, in the logic of the dynamics of recent years. According to data provided by ACLED, by mid-November, there were 268 deaths caused by violence in the Darfur region (almost half of them, 132, reported in the Central Darfur region) in 2019. This is significantly less than the 859 violent deaths reported during 2018, the 996 in 2017 and the 2,286 in 2016. Much of the decline in violence was marked by the peace negotiations and the political protests in the country during the year, which led to the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir's government in April. The opening of a new national transition process focused the efforts

of all parties (government, opposition groups, rebel movements and others) to open new initiatives to establish peace, elicit pledgesfrom the parties to cease hostilities and improve security conditions overall. As part of this scenario, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported a total of 14,500 new forced displacements throughout the country in the first three quarters of 2019, mainly in South Darfur, while the number of people who were able to return to their homes reached 111,500, with the highest number of returns in North Darfur (44,500 people). However, at the end of the year, inter-community disputes broke out in El Geneina between members of the Masalit and Maaliya groups, which killed more than 80 people, wounded 190 and displaced around 47,000. The crisis was related to the murder of a Maaliya pastor by a young Masalit, which triggered a wave of retaliatory attacks between families and groups. Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and the Vice President of the Sovereignty Council, Lieutenant General Mohamed "Hemeti"Hamdan, led the delegation that arrived in El Geneina on 1 January to assess and contain the violence.

In 2018, the UN Security Council began to reconfigure and reduce the **hybrid AU-UN mission in Darfur (UNAMID)**, as stipulated by UN Resolution 2363 (2017) and UN Resolution 2429 (2018), which foresee the handover of its facilities to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), among other aspects. However, human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch questioned the decision to curtail the mission due to ongoing violence perpetrated by Janjaweed militias in Darfur, but also in other parts of the country. As part of the exit roadmap, which plans for the mission to end by 2020, the Security Council had extended UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019. In early June, the Security Council extended it again until 31 October 2019. As part of the negotiationsfor the peace agreements between the new transitional government of Sudan and the rebel movements, in October Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok asked the UN to extendthe mission by one year. This was due to Darfuri armed rebel groups' concerns about the lack of protection for the civilian population ifUNAMID withdrew before the peace agreement is signed due to the violence carried out by the Janjaawed militias. The UN Security Council renewed UNAMID's mandate for one year on 31 October, stating that it would focus on specific areas: support for the peace process, support for peacebuilding activities, the protection of civilians, monitoring of and reporting on human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence and serious violations against children, the provision of humanitarian assistance and support for the voluntary return of people forcibly displaced by violence.

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 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 (SPLA-IO),unleashing a new round of violence that continues to this day. In 2015, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the SPLA-IO, which was ratified in 2018. However, the signatory parties' reluctance to implement it, as well as the emergence of other armed groups and community militias, have kept the war raging in the country.

Although violence continued to drop sharply across the country throughout the year, armed activity continued due to inter-community disputes, as well as clashes between government troops and the rebel group that had not signed the peace agreement, the National Salvation Front (NAS) led by Thomas Cirillo in the Central Equatoria region, particularly around the city of Yei. According to ACLED, 1,499 people lost their lives in armed political

With 2.21 million refugees, South Sudan had the worst refugee crisis in Africa and the third worst in the world, after Syria and Afghanistan

violence in the country in 2019. This is the lowest figure since the last phase of the armed conflict began in December 2013, which according to data from the UN mission in the country (UNMISS) has claimed around 400,000 lives since the beginning of war. However, although violence fell comparatively, a humanitarian emergency continued to grip the country. According to data provided by UNHCR, around 4.3 million people had been forcibly displaced by violence at the end of 2019. Around 2.21 million of these were refugees in neighbouring countries (mainly in Uganda and Sudan), of which 63% were children. According to the agency, these figures rank South Sudan as having the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the third largest in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan.[13]

During 2019, the ratification of the 2015 peace agreement after the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018 significantly reduced the violence in the country between the South Sudanese Armed Forces and the main rebel group, the SPLA-IO, led by Riek Machar. The agreement ratified the parties' commitment to cease violence, achieving in late 2019 the longest ceasefire between the two main groups that started the armed conflict in December 2013. Although progress on the road map policy described in the R-ARCSS were lower during the year,[14] significant progress was made in containing violence in the country that helped to reduce military hostilities, improve the security situation and ensure the free movement of people. It also favoured the provision of humanitarian aid, reducing incidents against humanitarian workers by 30% compared to the previous year.

Even so, violence continued in the country, mainly due to the armed actions of the NAS rebellion and inter-community disputes. Indeed, the refusal of the group led by Thomas Cirillo to recognize the peace agreement made the insurgency one of the greatest obstacles in the country to secure peace. Throughout the year, different armed actions by the NAS and clashes with the South Sudanese Army (now renamed the South Sudan People's Defence Force – SSPDF), as well as with the SPLA-IO rebel forces in the states of Central Equatoria and Western Equatoria, forcibly displacedaround 13,000 people during the first month of the year alone. The escalation of violence generated a joint statement by the Troika (USA, Norway and UK) on 21 February, urging the parties to respect the cessation of hostilities agreement of December 2017 and the R-ARCSS of September 2018. Later, on 15 March, the UN Security Council renewed the mandate of UNMISS, empowering the peacekeeping forces to protect and guarantee the return of displaced persons.

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13. UNHCR, "South Sudan Refugee Crisis", viewed on 14 January 2020.
14. See the summary on the peace process in South Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

On 30 May, the UN Security Council extended the arms embargo for one year, as well as sanctions against different government officials and members of different rebel groups identified as obstacles to peace. The United Nations also accused the parties to the peace agreement of continuing to recruit fighters. Meanwhile, hostilities continued in the Equatoria region. On 3 July, UNMISS reported that at least 104 people had lost their lives, mainly due to the escalating violence in the Equatoria region in the period between the ratification of the peace agreement in September 2018 and April 2019. In October, fighting between government troops and NAS members in Isebi, YeiRiver state, claimed the lives of three humanitarian workers and an unknown number of soldiers and rebels. UNHCR denounced the attacks carried out against humanitarian workers in the country, requesting respect for international humanitarian law. According to data provided by the agency, at least 115 humanitarian workers have been killed since the armed conflict began in late 2013.

Various violent inter-community disputes between different types of militias also took place during the year due to different causes, especially related to the theft of livestock and disputes over land boundaries. There were incidents in various states across the country (Bieh, Tonj, Jonglei, Akobo, Western Lakes and others). In the two most violent episodes, in mid-January, 105 people died in Tonj state from cattle theft raids, while at the end of November at least 80 people were killed and 1,000 others injured in clashes between members from the Manuer and Gak groups in Western Lakes state. This episode led to the dispatch of 75 Nepalese UNMISS troops to try to end the outbreak of violence.

Horn of Africa

Somalia	
Start:	1988
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Federal government, regional pro-government forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan and warlord militias, 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 activity of the armed group al-Shabaab persisted during the year, as did tensions between the federal government and the federal states, especially Jubaland and Galmudug, regarding regional autonomy from the the federal government in decision-making. This interference by the federal government in the internal affairs of the developing federal states escalated to the point that in November the federal security forces took control of the towns of Guriel and Mataban (Galmudug) from the Sufi militia Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ), a group that accused the government of trying to manipulate the presidential election. The federal government deployed additional troops in the state capital Dhusamareb and on 25 Novemberit revealed the dates of the presidential election for 17-23 December.

Al-Shabaab remained primarily responsible for the attacks on government facilities, officials, security forces, restaurants and hotels. ACLED noted that the overall number of fatalities as a result of political violence in Somalia rose to 4,038 in 2019. In March and April, there was a significant increase in attacks in Mogadishu, with incidents almost every day with improvised explosive devices, as well as mortar attacks and targeted killings. In March alone, there were 77 such attacks throughout the country. It was the highest number reported in a month since 2016. Regarding the increasing use of these bombs, according to the UN Secretary-General's report on the country in November, between 1 May and 12 October, 99 attacks of this kind against the Somali National Army were reported in the country, compared to 83 in the same period in 2018. Those attacks left 66 dead and 110 wounded. In the same period, AMISOM was the target of 73 attacks, which killed 21 people and wounded 34. Mortar attacks increased throughout the year, highlighting al-Shabaab's increased ability to attack strategic targets with precision and accuracy. The activities of al-Shabaab splinter groups linked to ISIS decreased and there were practically no incidents throughout the year, as ISIS was hit by many of the US airstrikes. In May, the UN

Security Council decided to reduce AMISOM by 1,000 soldiers, following the plan outlined in 2017 for the Somali Army to gradually assume its responsibilities, but the AU warned of a foreseeable worsening of the situation in 2020 due to the election.

The increase in the number of US airstrikes against al-Shabaab targets in 2019, particularly in the Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba regions, led to their dispersal, with their members moving from the most remote areas to urban centres. Amnesty International stated that there was credible evidence of at least 20 civilian fatalities as a result of the airstrikes conducted by the United States in the past two years, and that the Pentagon had not carried out a proper investigation into these cases. AFRICOM questioned the credibility of the evidence. The security force operations in Lower Shabelle allowed them to recapture cities that had previously been in the hands of al-Shabaab. Although al-Shabaab has moved to other locations, it has continued to maintain a considerable ability to attack areas recaptured by the government. While Mogadishu remained the centre of insurgent activity, al-Shabaab continued to carry out operations in the Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions. Between 5 May and 3 June, there were a total of 228 incidents during Ramadan, more than during Ramadan in 2017 and 2018. Ramadan is a period in which recurring violence has escalated in recent years, which fell in the months after June and July, as it happened in 2019. Thirty-five per cent (35%) of violent incidents occurred in the Banaadir region, and 34% in southern Somalia, illustrating the geographical presence of al-Shabaab.

ACLED raised the number of fatalities in Somalia to 4,038 in 2019

On 30 September, a patrol of the EU Training Mission for Somalia was the target of a car bomb attack in Mogadishu that caused an unconfirmed number of civilian casualties. On 4 September, in Middle Shabelle, several AMISOM Burundian troops lost their lives in clashes with al-Shabaab. In attacks launched by al-Shabaab on 8 September and 14 October, two deputy governors were killed. On 14 August, al-Shabaab launched a large-scale ground attack on the Awdheegle forward operating base, which lasted several hours and included the use of mortars and two car bombs. Somali and AMISOM forces suffered heavy casualties but maintained their positions and pushed back the al-Shabaab fighters. In Mogadishu, there were two suicide car bomb attacks in May, the first in the Warta Nabada district, in which four people died and 10 were injured, and the second in the Boondheere district, where a militant used a vehicle to attack a checkpoint at a prison run by the National Intelligence and Security Agency. At least 17 people died in the explosion, while another 20 were injured. On 15 June, another incident occurred with an improvised explosive device placed in a vehicle at a checkpoint near the federal Parliament, in which nine people were killed and 20 were injured. In

There was an increase in al-Shabaab's use of improvised explosive devices that caused dozens of fatalities during the year

August, the UN report on the situation in Somalia noted that the rise in large-scale attacks inside and outside Mogadishu highlighted the group's resilience and robust operational capacity despite the intensified security measures under way, including airstrikes against the group and operations conducted jointly by the Somali National Army and AMISOM in Lower Shabelle that are specifically designed to counter threats to Mogadishu. In Lower Shabelle, the Somali National Army continued offensive operations to capture territory with the support of AMISOM troops and other international actors. After the loss of the cities of Bariira and Sabiid, al-Shabaab made efforts to recover them, but the Somali National Army held its position and continues to control those strategic locations. On 12 July, al-Shabaab carried out an attack on the Medina Hotel in Kismaayo that claimed 33 lives, including a state presidential candidate and an IOM contractor, and injured 56 others. One of the most serious attacks of the year took place on 30 December, when a bomb exploded at a checkpoint in Mogadishu, killing 81 people.

According to the UN, the consequences of the drought of 2016 and 2017, aggravated by the prolonged armed conflict and obstacles to humanitarian access, accentuated protection problems, particularly for women and children. Between January and November 2019, drought and conflict had displaced more than 300,000 people, in addition to the 2.6 million internally displaced persons who continue to suffer serious risks of eviction, marginalisation and exclusion across the country. In August 2019, activist and peacemaker Amina Arale, the executive director of the Somali Women Development Centre (SWDC), was invited to provide civil society perspectives and recommendations at the UN Security Council meeting to discuss the situation in Somalia. Regarding the gender impacts of the conflict in Somalia, Arale highlighted that sexual and gender violence continued to be widespread and silenced, and that there were minorities who concealed how sexual and gender violence affects their communities to avoid stigmatisation and social exclusion. In this regard, she welcomed some concrete measures taken by the government to address sexual and gender-based violence, including the drafting of the Sexual Offences Bill, as well as efforts to hold those responsible to account. The consultation process around the drafting of the bill, which included contributions from civil society, was a positive example of inclusiveness. However, she regretted that Somalia had not yet signed, adopted or implemented CEDAW, and although it had committed itself, it had not yet developed a national action plan on Resolution 1325. She asked for faster efforts to establish the National Commission for Human Rights. Finally, the preparation of the national action plan to promote the effective application of Resolution 1325 began in September.

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:	End

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.

In line with the trend observed in recent years, in 2019 there was a drop in acts of violence linked to the low-intensity armed conflict led mainly by the security forces and militiamen connected to al-Qaeda. **This trend caused the situation in Algeria to stop being classified as an armed conflict at the end of the year**. According to the annual death toll released by the Algerian Defence Ministry, 15 people accused of terrorism were killed in 2019. The government also reported the arrest of 25 people and the surrender of 44 others allegedly linked to terrorist activities, the seizure of 649 pieces of weaponry and the discovery and destruction of 750 homemade explosive devices. Some media reports also indicated that an ISIS attack killed eight Algerian soldiers in November, athough there was no confirmation of the military casualties. The branch that claimed responsibility for the attack, "Algeria Province", had remained practically inactive since its creation in 2014. In general terms, the total body count of the conflict was the lowest in recent years, since in 2018 there were between 40 and 50 deaths, compared to 100 in 2017 and around 150 in 2016. ACLED data

point to a similar trend, with 22 fatalities in 2019 and 66 in 2018, and around 150 people killed annually in the preceding three years.

Recently, different analysts had said that AQIM in Algeria was weakening, citing the killing of around 600 fighters by the security forces between 2013 and 2018, compared to increased activity by the organisation in the Western Sahel region, particularly in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.[15] Nevertheless, AQIM has continued to claim Algeria as its sphere of action and has issued a series of statements in recent years urging its followers and supporters not to abandon the Algerian cause. During 2019, a senior AQIM leader spread a message through al-Qaeda communication channels with the intention of taking advantage of the political instability in the country amidst protests against the Algerian government after President Abdelaziz Bouteflika anounced that he would run for a fifth term. In his address, Abu Ubaydah Yusuf al-Anabi criticised the country's socio-economic conditions and suggested that the Algerian population should overthrow the regime and ensure that Algeria is governed by a strict interpretation of Sharia law. Later, al-Anabi issued another message celebrating Bouteflika's decision not to run in any new election. Thus, **despite the significant decline in its capabilities to act in Algeria in recent years, some analysts argued that the group may be interested in capitalising on the instability and deteriorating security situation**.

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 inclunding the Libyan National Army (LNA), militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Bengazi Defence Brigades, ISIS, AQIM, mercenaries; USA, France, UK, Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Russia, 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

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15. See the summary on Mali and the Western Sahel region in this chapter.

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 persistent political fragmentation. 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. The dynamics of violence have been accentuated by the involvement of foreign actors in support of the various opposing sides, motivated by geopolitical and economic interests, given Libya's strategic location in the Mediterranean basin and its great oil wealth.

The armed conflict in Libya worsened during 2019 compared to the previous year, largely due to the aftermath of the offensive on Tripoli launched by General Khalifa Haftar and his armed group, the Libyan National Army (LNA), and as a result of a greater involvement of foreign actors in the war, which was reflected by the many violations of the arms embargo on the North African country and by the increasing use of air arsenals. These dynamics blocked the peace initiatives for Libya and led to an increase in the fatalities caused by the conflict.[16] In the middle of the year, media outlets reported that from the start of the campaign on Tripoli in early April until June, more than 700 people had died. By late December, the UN mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had documented the deaths of 287 civilians due to the hostilities, while another 371 people had been injured. This amounts to **25% more civilian victims than in 2018, according to UN data**. ACLED counted 2,064 people killed by violence in 2019, almost double the number reported in 2018, when the total was 1,188. Meanwhile, the International Crisis Group reported that over 3,000 people had died in the fighting. During 2019, clashes between many different types of armed groups in Libya affected various parts of the country. The main scenes of violence were Sebha, Murzuq, Derna, Benghazi, Jufra, Waddan, Misrata and especially Tripoli and its surroundings.

In the first months of the year, violent incidents were concentrated in the southern part of the country, following the decision made by Haftar and the LNA to expand their control there. The clashes pitted the LNA and nearby Arab militias against non-Arab armed groups in towns like Sebha and Murzuq, while clashes continued between the LNA and Islamist organisations in the eastern part of the country. **The hostilities in Libya escalated mainly around 4 April, when Haftar launched an offensive with a view to taking control of the capital, Tripoli, a city that in previous months had been the subject of several violations of the ceasefire** reached in September 2018.

The armed conflict in Libya worsened in 2019, with clashes and airstrikes in various parts of the country encouraged by continued violations of the arms embargo

The start of the LNA campaign around Tripoli coincided with the visit of UN Secretary-General António Guterres to the country, who left Libya amid calls for the parties to avoid a bloody confrontation. The internationally recognised government of Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj promoted the creation of the Tripoli Protection Force. In the following months, the GNA managed to stop the Haftar offensive, but did not force a withdrawal, so the fighting continued in and around the city. The parties were not willing to honour a ceasefire: Sarraj submitted a proposal for a political process that excluded Haftar, who suggested that there could be no negotiations until the LNA assumed control of Tripoli and some institutions created by the Skhirat political agreement (2015) were eliminated. As of July, the fighting intensified and spread to other parts of the country. For example, Misrata and Tripoli were two of the main scenes of the fighting by the end of the year. The attacks included targets such as airports, arms depots, and populated areas.

This dynamic was favoured by external technical, logistical and military support to the different Libyan armed actors, particularly from Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Russia in the case of Haftar and the LNA and from Turkey and Qatar in the case of the GNA. In November, for example, Haftar's troops were reportedly reinforced by Russian military aides. In December, the decision of the GNA and Turkey to sign a pact on security and reciprocal maritime jurisdictions fuelled tensions in the Mediterranean, eliciting angry reactions from Egypt and Greece and leading to authorisation from the Turkish Parliament to send troops to Libya in early 2020. The United States maintained an erratic position regarding the conflict between the main Libyan armed actors. The US Secretary of State first condemned Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, but days later, US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with the Libyan general and reportedly appreciated his actions as part of a counterterrorism campaign and an effort to protect Libya's oil wells. Towards the end of the year, following a visit by GNA representatives to Washington, the US again condemned the LNA offensive and accused Russia of trying to exploit the conflict. Washington also continued to act directly in Libya through attacks on suspected AQIM and ISIS militants, such as those that killed 43 people in late September in the southern Murzuq area. Meanwhile, the EU failed to promote a unitary position on the conflict in Libya. France continued to back Haftar, but even more openly than before. Italy continued to try to maintain international interest in Libya and to prioritise migration control agreements.

In this context, in the last quarter of the year **the UN special envoy for Libya, Ghassan Salame, told the UN**

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16. See the summary on the peace process in Libya in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

Security Council that the dangers of foreign interference in the country were evident, with increasing numbers of mercenaries and fighters from private military companies. At the end of the year, the media reported mainly that there were Russian mercenaries supporting Haftar and fighters from Sudan who arrived in Libya to support the GNA. The diplomat also warned of the expansion of artillery fire to populated areas, with an increase in civilian casualties, and provided illustrative data on the increasing use of aerial fire in the conflict. According to UNSMIL data, from April to mid-November there had been around 800 airstrikes with drones in support of the LNA and another 240 in support of the GNA, operations that necessarily require external support. The dynamics of violence were favoured by the large number of Gaddafi-era arsenals circulating in the country, but also by continuous violations of the arms embargo. In December, Salame said that the embargo had been violated at least 45 times since the escalation of violence in April and stressed that divisions in the UN Security Council had prevented the approval of a ceasefire even though the issue had been discussed at least 15 times.

The intensification of violence in Libya in 2019 led to further deterioration of the situation of the population affected by years of armed conflict. **During the year, special warning was given to the forcibly displaced population (between 120,000 and 200,000 people since April, according to estimates).** Fifty-one per cent (51%) of the displaced persons were women and faced disproportionate risks of violence and harassment, including of a sexual nature. More than 60 attacks on hospitals or health personnel and a serious deterioration in health care were also reported, which particularly affected women and girls, according to a study released in October 2019. Likewise, complaints continued about the impacts of the conflict on the migrant and refugee population in Libya throughout the year. **In July, an attack on an immigration and refugee detention centre on the outskirts of Tripoli left 53 people dead in an incident blamed on the LNA.** At the end of 2019, a confidential report from the Council of the EU also emerged, acknowledging that more than 5,000 people were detained in between 17 and 35 official and unofficial centres, 3,700 of them in "conflict zones". The document admits that the Libyan government continued without improving the situation in these centres, which were crowded, lacked basic services and were the scene of multiple human rights abuses, and without addressing the habitual disappearances of people captured by the Libyan Coast Guard on their failed trip to Europe. The report even states that the government and officials may be involved in these practices as a business model, amid allegations of bribes and blackmail to the families of

the detainees. Nevertheless, the document hails the reduction in arrivals to Europe from Libya as "progress". Despite demands by human rights organisations to revoke it, in November Italy renewed a multi-million dollar agreement with the Sarraj government to stem the flow of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean, which commits Rome and the EU to train the Libyan Coast Guard and fund detention centers.[17]

Southern Africa

Mozambique (North)	
Start:	2019
Type:	System, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ), Russian mercenaries (Wagner Group)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:
Since late 2017, the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique has suffered an armed conflict led by Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ). The armed jihadist organisation made its first appearance in October 2017 when it attacked three police posts in the Mocímboa da Praia district in Cabo Delgado province. Since that time, Cabo Delgado has been the epicentre of rising violent activity in the country. While some reports claim that ASWJ fighters have received training in Tanzania and Somalia, which has led locals to call them al-Shabaab, alluding to the Somali jihadist group, no significant links to international jihadist networks have been established. The causes of the outbreak of violence refer rather to factors linked to the grievances and marginalisation of the Muslim minority in Mozambique (22% of the population), as well as to the extreme poverty of what is the most underdeveloped province in the country. Poverty rates in Cabo Delgado contrast with its enormous economic potential due to its significant natural gas reserves, which have generated significant investment in the area, but this has not helped to reduce inequality and poverty among its population. Since the end of 2017, the Mozambican security forces have developed a security policy that has increased repression and retaliation in the area, influencing new factors that trigger violence. In 2018, the group intensified its use of violence against civilians and expanded the scope of its operations.

Violence in the northern province of Cabo Delgado rose during the year due to the armed actions of jihadist fighters allegedly linked to the Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo organisation (ASWJ). According to data provided by ACLED, until 6 December 2019, there were 689 deaths caused by violence in the province of Cabo Delgado during the year, far exceeding the 126 reported during 2018 or the 119 in 2017, the year that the insurgency became active. Although there had been no attacks directed

Violence rose considerably in northern Mozambique due to the presence of self-proclaimed jihadist armed groups

17. Daniel Boffey, "Migrants detained in Libya for profit, leaked EU report reveals", *The Guardian*, 20 November 2019; Ylenia Gostoli, "Anti-migration deal between Italy and Libya renewed", *al-Jazeera*, 2 November 2019.

against natural gas infrastructure or against extractive companies linked to the sector since the start of the rebellion, the year 2019 began with an ambush on a convoy of the US gas company Anadarko and various attacks that cost the lives of at least 11 people and injured20. In June, for the first time since violence began in the region, the jihadist group Islamic State (ISIS) publicly announced it was in the area, although analysts and Mozambican security forces denied evidence that the group had any effective presence. Following the announcement, different attacks were directed against military detachments in the region in July for which ISIS claimed responsibility. Mozambican President Felipe Nyusi met with his counterpart Vladimir Putin in Russia, where both countries signed energy and security agreements. Following these agreements, different reports indicated that around 200 Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group had entered the country to join the Mozambican security forces in fighting the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. While Russia denied the presence of the Russian bootson the ground, ISIS claimed that it had killed at least 20 members of the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (FADM) and five Russian mercenaries in an ambush in the Namala region, Cabo Delgado, in October. ISIS later claimed responsibility for a new attack carried out against Mozambican troops and Russian mercenaries in November. The year ended with violence raging in the province of Cabo Delgado, including over a dozen attacks against civilians and the Mozambican security forces in December that claimed the lives of around 50 civilians and combatants. The violence was not only concentrated in northern Mozambique, but there were also episodes in southern Tanzania, such as the one that occurred in mid-November where at least six people were killed and seven others were injured in an attack in the village of Ngongo, allegedly by members of ASWJ. Following this episode, the Mozambican and Tanzanian Defense Ministries began talks to improve security in their border areas.

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, armed groups ADF, SCACUF, SOCADEF and SCDF and dozens of minor militias
Intensity:	3
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. 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 armed conflict affecting the country's English-speaking majority regions worsened during the year and organisations like the think tank International Crisis Group (ICG) highlighted the deaths of at least 1,850 people since the conflict began in October 2017, although others sources raised that number to over 3,000. The UN noted that at least 530,000 people had fled their places of origin as a result of the violence and that at least 4.3 million people were in need of humanitarian aid, a figure that had increased by 30% compared to 2018. There was an escalation of kidnappings in the English-speaking region targeting local opposition politicians, separatist movement activists, soldiers, police and civilians. The leader of the opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Ni John Fru Ndi, was kidnapped twice during the year. In the presidential election of October 2018, which was boycotted by the opposition and the separatist movement, the incumbent, Paul Biya,won a new term of office. He announced his government in January, promoting "hardliner" groups and appointing the English speaker Dion Ngute to be the new prime minister. The Norweigian Refugee Council (NRC) reported that the crisis in Cameroon was the main forgotten current crisis of displaced people after the DRC and CAR. In a report released in March, Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted[18] that between October 2018 and February 2019, at least 170 civilians died in 220 incidents in the two English-speaking regions as a result of clashes between

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18. HRW, "Cameroon: New Attacks on Civilians By Troops, Separatists", 28 March 2019.

separatist groups and the government and another 81 members of the security forces were reportedly killed in the course of the operations. The report detailed abuse committed by the Cameroonian Armed Forces, which were denied by the government. The report also highlighted the increase in violent actions by the security forces around health centres and against medical personnel, drastically reducing the influx of civilians due to the insecurity. Thus, the government accused the insurgents of occupying the schools for purposes of war and the insurgents accused the government of burning more than 120 schools. The insurgents have attacked many schools in the past two years, in some cases even kidnapping students and teachers. In July, HRW and Amnesty International condemned the serious crimes committed by both parties to the conflict, such as the extrajudicial killing and torture of politicians, members of separatist parties and civilians. In addition, in July hundreds of prisoners (separatists and political opponents) rioted in the Yaoundé Central Prison (joined by common prisoners andamounting to over 1,500 rioters), demanding improvements in prison conditions and an end to arbitrary trials, torture and overcrowding. Later, there was also a riot of separatist prisoners in the prison in Buea, the capital of the province of South West. HRW confirmed the arrest and torture of over 100 prisoners on 20 August following the riot in the Yaoundé Central Prison. Analysts have pointed out that prisons have become "political incubators" for the arrest of members of the opposition MRC party and of Boko Haram fighters. Over 350 of its political activists are detained in Cameroonian prisons, the MRC noted in June. Riots have been recurring in recent years. On 20 August, a military court sentenced one of the main leaders of the separatist movement in the country, Julius Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, and nine other people to life imprisonment, a decision that analysts said could further inflame the rebellion. Protests and strikes in regions with an English-speaking majority rejected the sentence. Considered a moderate, Ayuk Tabe proclaimed himself Ambazonia's first president on 1 October 2017. He was arrested along with 46 other supporters in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria in January 2018 and transferred to Cameroon. In March 2019, a Nigerian court made extradition illegal and ordered the Nigerian federal government to demand the return of the deportees and compensation for them. However, there were no reports that Nigeria complied with the court's decision.

As the situation has deteriorated in the English-speaking regions, there has been increasing pressure from the international community. The US and the EU called for the release of opposition leader Maurice Kamto (detained in January) and 150 other supporters of the opposition MRC party, calling on the authorities to step up efforts to end the violence and promote negotiations in English-speaking separatist regions. The government expressed its outrage at the interference in its internal affairs. Meanwhile, pro-government demonstrations were reported during the visit of US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Tibor Nagy in March. On 18 April, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, called on the parties to start talks as the only way to reach a sustainable solution. The conflict was explicitly discussed for the first time in the UN Security Council on 13 May, although Equatorial Guinea (on behalf of the three African countries present in the Council), Russia and China warned of interference in Cameroonian internal affairs and politicisation of the humanitarian situation. In the second half of the year, President Paul Biya began a series of concessions in order to appease internal and international pressure. In September, he announced his intention to hold a national dialogue to end the conflict, which took place between 30 September and 4 October, but was boycotted by the separatist movements. At the end of the national dialogue, Paul Biya announced the release of 333 prisoners, including Maurice Kamto, nine months after his imprisonment for boycotting and questioning the presidential election of October 2018, in which Paul Biya won another term of office. In December, the Cameroonian Parliament approved some of the recommendations of the national dialogue regarding changes to the political status of the two English-speaking majority regions, though many groups considered them insufficient.

The armed conflict in the English-speaking majority regions of Cameroon has caused between 1,850 and 3,000 fatalities since the start of the conflict in 2017

Mali[19]	
Start:	2012
Type:	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), MSA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQMI, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force
Intensity:	3
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

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19. In past issues of *Alert!,* this case was identified as "Mali (north)", but the name has changed due to the expansion of dynamics of violence to other parts of the country.

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 violence increased and spread across a large part of Mali due to the consisent armed activity of jihadist groups in the north of the country, as well as the increase in fighting between Fulani, Dogon and Bambara community militias in the central region of Mopti and some parts of the south. According to data from the ACLED research centre, 1,702 deaths were reported as a result of armed violence in the country in 2019. Likewise, according to UNHCR data, 138,659 people were refugees in neighbouring countries at the end of the year, while another 201,429 were internally displaced. The year began with different attacks on the UN peacekeeping mission in the country, MINUSMA. The first attack, in Mopti, killed two Sri Lankan troops, while the second attack, on a UN camp in Aguelhok, in northern Mali, killed 10 Chadian soldiers and injured at least 25 others. This latest attack was one of the worst suffered by MINUSMA, and theGroup of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), allegedly linked to the al-Qaeda network, claimed responsibilty for it, saying it came in response to the resumption of Chad's diplomatic relations with Israel. In Mopti, the central region of the country, there was another attack by alleged members of the Dogon community against members of the Fulani community, whom they accuse of supporting jihadist groups, leaving 37 civilians dead. In February, the GSIM continued to claim responsibility for armed actions against different military targets, killing five French soldiers in an ambush on a French patrol in Timbuktu, five Malian soldiers in another ambush in Mopti and five Azawad rebels (MSA and GATIA) in Menaka. In late February, a joint operation by the Malian Army and the French Operation Barkhane killed 15 alleged members of the jihadist group Katiba Macina near Dialloubé. Violence increased substantially after an attack against members of the Fulani community in the centre of the country that left at least 100 people dead in early March. Weeks later, in response to this attack, the GSIM attacked a Malian Army base in the centre of the country that killed at least 23 soldiers. The increase in insecurity gave rise to major protests in the country that led to the resignation of Malian Prime Minister

Mali suffered an increase in violence due to the actions of jihadist groups in the north of the country and to inter-community clashes in the central region of Mopti

Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, as well as the entire national executive branch, forcing the government led by Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta to appoint a new executive under new Prime Minister Boubou Cissé, formerly the Minister of Economy and Finance. Later, on 23 March, a community of Fulani herders in the Mopti region suffered an attack by members of the Dogon group that killed around 160 people. By that date, around 600 Fulani people had been murdered in inter-community fighting with Dogon communities since the outbreak of violence in the country began in 2012, according to MINUSMA data. At least 488 of these Fulani deaths had occurred since January 2018, with 63 deaths caused by members of the Fulani community in the same period. According to data from the Norwegian Council for Refugees, the increase in instability and violence in the central part of the country in the first few months of 2019 forcibly displaced 133,000 people internally at the end of April.

The intensity of violence in the country was maintained in the second quarter of the year, where some episodes stood out. **On 11 April, a group linked to Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) made its first formal appearance in the country,** claiming responsibility for an attack against the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) in northeastern Mali. On 16 April, President Keita announced an increase in Malian troops, as well as MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane forces in the centre of the country. Later, due to the increase in instability in the central region of Mopti, which resulted in another massacre in a village on 10 June that claimedthe lives of between 35 and 95 people, many of them boys and girls, the Malian government announced the removal of the governor of the region. Days later, on 17 June, another massacre against Dogon people in the region claimed 41 lives. In addition, 23 other people lost their lives in different attacks in the communities of Bidi, Sankoro and Saran in central Mali on 30 June. Meanwhile, the government began to disarm community-based self-defence militias and activated inter-community talks between members of the Dogon and Fulani communities to halt the escalation of violence. As a result, on 1 July both groups signed an agreement to end the violence and work for peace. In turn, the UN announced the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate in the country, which will expand its presence in the central region.

Although the opening of different peace negotiation spaces and initiatives in the centre of the country reduced the incidence of inter-community clashes in the third quarter of the year, some continued to be reported. At the same time, jihadist groups continued to launch attacks in the country and in different parts of Burkina Faso and Niger. In two attacks on military bases of the G5 Sahel joint military force in Boulkessy and Mondoro in central Mali between 30 September and 11 October, a total of 40 Malian soldiers were killed according to

government data, though the GSIM raised this figure to at least 85. Subsequently, the Malian Army announced the death of 50 jihadist fighters in different airstrikes. In various attacks attributed to the GSIM in November, around 100 Malian soldiers and 17 jihadist fighters lost their lives. Once again, the increase in violence sparked large protests in the country denouncing the Malian Armed Forces' inability to contain the violence and demanding the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country, in particular the Operation Barkhane mission and MINUSMA forces. On 4 November, President Keïta announced a change in the security forces' strategy, ensuring that they would shift from a defensive to an offensive one. The year ended with the continuation of inter-community clashes in the Mopti region, as well as French intervention in the area on 21 December that left an official body count of 40 alleged members of the jihadist group Katiba Macina.

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Boko Haram-ISWAP, Boko Haram-Abubakar Shekau, civilian militias, MNJTF(Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)
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 conflict in northeastern Nigeria and the neighbouring areas of the Lake Chad region persisted bitterly despite ongoing military operations, with some sources even highlighting an **increase in activityby Boko Haram** (BH). Violence during 2019 continued to mainly affect Nigeria and specifically Borno State, along with the states of Yobe and Adamawa to a lesser extent, with incidents that included attacks by BH factions against civilian targets, such as markets and displaced person camps, attacks on military bases and clashes that caused fatalities and

In October, ISIS claimed responsibility for its first lethal attack in northwestern Nigeria, committed by militiamen coming from Niger

forcibly displaced the population. There was reportedly an increase in activity by the BH faction of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP, created in 2016) and also, although to a lesser extent, by the BH faction of Abubakar Shekau, both of them allies of ISIS. **Based on ISIS propaganda in March, various analysts suggested that the group may be seeking greater prominence and looking to expand its activities in Nigeria after the losses of Syria and Iraq, so it may be making a global call to support and join West Africa Province**. Journalistic sources indicated that ISIS had also replaced its leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi, though without giving details of the succession, stemming from a crisis within ISWAP in which ISWAP commanders allegedly accused him of having links with moderate groups in Mali. It was unlikely that he would be executed, however, since al-Barnawi is the son of BH founder Muhammad Yusuf, who is revered by all BH factions, including that of his former lieutenant, Abubakar Shekau. The ICG noted an increase in violence carried out through suicide attacks and landmines placed by the Shekau faction. Counterinsurgency operations carried out by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), including aerial bombardments of alleged BH bases, also killed hundreds of fighters. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, BH's attacks and clashes with the security forces have claimed 36,222 lives, according to the Nigerian Security Tracker (NST) database. The number of fatalities in the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa stood at 2,607 in 2019, after climbing from 2,243 in 2018 and 1,907 in 2017. In September, the ICRC stated that 22,000 people, mostly minors, are missing as a result of the conflict, the highest number that the ICRC has ever recorded globally. In October, ISIS claimed responsibility for its first lethal attack in northwestern Nigeria when ISIS militiamen from Niger penetrated the northwestern state of Sokoto and attacked members of the Nigerian Army, causing an undetermined number of fatalities and injuries.

Cameroon continued to be the second most affected country by the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, after Nigeria, as 1.9 million people or one half of the people living in the Extreme Nord region were in need of humanitarian assistance, accounting for over one third of the country's total cases in 2019. According to the UN, violence has displaced more than 270,850 people since the beginning of the crisis. There were also more than 108,600 Nigerian refugees in the region. In Chad, there was a resurgence of armed attacks and insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin that led thousands of civilians to flee and seek refuge. Since early 2019, over 47,000 people are believed to have been displaced in Chad's Lac region. That figure includes refugees who came from Nigeria, returnees from Niger and Chadians who had been displaced and were seeking security and assistance. In Lac province, 49 schools were temporarily closed due to insecurity in 2019, affecting more than 12,000 children. The humanitarian and security

situation worsened in the Nigerien region of Diffa, according to OCHA, where rising attacks on civilians may reveal a change in tactics by the armed groups, since their main target would be the most vulnerable population. In Niger, 88 civilians died as a result of Boko Haram's actions and over 18,000 people were forced to flee in March alone.

Furthermore, as part of peacebuilding initiatives to reverse the situation, in June the governor of Borno State urged the federal government to support the military campaign against BH with non-military strategies. On 20 June, it secured the release of civilians that had been kidnapped by BH in January, stating that the release was in line with efforts to maintain open communication channels with the insurgency. In this regard, on 5 November the governors of the six northeastern states met on Maiduguri for the first time and urged the federal government to engage in dialogue with the insurgency to facilitate its surrender.[20] Members of the National Assembly, state parliaments and high-ranking officers of the Nigerian Army and of other security forces also participated in the meeting. They also asked the government to increase resources to combat the insurgency, asked the North East Development Commission to assist the governors and the security forces of the states in the area with more logistics and support and asked the authorities to dredge the Lake Chad canal to allow maritime security forces to act quickly.

OCHA indicated that Boko Haram in Niger is specifically attacking the most vulnerable population as part of its military strategy

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:	3
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.[21] 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.

Violence in the Western Sahel area spread in 2019 due to the armed activity of different jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS and different community militias that especially affected the border regions of eastern Mali, northeastern Burkina Faso and western Niger, known as the Liptako-Gourma region. According to Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the violence and instability experienced an unprecedented surge in the region in 2019, **claiming over 4,000 lives** mainly due to the activity of the armed groups Macina Liberation Front (FML), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansaroul Islam and the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM). **This indicates that the violence multiplied fivefold since 2016, when 770 deaths related to the conflict in the area were reported.**[22] The violence had **forcibly displaced around 900,000 people by the end of the year**, half a million of which were reported in Burkina Faso in 2019 alone (quintupling the figures from January 2019). At the beginning of the year, OCHA further warned that **1.2 million people in Burkina Faso were in need of humanitarian aid**. The deterioration of the security situation in the region prompted the Burkinabe government to decree a state of emergency in several northern provinces of the country in 2018, which was later extended throughout 2019. A similar situation took place in Niger, where 10 departments bordering Mali and Burkina Faso were in a state of emergency.

The most significant episodes of violence during the year included clashes in northern Burkina Faso in early February that the Burkinabe Army claimed led to the

20. Sahara Reporters, "Boko Haram: North-East Governors Urge Buhari Regime To Dialogue With Terrorists", 6 November 2019.
21. See the summary on Mali in this chapter.
22. UN News, "'Unprecedented terrorist violence' in West Africa, Sahel region". 8 January 2020.

deaths of 146 jihadists, although Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Burkinabe Movement for the Rights of Man and Peoples (MBDHP) reported that many of the casualties were civilians from the area. In May, the ISGS claimed that it had killed 28 Nigerian soldiers in an ambush in the western Tillaberi region, near the border with Mali. In early July, ISWAP claimed responsibility for an attack on a Nigerian Army camp in Inates that killed 18 Nigerian soldiers. On 20 August, **24 soldiers were killed in another attack on a Burkinabe military base in Koutougou, near the Malian border, in what was the deadliest assault on the Burkina Faso Armed Forces**. In October, multiple episodes of violence were reported in Burkina Faso, leaving at least 151 people dead. On 6 November, an attack in the Burkinabe province of Gourma against a convoy escorting five buses of local employees of the Canadian gold mining company Semafo claimed 39 lives. On 3 November, four people, including Oumaru Dicko, a member of Burkina Faso's Parliament, were killed in an ambush in the Gaskinde area, making it the **first time that an MP was killed in the conflict**. In November, JNIM, a group linked to al-Qaeda, announced the capture of a military barracks in Kaya and another in Kelbo, in Burkina Faso. And in December, ISGS militants attacked a military complex in Ates, Niger, where at least 128 people lost their lives, including **71 Nigerien soldiers, making it the greatest loss suffered by the Nigerien Army in its history**. In another attack in northern Burkina Faso carried out by jihadist groups, at least 42 people lost their lives, prompting the government to declare three days of national mourning.

In response to the increase in violence, the governments of the **G5 countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger)** held various meetings throughout the year in order to cope with the insecurity. On 5 February, at a meeting in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, the G5 Sahel called for closer security cooperation between the G5 Sahel and the UN under the auspices of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. At the end of the Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held in Burkina Faso in September, which enjoyed the extraordinary participation of Mauritania and Chad, West African regional leaders announced a billion-dollar plan to combat jihadist violence in the region. Scheduled to be financed between 2020 and 2024, the plan includes measures to strengthen the military operations of the nations involved and joint military operations in the region, contain the sources of financing for jihadist groups and establish a development investment programme in fragile regions. ECOWAS requested financial support from the international community, which it blamed for the crisis in the region due to its military intervention in Libya that it argued ended up destabilising the entire Sahel region. On 4 November, the French government announced the deployment of ground troops in the "three borders" area under

During the year, the Burkinabe and Nigerien Armed Forces suffered the deadliest attacks against them yet in the conflict, resulting in 24 and 71 deaths, respectively

Operation Bourgou IV, which would be led by Operation Barkhane and would also include G5 Sahel troops. By late 2019, the French government had deployed 4,500 soldiers in the region, while the UN, through MINUSMA, had 13,000 peacekeepers in Mali and the regional G5 Sahel alliance had approval to deploy around 5,000 troops from Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Niger. The German government also announced the possibility of boosting its troops in the region, which consisted of 1,100 soldiers deployed as part of the UN and EU mission in Mali at the time. However, the different international military coalitions (as well as the presence of the United States through AFRICOM) did not yield many results in terms of reducing violence and the increases were questioned by local populations. The year ended with the announcement that the meeting between the French government headed by Emmanuel Macron and the leaders of the G5 Sahel to assess French involvement in supporting the fight against terrorism in the region, initially planned to be held in Paris on 16 December 2019, had been rescheduled for 13 January 2020.

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 remained active and there were armed clashes and different acts of violence throughout the year. **The year began with the definitive cancellation of the peace talks between the government and the ELN after an attack against a police academy**

in Bogotá on January 17 killed 21 policemen and wounded over 60. The ELN claimed responsibility for the attack, the deadliest in the country's capital in the last 15 years. The attack was condemned by the FARC political party. Episodes of violence in the months that followed included clashes between insurgent groups and the security forces, and also with armed paramilitary groups and drug traffickers such as the Self-Defence Forces of Colombia. The Colombian government accused Venezuela of supporting and encouraging the Colombian armed insurgency. According to data collected by the Ideas for Peace Foundation, the ELN was the most active armed group during 2019.

The ELN was the most active armed group in Colombia in 2019

Alongside the ELN's armed activity, prominent FARC leaders announced that they were resuming the armed struggle in August and abandoned the peace agreement signed in Havana in 2016. Those who renounced the implementation of the peace agreement included Iván Márquez, the former FARC negotiator in Havana, Jesús Santrich, El Paisa and Romaña. Several of these leaders were unaccounted for and had abandoned the different institutional processes stipulated by the peace agreement, such as appearing before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), and they were officially expelled from the JEP as a result of their return to armed struggle. They also indicated that they would seek military alliances with the ELN. In the months following the announcement of the resumption of the armed struggle, nine FARC dissidents died in the San Vicente del Caguán area in the department of Caquetá as a result of a military operation. In October, the Attorney General blamed these same dissidents for a massacre of indigenous people in the municipality of Toribio, in Cauca (south), in which five people died and six others were injured. Local elections were also held in October, which were preceded by several episodes of violence in which different candidates lost their lives. The International Crisis Group noted that 22 mayoral candidates had been killed throughout the year. The Colombian Ombudsman reported that 15,000 people were displaced in eight departments as a result of the violence related to the conflict between January and October. The department most affected by these forced displacements was Nariño, where over 5,000 people had to flee their homes. In addition, many social leaders, human rights defenders and indigenous people were murdered throughout the year, with paramilitary groups and criminals responsible for many of the killings. Thus, the Institute of Legal Medicine indicated that at least 83 indigenous people had been killed between January and November 2019, 42 of them in the department of Cauca. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia indicated that it had documented the deaths of 89 people in 2019, of which 20 had demobilised from the FARC.

While the conflict continued, **massive protests began in November, with a call for a national strike supported by unions, student organisations and organisations for indigenous people and people of African descent**.

The strike was called to demand the withdrawal of fiscal measures proposed by the government, to show opposition to changes to the pension system, to demand the implementation of different agreements reached with student organisations and to demand the protection of social leaders and former FARC combatants and the implementation of the peace agreement. The strike lasted throughout November and into December and although most of the protests were peaceful, there was a tough crackdown by the police and some episodes of violence in which several people died, including a young man shot by the riot police.

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 (ISIS-KP)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

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

The armed conflict in Afghanistan maintained high levels of violence throughout the year, with constant clashes pitting internationally-supported Afghan security forces against armed groups, especially the Taliban militias and ISIS, which operates in the country under the name IS-KP (Islamic State in Khorasan Province). Thousands died as a result of the violence. Regarding the impact

on civilians, the records of the United Nations mission in the country (UNAMA) show that 3.403 civilians died and 6.989 were injured during 2019. These are the lowest figures since 2013. Nevertheless UNAMA highlighted that 2019 was a record year in terms of civilians' deaths because of aerial bombardments and search operations. The research centre ACLED indicated that nearly 42,000 people were killed in 2019.[23] A body count maintained by the BBC revealed that an average of 74 people died in Afghanistan each day in August as a result of the violence. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program reported that more people lost their lives in Afghanistan as a result of the conflict in the first 10 months of 2019 than in all of 2018. With 24,000 fatalities, it was the deadliest conflict of the year, which was confirmed by the death toll provided by ACLED.[24] In addition, the United Nations reported that nearly 350,000 people were internally displaced as a consequence of the armed conflict in 2019. The peace negotiations between the Taliban insurgency and the US government that took place during the first half of the year did not significantly reduce the violence, and in fact UNAMA data showed that July was the month in which the highest number of civilian casualties has been reported since the United Nations monitored it. In addition, many of the armed attacks took place during the different rounds of negotiations, including attacks against humanitarian organisations funded by the United States.

In March, the Taliban managed to take control of a military base in Badghis province, killing 21 soldiers and taking 40 prisoners as part of a strong Taliban armed offensive in the Bala Murghab district that lasted throughout April, when hundreds of Taliban attacked the heart of the district, killing at least 30 soldiers. Another serious attack took place in May, killing 20 policemen in Baghlan province. Also in May, a US attack against alleged Taliban narcotic laboratories killed 30 civilians according to United Nations investigations, though the United States denied it. When the round of negotiations started in late June, a series of attacks and clashes over two days killed 300 people, including Taliban insurgents and members of the security forces. Especially serious was the attack in Baghlan province in which 25 members of a government militia were killed. There were several extremely serious attacks in September during the presidential election. Two attacks on 17 September killed 48 people, one of them in an election campaign event by President Ashraf Ghani and the other near the US embassy in Kabul. Days later, a US drone attack, allegedly targeting ISIS, killed 30 civilians in Nangarhar province, while a Taliban attack on a hospital in Zabul province killed 22 people and wounded 90. In addition, the Afghan government admitted that a US-supported counterinsurgency operation in Helmand province had killed 40 civilians. On 22 December, the Independent Election Commission announced that the preliminary

results of the 28 September election handed victory to President Ghani. His main opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, declared that he would dispute the results.

BBC reports indicated that Afghanistan was the country in which ISIS was the most active in 2018 and 2019, with the exception of Iraq and Syria. The group mainly operated in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces. The most serious attack since ISIS began operating in the country took place in August, coinciding with announcements of an imminent peace agreement between the Taliban and the United States. The suicide attack killed 63 people attending a wedding, most of whom were Shia. Another more serious attack took place in October, killing 73 people in a population of a few hundred in Nangarhar province, coinciding with Friday prayers at the mosque.

India (Jammu and Kashmir)	
Start:	1989
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (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 situation deteriorated markedly in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which had a negative impact on the relationship between India and Pakistan. On 14 February, the most serious attack against the Indian security forces took place in Jammu and Kashmir when a car driven by a suicide bomber exploded in the Pulwama district as a convoy of Indian security forces passed, killing 45 of them. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Pakistan-based armed group Jaish-e-Muhammad and led the government to deploy thousands of additional members of the security forces, impose

23. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), *Number of reported fatalities by country-year*. acleddata.com
24. Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Bulletin. "Afghanistan: The deadliest conflict in the world", 2019.

a curfew and arrest over 200 opposition leaders in the days that followed, although they continued to arrest almost 4,000 people in the following months, of whom more than 2,000 were subsequently released. India accused Pakistan of orchestrating the attack, though the Pakistani government denied it. The fact that the bomber was from a town near the scene of the attack revealed the increasingly internal nature of the Kashmiri armed groups and Pakistan's weakening control over them. The Indian security forces announced that they had killed five Jaish-e-Muhammad leaders in the days that followed. Five days after the bombing, a new insurgent attack killed one commander of the Indian Armed Forces, three other soldiers and one civilian. In the following months, clashes were repeated between the Indian security forces and Kashmiri insurgent groups, causing the deaths of hundreds of people. According to figures from the Indian research centre South Asia Terrorism Portal, 283 people died in 2019, significantly less than in previous years (452 in 2018 and 357 in 2017). Forty-two of the deceased were civilians, 78 were members of the security forces and 163 were members of insurgent groups. The Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society reported a significantly higher death toll resulting from the armed conflict, claiming that 368 people died in 2019, of which 80 were civilians, 159 were insurgents and 129 were members of the Indian Armed Forces.

In August, the tension in the state increased markedly when the Indian government decided to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy status, alleging that the situation was insecure and suggesting the possibility of new attacks from Pakistan. **Its state status was also withdrawn, as it was divided in two (Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh) and downgraded to a union territory**, while it also lost its constitution and own flags. Alongside the suspension of autonomy, 40,000 additional soldiers and members of the security forces were deployed. Usually around 250,000 troops are deployed, making Kashmir one of the most militarised areas in the world. Internet and telecommunications services were cut and the right of assembly was restricted. Despite the bans, protests were staged that led to arrests, including that of the former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, detained under the Public Security Law that allows for detentions without charge and trial during two years. Many social and political leaders were also arrested. The revocation of autonomy had a serious impact on relations with Pakistan, since Jammu and Kashmir is the central issue in the dispute between both countries. In October, five civilians from the state of West Bengal were shot by insurgents amidst reprisals against people who went to work or opened their businesses during calls to strike in protest of the revocation of the state's autonomy. New murders followed this pattern in subsequent weeks. In late November, two people died when a grenade exploded in the Anantnag district.

In August, the tension in the state increased markedly when the Indian government decided to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy status

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

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

The armed conflict pitting the Indian security forces against the Naxalite insurgency continued throughout the year, with an intensity similar to that of 2018 and with mortality figures associated with violence slightly lower than in previous years. A total of 302 people died as a result of the armed conflict in 2019, of which 99 were civilians, 154 were members of the CPI-M armed group and 49 were members of the Indian security forces, according to figures collected by the South Asia Terrorism Portal. The states mainly affected by the armed conflict were Chhattisgarh, in which 122 people died, Jharkhand (64 deaths), Maharashtra (51 deaths), Bihar (21 deaths), Odisha (19 deaths), Andra Pradesh (14 deaths), Kerala (five deaths) and Telengana (two deaths). Throughout the year, clashes between the security forces and insurgents were repeated, with different military operations as well as ambushes and attacks by the Naxalites. The most serious attack of the year took place during the general elections in the country, in May, when an antipersonnel mine exploded in Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra state, killing 15 police officers and a civilian. According to some analysts, the attack was a response to the 2018 clashes in which about 40 insurgents died in the same district. Various people were later arrested in relation to the attack. During the electoral campaign, different incidents of violence had occurred in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkahnd, such as the attack in Kander district (Chhattisgarh) on 4 April, in which four members of the security forces died. In July, the Indian government announced that it would carry out more police operations to combat the insurgency, which it considered weakened. In addition, an amnesty plan was announced in Kerala for Maoist

insurgents in exchange for information and reports about collaborators. In July, the police claimed to have executed seven insurgents in Bastar district in Chhattisgarh. There was an uptick of violence in November, with several incidents in Jharkhand state, when the insurgency killed four policemen and two civilians, including a member of the BJP party, prompting Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to threaten to increase action against the Naxalites. In December, a report was released by a judicial investigation commission that revealed that 17 people who were shot dead by the security forces in Chhattisgarh in 2012 were not Naxalite insurgents, but rather Adivasi civilians, including several children. "Adivasi" is a term designating the different indigenous tribes that inhabit various states of India. This led different human rights organisations to demand actions against those responsible for the murders, stressing that there are many similar cases pending resolution by the courts. The security forces have repeatedly been accused of serious violations of civilians' human rights in the states affected by the armed conflict, especially the Adivasi population.

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.

The armed conflict in Pakistan remained active throughout the year, though it was less intense than in 2018. According to data from the Center for Research

and Security Studies of Pakistan, 679 people died across the country during the year as a result of the armed violence and clashes between Pakistani security forces and insurgent groups. Other sources, such as the South Asia Terrorism Portal, reported that 369 people died as a result of the armed violence, notably less than the previous year. **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which comprises territories formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), remained the scene of a significant part of the security forces' battles with the Taliban insurgency and security operations, which led to a serious level of fatalities, including 265 deaths.** However, the Taliban insurgency was also operational in other areas of the country, carrying out attacks in the provinces of Punjab and Balochistan in addition to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Taliban insurgency carried out attacks against the security forces, but also against civilians, mosques and markets. Killings of health workers, especially those involved in polio vaccination campaigns, were also repeated. In May, a bomb exploded at a Sufi shrine in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, killing 10 people, including five police officers. In July, another serious suicide attack occurred in Dera Ismail Khan district in the northwestern part of the country, in which nine people died and 30 were injured. The double attack, which the Taliban claimed to have committed, took place first at a security checkpoint and later at the hospital to which the wounded people had been transferred. In addition, six soldiers patrolling in the immediate vicinity of the Afghanistan border in North Waziristan died after an attack by the Taliban group TTP. In November, a new bomb attack in North Waziristan killed three soldiers. Alongside the clashes between the insurgency and the security forces, crackdowns on social protests staged in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, mainly in the former FATA, claimed at least 13 lives when protestors were shot by security forces during a demonstration to defend the rights of the Pashtun population. After the integration of the FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, protests were staged again, accusing the Pakistani Armed Forces of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances and forced population displacement as part of military operations. The protesters included at least two MPs.

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.

In the province of Balochistan, armed clashes and attacks were repeated throughout the year, both by the Balochi nationalist insurgent groups and by Taliban insurgents, which were very active in the province. According to figures compiled by the Pakistani Center for Research and Security Studies, 226 people died in the province as part of the armed conflict in 2019. The South Asia Terrorism Portal noted that 180 people died as a result of violence in Balochistan in 2019, a figure significantly lower than in previous years. In April, a bomb attack on a market in Quetta killed at least 16 people and injured many others. The attack took place in an area inhabited mainly by the Shia population. Also in April, 14 people were killed on a motorway in Gwadar district when several armed men dressed as soldiers stopped six buses, separating those carrying ID cards from the security forces, and later shot them. The armed group Baloch Raji Aojoi Sangar claimed responsibility for the attack. Formed in late 2018, this group is made up of the BLF, the BLG and a dissident faction of the BLA. The armed group BLA claimed responsibility for an attack in May in which five people died when armed men shot at a luxury hotel where representatives of the Chinese government and Chinese workers employed in a port project in the city of Gwadar usually stay. The Balochi nationalist insurgency is opposed to economic investment and infrastructure projects developed by the Chinese government and businessmen in the province. There were several episodes of violence in July, including an operation against the Balochi insurgency in the Turbat area that killed four soldiers and an attack against a police station in Quetta. This latest attack, which the Taliban armed group TTP claimed to have committed, killed five people and wounded about 30. In August, four people died in Quetta when a bomb exploded in a mosque during Friday prayers. It was a mosque frequented by Taliban insurgents, whose shura (council of leaders) is based in Quetta. Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack, which came just after the eighth round of peace negotiations between the Taliban in Afghanistan and the US government in Qatar. In October, a bomb blast in Quetta killed one police officer and wounded five others. In November, at least seven members of the security forces died in different

episodes of violence, including clashes with the Balochi insurgency in Rajanpur district in the province of Punjab and the explosion of a bomb on 15 November.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	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)
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.

The armed conflict in the country remained active throughout the year and mainly affected Rakhine State, which was the scene of most of the fighting between the security forces and the insurgency, especially the armed opposition group Arakan Army (AA). Periodic clashes, attacks and bombings throughout the year had a significant impact and forcibly displaced the population. The unilateral ceasefire decreed in December 2018 by the Burmese Armed Forces in the Shan State and Kachin State remained in effect until October, which helped to reduce violence overall in the country, but had no impact on the situation of the Rakhine State, which was the scene of constant violent clashes. However, despite the ceasefire agreement, sporadic fighting occurred in the states of Shan, Kachin and Chin. Around 100,000 people were displaced by fighting with the AA in Rakhine State between November 2018 and November 2019, which killed dozens of soldiers and insurgents. In August, an attack on a military base in the northern part of the state killed 30 soldiers and two AA members. In addition to the armed clashes, the AA

kidnapped civilians and soldiers at different times of the year. Notable in this regard was the abduction of 50 police officers, soldiers and government officials in October, which led to a military rescue operation in which several people lost their lives. Also in October, the AA reported that the security forces were using helicopters in their military operations and that at least 60 soldiers had died as a result of the fighting between 11 and 16 October. Since its formation in 2009, the AA has grown and currently has around 10,000 members. The armed group ARSA was also involved in armed violence, carrying out an ambush against a police convoy in January and resuming clashes with the Burmese Armed Forces in December. After the attacks in 2016 and 2017 that led to an unprecedented military response and the serious human rights and humanitarian crisis suffered by the Rohingya population, ARSA had not been active since January 2018.

Shan State was the scene of clashes between the Burmese Armed Forces and the armed groups TNLA and MNDAA. In August, several coordinated attacks in the northern part of the state and the Mandalay region by the TNLA killed 15 soldiers. The fighting increased after the unilateral cease-fire of the Armed Forces expired on 21 September. In September, the coalition of the armed groups AA, TNLA and MNDAA, known as the Brotherhood Alliance, which in turn is part of the Northern Alliance, which groups together insurgencies that have not signed the ceasefire agreement (NCA), also decreed a one-year ceasefire that it broke a few hours after announcing it. This prompted the Burmese Armed Forces to assert that the armed groups had no interest in participating in the NCA, adding that they would end the ceasefire that started in 2018. In October, Amnesty International reported that the Burmese Armed Forces and insurgent groups were committing war crimes, most of them during the ceasefire.

Alongside the development of the armed conflict, international investigations continued into the serious human rights violations that took place in Rakhine State in 2017 as part of Burmese military operations against the insurgent group ARSA and the local Rohingya civilian population. The United Nations fact-finding mission presented its report, stating that there had been a pattern of attacks aimed at erasing Rohingya identity and expelling the Rohingya from Myanmar, adding that the Independent Commission of Enquiry established by the government lacked credibility. The United Nations mission also called for selective sanctions. By early November, a total of 397 people out of the 750,000 who took refuge in Bangladesh in 2017 had returned to Myanmar under the voluntary return programme agreed by the two governments. In December, State Councilor Aung San Suu Kyi appeared before the International Court of Justice on behalf of Myanmar to respond to charges of genocide submitted by The Gambia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. The Burmese leader denied the charges.

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.

Although the government did not offer figures on the mortality associated with the conflict, several analysts suggest that overall the intensity of the warlike hostilities between the state and the NPA was similar to that of the previous year. According to data from the Political Violence in the Southern Philippines Dataset, 168 soldiers, police and civilians were reportedly killed in the armed conflict between January 2017 and July 2018, while another 266 were reportedly wounded. The conflict killed 185 NPA fighters and injured 109 others. In mid-2019, however, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPF) declared that 318 members of the state security forces had been killed during 2018 in clashes with the NPA. In early 2019, both the Philippine Armed Forces and President Rodrigo Duterte announced their objective to militarily defeat the NPA by 2022. To this end, the government expressed its satisfaction with the results that the new counterinsurgency strategy was producing stemming from Executive Order 70 (issued in December 2018), popularly known as the Whole-of-Nation Approach to Achieve Inclusive and Lasting Peace. The National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) was created to implement it, which was replicated at the provincial level during the year. According to the government, this new strategy aims to go beyond counterinsurgency operations and affect the well-being and development of the communities in which the communist movement has historically been most deeply rooted. **Manila especially highlighted the impact that this new approach was having on the mass surrenders and defections of regular and auxiliary NPA members.**

Thus, the Philippine Armed Forces declared that between January 2018 and February 2019, over 11,500 people linked to the insurgent movement (918 regular members of the NPA, 1,217 support militias, known as Militia ng Bayan, 434 members of local support groups and 8,932 members of clandestine support organisations) had benefited from government-sponsored reintegration and reintegration programmes in Eastern Mindanao alone. In the province of Agusán del Norte, for example, the Provincial Task Force to End the Conflict stated that 898 active members of the NPA or of groups supporting the insurgency had decided to take advantage of such reintegration programmes between January and October 2019. At various times during the year, the government reported mass defections from the NPA. According to Manila, between 15 and 22 July alone, over 200 NPA members reportedly surrendered to the authorities in the provinces of North Cotabato, Bukidnon and Davao del Sur, all of them in Mindanao. Another notable development was the surrender of weapons and start of the reintegration of 727 former fighters from the Rebolusyonaryong Party ng Manggagawa-Pilipinas/ Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade-Tabara-Paduano Group (RPM-P/RPA/ABB-TPG), also known as KAPATIRAN. This group split off from the CPF and the NPA in the mid-1990s and signed an agreement with the government in 2000. Since then, the group's fighters remained in their bases but were still armed. In July 2019, a five-point Implementation Clarification Document was signed that, if fulfilled, should lead to the signing of a Closing or Termination Agreement by 2022. In November 2019, 266 of the 727 people who turned in their weapons completed a training programme for their integration into the Philippine Armed Forces. There had been several incidents of violence between members of the NPA and the RPM-P/RPA-ABB TPG in recent years, so Duterte personally pledged to guarantee the security of the group's ex-combatants during the arms delivery ceremony in September. A few days after the ceremony, a prominent leader of the RPM-P/RPA-ABB TPG was assassinated in Negros Occidental. In this region, the government suggested the possibility of imposing martial law after spikes in political violence occurred at various times of the year (21 people were killed in a single week in late July, for example). The government noted that the NPA was behind several of these incidents and accused it of profiting from land conflicts in the region and of building a quasi-state in the province.

Despite Manila's statements about the mass defections from the NPA and about the impacts of its new counterinsurgency strategy, it also acknowledged that the communist movement continued to pose one of the main threats to security. **The Philippine Armed Forces acknowledged that while they estimate the active members of the NPA at around 5,000, they also think that it has another 50,000 non-armed members across the country**. The founder of the NPA, Jose Maria Sison,

The Philippine government maintains that its new approach to managing the conflict is leading to defections and mass surrenders within the NPA

said that the group currently has 120 active fronts in 74 of the country's 81 provinces and that the CPF has over 100,000 members throughout the country. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NPA in 1969, the CPF ordered the NPA to step up attacks across the country and said that the communist movement was making significant progress on all fronts. Regarding the dynamics of the conflict, there were regular clashes throughout the year, mainly in Mindanao and in some Visayas provinces. Some of the NPA's actions prompted political reactions, such as the one that killed six soldiers (and wounded another 20) in November in the city of Borongan and the offensive in Samar in April, in which six others soldiers perished. On 30 March, the day after the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the group's founding, 14 of its combatants died and as many were detained in a Philippine Army operation in the province of Negros Occidental. At the end of the year, amidst declarations by both parties that they were willing to resume peace negotiations in early 2020, the NDF announced a cessation of hostilities between 23 December and 7 January for the Christmas holidays. The government immediately responded in kind, as has been customary in recent years. Also in late December, Manila announced that it was reshuffling its negotiating panel to include Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, who according to various media outlets is very close to Duterte. Finally, the government accused the NPA of committing war crimes by recruiting minors. According to data from the Philippines Armed Forces made public in August, between 1999 and 2019 the state neutralised 513 minors recruited by the NPA, of which 362 surrendered, 134 were captured and 17 were killed.

Philippines (Mindanao)	
Start:	1991
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlah Islamiyah/ 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.

Although the death toll of the armed conflict between the Philippine government and various groups such as the BIFF, Abu Sayyaf, the Maute Group and Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao was not made public, the levels of violence were similar to or even lower than those of the previous year. In 2018, 173 BIFF fighters and 21 soldiers were killed in 83 clashes in Mindanao (especially Maguindanao, the BIFF's main stronghold). In addition, 36 other clashes between the state and other jihadist groups forced more than 91,000 people to leave their homes. Also in 2018, in Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, 161 people died and more than 5,000 were forcibly displaced by fighting (63) involving Abu Sayyaf. In addition to the conflict between the state and the aforementioned groups, in 2019 there were also clashes between the MILF and the BIFF, a MILF splinter group. For example, in October seven MILF and four BIFF fighters were killed in a firefight between the MILF and one of the three main BIFF factions led by Abu Toraife. After the establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), temporarily governed by the historical leader of the MILF, the group has become more actively involved in preventing radicalism in Mindanao and fighting armed groups linked to ISIS. According to several experts, although coordination between these groups is still precarious and their military capacity only allows them to launch sporadic attacks, the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, where it lost its last strongholds in March, caused the group to modify its global strategy, abandoning the pretense of controlling territory and focusing its efforts on expanding and diversifying its jihadist appeal territorially. Thus, according to the aforementioned analysts, **ISIS is attaching increasing importance to Southeast Asia and particularly to Mindanao**. In 2019, the trend observed in the previous two years continued, including the growth of ISIS in the region and the increase in foreign fighters, videos and propaganda, suicide attacks and military training in Mindanao. In the middle of the year, for example, the Philippine Armed Forces acknowledged having detected over 100 foreign fighters in Mindanao, several of which were training in explosive devices and suicide bombings. In fact, some of the most serious episodes of violence during the year were committed by people that were not Filipino nationals.

The hostilities increased early in the year, coinciding with the referendum to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which was held in two rounds in late January and early February. On 31 December 2018, there had already been an attack at a shopping centre in Cotabato in which two people died and more than 30 were injured. In its first statement since the end of 2017, ISIS stated that over 30 soldiers had been killed in clashes with various groups, especially with the Maute Group. **Two days after the results of the first round of the referendum were announced, 22 people died and 109 were injured following the simultaneous detonation of two explosive devices in the cathedral of Jolo**, the capital of the province of Sulu. Three days later, two people died and many others were injured after an attack on a Zamboanga mosque. In the days after the attack in Jolo, the government indicated that two people of Indonesian origin were materially responsible for the attack and that they had the support of ISIS and one of the most active Abu Sayyaf factions, called Ajang Ajang. This faction, whose main stronghold is in Sulu (the group's other main faction is led by Furuji Indama and is mainly based in Basilan), is headed by Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who several analysts have indicated has become the top ISIS leader in the southern Philippines, identified by the US State Department as the emir of the region. In late January and throughout February, the Philippine Armed Forces intensified their counterinsurgency campaign in Sulu, including several airstrikes. Thus, the government declared its intention to defeat Abu Sayyaf by the end of 2019, deploying additional troops in the Sulu archipelago for this purpose. Some analysts anticipated an increase in hostilities between both sides, considering that the Philippine Armed Forces had already neutralised some of the groups operating in other parts of Mindanao, allowing them to focus efforts on the fight against Abu Sayyaf. Analysts also said that the fact that the group has drastically reduced its number of kidnappings makes it easier for the state to launch large-scale military operations without putting the lives of the hostages at risk. Furthermore, after eight people died in a dual bomb attack blamed on Abu Sayyaf in June, the government warned that it may be increasing its use of suicide bombings, perhaps due to its growing connection with ISIS. Finally, the fact that Sulu province, a stronghold of Abu Sayyaf, voted against joining the new BARMM at the beginning of the year makes it difficult for the MILF to participate in neutralising the group. Several times during the year the government asked Nur Misuari for help in

Shortly after the referendum was held on the new autonomous region in Mindanao, 22 people died and 109 others were injured after the simultaneous detonation of two explosive devices in the Jolo cathedral

its fight against Abu Sayyaf. Misuari is the founder of the MNLF, a group with a significant presence in Abu Sayyaf's main bastions. In March, Misuari threatened to resume the war in Mindanao if the government did not comply with his demands and did not make headway on Duterte's objective of transforming the Philippines into a federal state, but the government said that the MNLF can currently carry out armed operations of a certain size but cannot resume a high-intensity war against it.

As part of the martial law imposed in Mindanao in late 2017 and renewed until the end of 2019, the Philippine Armed Forces frequently clashed with the BIFF and, to a lesser extent, with other groups such as Ansar Khilafa and the Maute Group. Hostilities increased markedly in March and April in Maguindanao (bastion of the BIFF) and in Lanao del Sur (bastion of the Maute Group), displacing around 50,000 people in Maguindanao and another 9,000 in Lanao del Sur. The number of fatalities linked to both military campaigns, which included aerial bombardments, is unknown, but in mid-March the government declared that over 20 BIFF fighters had died. Clashes with the BIFF were very frequent throughout the year. In late July, for example, 10 BIFF fighters were reportedly killed after several days of fighting in Maguindanao. **The Maute Group's leader, Abu Dar, died in mid-March. Many had considered him the top ISIS leader in the region after the deaths of Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers during the siege of Marawi in 2017**. The government acknowledged that over two years after the siege, the longest and most intense episode of violence in the recent armed conflict in Mindanao, there were still over 100,000 people who had been unable to return home, causing enormous frustration and resentment and facilitating the recruitment of new members by Islamist groups. Finally, other episodes of violence were also reported in Mindanao, often with some type of relationship to the armed conflict in the south of the country, such as rido (blood feuds between clans or families for reasons of honour or land), the war on drugs waged by the government and violence linked to the elections. In late May, the organisation International Alert indicated that 144 incidents of violence related to the general elections that took place on 13 May had been reported in Mindanao, but it also clarified that the figures were significantly lower than in previous elections. Police indicated that 33 people had died nationwide from violence related to the elections, confirming a downward trend in this type of incident. Regarding the war on drugs, the government acknowledged in July that 5,526 people had died in the more than 134,500 anti-drug operations carried out since July 2016, shortly after Duterte took office. However, human rights groups maintain that the number of fatalities caused by the anti-drug campaign could exceed 27,000, thousands of them in Mindanao.

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

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

In keeping with the trend of recent years, violence decreased slightly compared to previous years. Thus, according to the Deep South Watch research centre, 180 people were killed and another 243 were wounded in the four southern Muslim-majority provinces between January and November 2019, while a total of 218 people had died in 2018. There had also been a gradual decrease in the number of fatalities in previous years (235 people in 2017, 307 in 2016, 246 in 2015 and 341 in 2014, while in the previous four years the fatalities were always higher than 450). According to Deep South Watch, **since 2004 there have been 20,485 violent incidents** that killed 7,074 people and wounded 13,221. Despite this decrease in the intensity of the violence, the government repeatedly expressed its concern about the security situation in the south of the country and refused to withdraw both the emergency decree and the Internal Security Law, which grant special powers to the state security forces and bodies, which have been repeatedly criticised by MPs and national and international human rights organisations on the grounds that they encourage impunity for the Thai Armed Forces in containing the insurgency. This criticism intensified in 2019 after an alleged insurgent, Abdulloh Isomuso Abdulloh, died in military custody in late August after falling into a coma the day after he was detained. However, the government defended the suitability and proportionality of the special measures in the southern part of the country at all times. In mid-November, both Bangkok and various media outlets were even considering the possibility of imposing a curfew in the south, though it ultimately did not come to pass.

Four aspects should be highlighted regarding the dynamics of violence during the year. First, the most serious episode of violence in recent years took place in 2019. In early November, **15 people died and four were injured after an alleged insurgent attack on a military checkpoint in Yala province**. Though no particular group claimed responsibility for the attack, the Thai authorities blamed it on the BRN, a group with 8,000 estimated members that rarely claims to have carried out any armed action. This attack gave enormous media visibility to the conflict and opened a debate on the security model and its legislative framework in the southern part of the country. Furthermore, insofar as most of the victims were civilians, the incident cast doubt on the government's strategy of transferring certain security and protection powers to armed civilian groups, which in most cases have little training. According to several analysts, the insurgent movement was trying to demonstrate its operational capacity in the south. Attacks at other times of the year suggested a high level of coordination, such as the simultaneous explosion of several devices in four districts in Yala in late August and in various locations in the province of Pattani at the beginning of the same month. Furthermore, despite the fact that the government often reinforces security measures during Ramadan, there was a high number of violent incidents in the Muslim-majority southern provinces.

The second aspect of concern for the government was that, contrary to what happened in previous years, in 2019 there were no active peace negotiations between the government and MARA Patani, an umbrella organisation that brings together the main insurgent groups in the southern part of the country, since it formally withdrew from the talks in February 2019. According to some analysts, this circumstance not only hinders permanent dialogue between both parties to the conflict, but also impedes the government's ability to pressure MARA Patani to reduce the levels of violence in the operational cells on the ground to demonstrate their commitment to the peace negotiations. The third new aspect were the attacks that the insurgent movement carried out in the provinces of Satun and Phatthalung in 2019, further north of their usual area of activity (the provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and part of Songkhla). In early August, coinciding with a summit of ASEAN foreign ministers, four people were injured when six explosive devices detonated simultaneously in various parts of the city. The police blamed the attacks on the BRN, which denied it. Two weeks after the attacks, it emerged that the government and the BRN had met in secret. Finally, the insurgent movement carried out attacks against Buddhist monks and temples in 2019 after several years in which it seemed to have stopped doing so.

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Ukraine (east)	
Start:	2014
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed actors in the 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 war runs parallel to a peace process with negotiations at various levels and formats.

The violence associated with the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine fell significantly, with notable headway made in the peace process while a new president took office in the country, although the conflict continued to have impacts on human security. According to the ACLED research centre database, 391 people lost their lives in 2019, compared to 848 in 2018. The OSCE observation mission identified many violations of the ceasefire during the year, causing victims and damage to civil infrastructure such as homes, schools and electrical installations due to bombardment and the use of light weapons in numerous locations along the line of contact and heavy weapons in areas not authorised under the Minsk peace agreements. In its 2019 report, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed similar concern regarding the new civilian casualties and the military personnel, military positions and weapons that it observed in or near residential areas. It also warned about the lack of access to basic services and other impacts. Around 3.4 million civilians were in need of humanitarian aid (1.5 million in government-controlled areas and 1.9 million in areas controlled by the self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk). The precarious situation of

the few checkpoints for crossing the line of contact, which are in poor condition and subjected to temporary closings, also affected the civilian population, as several people with health complications died while crossing the line during the year.

The civilian death toll rose in certain months in 2019, such as in February and May. Areas affected by the violence included Zolote, in the Luhansk region, and the area between Popasna, Pervomaisk and Zolote, in Luhansk, as well as areas in the centre of the Donetsk region and others. In addition, drones from the OSCE's non-armed civilian oversight mission were attacked on several occasions in 2019. As in previous periods, the mission had restricted access to areas under rebel control. Despite the continuation of hostilities, on the whole **the year was marked by a decrease in civilian fatalities and injuries**. Between January and late November, 18 civilians died and 126 were wounded (in 2018, 55 civilians died and 224 were wounded). Despite continued ceasefire violations, the truces were more robust. The parties pledged to uphold a new ceasefire on 8 March, following an increase in hostilities in February, and another, unlimited ceasefire on 17 July, although the Ukrainian authorities specified that their forces could return fire if attacked. Even so, this was considered significant progress, due to its greater coverage compared to previous truces, which had the practical effect of decreasing hostilities. In December, the parties committed to the full and comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire and to reinforce it with supporting measures. Other specific local truces allowed civil infrastructure repair work to be carried out. During the year, **progress was also made in the withdrawal of forces from Stanytsia Luhanksa, Zolote and Petrivske**. Some groups in Ukraine protested the withdrawal agreements, deriding them as a form of surrender.

Regarding the regional context of the conflict, tensions continued between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov, where in late 2018 Russia captured three Ukrainian ships and detained its 24 crew members, wounding three of them, in an incident preceded by other similar ones in previous months. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea issued an opinion in May demanding the release of the crew as a provisional measure, but Russia rejected it. Ukraine detained a Russian oil tanker in July, alleging that it had been used in the dispute in late 2018. In September, the 24 sailors were released along with other people as part of an exchange of prisoners involved the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, **tension remained over Russia's control of Crimea. In 2019, OHCHR warned of intensified house searches and raids by Russian security services** under Russian anti-extremist legislation, with a disproportionate effect on the Tatar minority. OHCHR also documented and denounced other human rights violations in the peninsula. Domestically, Ukraine held the first and second round of the presidential election on 31 March and 21 April, respectively. Comedian Volodomir Zelenski

won with 73% of the votes and 62% turnout, unseating his rival, the outgoing President Petro Poroshenko. Early parliamentary elections were also held on 21 July, which were won by Zelenski's party Sluga Narodu ("Servant of the People") with 42% of the vote and close to 50% turnout, followed by the Opposition Platform – For Life (13%) of Victor Medvedchuk, who is close to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Both elections took place calmly, competitively and inclusively, according to international organisations.

Southeast Europe

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

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

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK escalated, mainly due to Turkey's military campaign against the group in northern Iraq and against Kurdish forces linked to the PKK in northern Syria, while also remaining active within Turkey. In 2019, Ankara's massive repression against unarmed actors of the Kurdish nationalist movement also continued. The death toll inside Turkey differed. According to the think tank ICG, 468 people died due to the conflict in 2019, 355 of them PKK fighters. The ACLED research centre put this figure at 979 (1,966 in 2018, 2,940 in 2017 and 5,237 in 2016). In addition, the Turkish Army and the PKK have

historically tended to offer very disparate body counts of their own. In Turkey, the armed conflict mainly took place in rural southeasten areas. The Turkish Army conducted many bombings, including with drones, and other operations against the PKK that killed many insurgents. The security forces announced the destruction of large amounts of the group's hideout infrastructure and seized weapons. They also imposed exceptional measures such as "safe zones" in areas of counterinsurgency operations, prohibiting unauthorised entry, and many indefinite curfews simultaneous with military operations. The PKK carried out many military actions, including bomb attacks, improvised explosive devices and explosive-laden drones. The group attacked targets such as Turkish Army and gendarmerie forces, "village guard" paramilitaries, civilians accused of being informants, military posts, police stations, military vehicles and others. A significant part of the PKK attacks were carried out by its women's branch, the YJA Star.

Among recurring incidents of violence in Turkey, 12 soldiers were reportedly killed in a PKK attack on the Turkish Army alongside a military post in Igdir province in January; the PKK claimed responsibility for an attack against security forces in the Dargecit district (Mardin) on 18 March, during which two combatants blew themselves up, causing around 20 fatalities; air operations by the security forces in the Yuksekova district (Hakkari) on 26 July killed eight PKK members; and the group claimed responsibility for an attack in September that killed seven workers and wounded seven others in Diyarbakir province, alleging that they were informants. A PKK attack on a Turkish Army armoured vehicle in a district in Mardin on 20 October killed 14 soldiers and three PKK militiamen in subsequent clashes. Ten soldiers died and 10 others were wounded in a PKK attack on Turkish Army units alongside a military post in a district in Van on 9 November. In August, the Ministry of Defence said that there had been 80,570 operations against the PKK in the first eight months of the year and 635 PKK members had been "neutralised" (the Turkish Army's term for insurgents that have been killed, detained or surrendered). In any case, the death tolls on each side were questioned. The conflict took place mainly in rural areas, but **there were also many small-scale urban guerrilla attacks against civilian targets by groups linked to the YPS**, an armed group connected to the PKK made up mainly of young people involved in urban violence in 2015, with attacks on private homes, vehicles and companies by civilians linked to the ruling party (AKP) and against police targets. The attacks caused various injuries and material damage in different places.

The conflict also raged in northern Iraq, where Turkey launched air and ground operations against the PKK throughout the year. Shortly after Turkish Army caused

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK became less deadly inside Turkey, while Ankara stepped up pressure against the PKK in the region

civilian casualties in January, a group of Kurdish civilians from Iraq attacked a Turkish military base. Two protesters died and around 15 were wounded by shots fired by the soldiers. **In May and July, the Turkish Army launched Operation Claw 1 and Operation Claw 2 in the Hakurk region of northern Iraq, next to the Qandil Mountains, where the PKK has its main bases, in order to increase pressure against the PKK** in the area. In August, Ankara launched Operation Claw 3. In addition, Turkey killed a senior PKK official in Qandil in June, identified as Diyar Gharib Muhammed, who is considered to be responsible for the PKK in Iraq and a member of the PKK central committee. Some analysts said that it was the first death of a leader of the group due to an offensive action in Qandil since 1984. In turn, Osman Kose, a Turkish diplomat on a special mission in the region, was assassinated in Erbil, the Kurdish capital of northern Iraq. His death was blamed on the PKK. The group denied involvement, while one of its leaders publicly congratulated the perpetrators.

Another theatre of the conflict in 2019 was northern Syria, where Turkey stepped up its pressure against Kurdish YPG militias[25] linked to the PKK, which Turkey and some analysts consider an integral part of the armed group. Turkey launched a military operation with its Syrian National Army militia allies in October, with the acquiescence of the United States, which withdrew its troops, in order to establish a zone free of the YPG along part of the border. As a result of the agreement between Turkey, Russia and Syria, as well as the pact between Turkey and the US, the operation forced the withdrawal of the YPG and their weapons 30 kilometers into Syria. Amnesty International and other organisations denounced war crimes and serious human rights violations committed by Turkey and its allied forces in the operation, which initially displaced around 200,000 civilians. The YPG, the Syrian regime and Russia agreed to allow Syrian forces to return to areas under Kurdish control. Some analysts stated that the dynamics in 2019 spelled the end of self-proclaimed Kurdish-majority autonomy under YPG control. The YPG's political autonomy and territorial control in an area that extended east of the Euphrates had been blasted by Turkey as a red line for its state security, given its conflict with the PKK. The media reported that the YPG launched mortar shells and rockets from the Syrian border against Turkish targets, killing several people and wounding and several dozen civilians in places in Turkey.

As in previous years, the Turkish authorities threatened to destroy the PKK at various times during 2019, while some analysts pointed to the difficulties of imposing a military solution on a regional force able to adapt to new methods of warfare such as the PKK. Furthermore, **Turkey authorised several people to visit imprisoned**

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25. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.

PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan during the year, including a relative, his lawyers (for the first time in eight years) and an academic. This was interpreted in various ways by analysts and the media, including the possibility that it was aimed at encouraging new attempts at peace negotiations, at responding to electoral interests to capitalise on the Kurdish vote in the context of the local elections in Turkey on 31 March and at partially attempting to appease the mass hunger strike of Kurdish prisoners that began in late 2018. The pro-Kurdish party did not run candidates in several large cities to support the victory of candidates opposed to the AKP, such as in Istanbul, where CHP candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu won the repeat election in June after the results of the vote in March were annulled. The HDP retained several mayorships in the southeast, although the government maintained its policy of previous years and **forced the resignation of many elected mayors of the HDP and their replacement by state officials, blocking the pro-Kurdish party's legal political activity**. This was denounced by local and international human rights organisations, the Presidency of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and other bodies. It was also accompanied by mass arrests on charges of supporting the PKK, such as 418 arrests on 19 August, mostly of members of the HDP. The Kurdish movement called these steps a political coup and many protests staged in multiple locations were repressed by the security forces.

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:	=

Summary:

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

The armed conflict that mainly pits the Egyptian security forces against the armed ISIS branch in the country remained concentrated in North Sinai governorate, especially in the towns of Arish (capital), Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah (bordering the Gaza Strip) and caused the deaths of hundreds of people in 2019. As in previous years, the death toll of the conflict was difficult to determine due to the ambiguities of official reports, which often omitted casualties among the security forces and did not the specify places of the incidents or periods to which the body counts correspond, in addition to the propagandistic tone of the information disseminated by the armed group and restrictions on the media and NGOs to verify the situation on the ground. Nevertheless, **partial counts from media reports indicate that at least 500 people lost their lives as a result of the conflict during 2019. Statistics kept by organisations such as ACLED point to an even greater number of fatalities, totalling up to 1,233 by the end of the year**. In November, the ISIS branch released its own balance sheet of operations in Sinai during the Hijri year 1444 (September 2018 to August 2019), indicating that in that period it had carried out 227 attacks and caused the death or injury of 463 people. During 2019, the ISIS branch announced plans to expand its activities to the southern part of the governorate, including the Red Sea area, which is home to many tourist assets, and pledged allegiance to the organisation's new leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi, after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death in a US attack in Syria.

In line with what was observed in previous years, the violence took the form of attacks by ISIS militiamen and explosives, in many cases against military facilities, on roads and at checkpoints. In February, the Egyptian Army acknowledged that the group carried out an attack near the Arish airport that killed a dozen soldiers died and was considered the bloodiest ISIS attack in several months. **The group calling itself Sinai Province also claimed responsibility for attacks against civilians and highlighted several kidnappings and beheadings of people accused of being informants or collaborators of the Egyptian Army in 2019**. Meanwhile, the security forces continued their military offensives as part of their "Sinai 2018" campaign launched at the beginning of the previous

year. Several raids were also reported during the year that ended with the deaths of dozens of suspected militants, repeatedly just days after attacks committed by or blamed on ISIS or other armed groups. Thus, for example, after a bomb attack that wounded 17 people, in the tourist area of the Giza pyramids in May, 12 alleged members of Hasm were reportedly killed, although both events were not officially linked. In August, another attack attributed to Hasm in Cairo killed 22 people, which in the following days led to the deaths of 17 suspected members of the group, who denied responsibility for the attack. The government accuses Hasm of ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, but the organisation denies any connection.

In this context, **human rights organisations accused both the Egyptian security forces and the ISIS branch of systematic abuses against the civilian population, some of them constituting war crimes**. Local and international NGOs warned of deaths in police and military raids or after periods of arbitrary detention, which they denounced as extrajudicial killings. A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report published in May that focused on abuses by official forces since 2014 reported torture and at least 20 documented killings in recent years of people secretly detained in security force facilities at military bases located in North Sinai and in the neighboring governorate of Ismailya.[26] The report also warned of the role played by militias consisting of people recruited by the Egyptian Army in North Sinai, who were also involved in arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions. HRW also cited the difficulties in identifying civilian victims of the conflict because the authorities do not provide data on the subject and often include them as militiamen in the death tolls. In terms of forced displacement, it was estimated that around 100,000 people living in North Sinai (one fifth of the area's population) had been expelled from their homes and that the Egyptian Army had demolished thousands of homes. The Washington-based Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) has counted at least 12,000 Sinai residents detained between July 2013, when the conflict escalated, and December 2018, double the figure recognised by the Egyptian authorities. The conflict is taking place amidst a state of emergency in the country, which has periodically been renewed since a double attack on Coptic churches in 2017 and the imposition of a night curfew in Sinai since 2014. To this is added the growing authoritarianism, consolidation of military power and persecution of dissent in Egypt. During 2019 these trends were demonstrated by the approval of a constitutional reform extending presidential term limits, thereby opening the possibility for the general and current President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi to remain in office until 2030, and by the arrest of over 4,000 people for participating in protests against the regime.[27]

Iraq	
Start:	2003
Type:	System, Government, Identity, Resources 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, USA, Iran, Turkey, Israel
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

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

In line with the trend observed during the previous year, the levels of violence in the armed conflict in Iraq decreased with respect to the 2014-2017 period, in which between 10,000 and 20,000 civilian fatalities were reported each year, although the country continued to rank among the most serious conflicts in the world. According to the organisation Iraq Body Count (IBC), at least 2,392 civilians died as a result of the violence of the conflict, compared to 3,319 civilian deaths in 2018. **The situation in the country was marked by the continuation of the government campaign against the armed group ISIS, which, though weakened, continued to carry out multiple attacks in the country, and the impact of the dispute and strategic competition between the US and Iran, both of which are interested and involved in controlling internal Iraqi affairs, with increasing Israeli participation in armed actions in the country**. At the same time, Iraq was the scene of massive popular protests in 2019 that led to a serious escalation of violence that claimed more than 400 lives, triggered a government crisis, and put the entire Iraqi political system in doubt.[28]

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26. Human Rights Watch, *"If You Are Afraid for Your Lives, Leave Sinai!" Egyptian Security Forces and ISIS Affiliate Abuses in North Sinai*, HRW, 31 May 2019.
27. See the summary on Egypt in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
28. See the summary in Iraq in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

Even though the Iraqi government proclaimed the end of the fight against ISIS after inflicting several defeats on it in late 2017, the organisation continued to claim responsibility for armed actions in different parts of Iraq in 2019, including the governorates of Salah-al-Din, Nineveh, Anbar, Suleimaniya, Diyala, Kirkuk and Najaf and in northern Baghdad. Its attacks mainly consisted of car bombs, suicide operations, roadside IEDs, shootings, ambushes and clashes with Iraqi security forces and Shia militias attached to Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs) or Hashd al-Shaabi, in addition to armed attacks against Shia pilgrims, the kidnapping and extortion of civilians and killings of people accused of being "collaborators". In the middle of the year, the Iraqi military and anti-terrorist forces intensified their campaign against the group as part of Operation New Dawn in Kirkuk governorate and Operation Will of Victory in Diyala. In this context, fighting between the PMUs and ISIS also increased. **Some analysts said that although ISIS has declined significantly compared to 2014 and 2015, particularly in Iraq and Syria, it could still re-emerge by taking advantage of some dynamics in Iraq**, such as instability or the impact of foreign interference that could facilitate its resurgence beyond the mostly mountainous and desert areas in which it has operated. Experts also warned that the Iraqi authorities must prioritise reconstruction in the areas that were under ISIS control, promote the sustainable return of the displaced population and avoid chronic stigmatisation of the families of the group's fighters.

The armed conflict in Iraq was characterised by ongoing hostilities between the security forces and the armed group ISIS in 2019 and by the growing projection in the country of the struggle between Iran and the United States

Iraq remained another theatre for projecting the strategic struggle between the US and Iran, which intensified in 2019.[29] The competition between Washington and Tehran to influence and shape the decisions of the Iraqi government was evident from the beginning of the year, as seen in the high-level visits to Iraq, in the demands and warnings to its leaders and in the attempts by Baghdad to stay neutral. In the final days of 2018, US President Donald Trump made a surprise visit to a US military base in Anbar governorate and reaffirmed his intention to keep troops in Iraq, while in February he noted that the purpose of the US military presence in the country was "to watch Iran". Given this, Iraqi Shia MPs from different political parties raised the need to end this military presence and the security cooperation agreements with the United States. Throughout the year, Washington also tried to pressure Baghdad to stop importing Iranian gas, and although it issued successive ultimatums to the Iraqi authorities, it still did not impose sanctions. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani made his first visit to Iraq in March and signed various bilateral collaboration agreements. During the trip, he also met with the top Iraqi Shia leader, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who reportedly insisted that the Iraqi authorities should take full control of the PMU militias, bearing in mind

that some of their groups are considered as loyal to Tehran and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Given this context, **the rise in tension between Washington and Tehran and several acts of violence that affected both US and Iranian interests in Iraq aggravated the situation in May**. Various attacks against US targets were reported, including projectile and rocket fire on the US embassy in Baghdad and on US military bases and company facilities. The US withdrew some of its diplomatic personnel and US companies like Exxon Mobil evacuated its non-Iraqi workers. The US Secretary of State underscored Iraq's responsibility for protecting its citizens and troops against possible attacks by pro-Iranian militias. In July, the Iraqi Prime Minister approved a decree to integrate the Iranian-backed militias under his command and integrate them into the Iraqi security forces. Meanwhile, a drone attack was reported against a military base in the governorate of Salah-al-Din where members of the Revolutionary Guard were located. The US denied any responsibility for this attack, which was followed days later by several Israeli airstrikes on Iraqi military bases allegedly sheltering Iranian weapons and advisors, one of whom died. In August, new allegedly Israeli attacks against Tehran-backed Shia militia facilities killed three others, prompting the pro-Iranian parliamentary bloc (Fatah Alliance) to blame them on the US and Israel, describing them as a declaration of war on Iraq and urging the withdrawal of US troops from the country. In September, a drone attack for which nobody claimed responsibility killed 21 PMU members in Anbar governorate. The Iraqi prime minister held Israel responsible for the attacks. The biggest escalation occurred in December, as there were several attacks against US military bases and targets throughout the month. One of them, at the end of the year, killed a US contractor in Kirkuk. In response, Washington attacked pro-Iranian Kataib Hezbollah militia bases (part of the PMUs), causing 25 deaths. This attack sparked protests outside the US embassy in Baghdad, which was surrounded by protesters and pro-Iranian militias who ended up entering the complex. **In early January 2020, the United States launched an attack in Baghdad that killed senior Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, the head of the al-Quds Brigades, and other high-ranking pro-Iranian militia officers. The attack significantly increased the tension between Washington and Tehran** and could foreseeably have destabilising effects on the region.

During the last quarter of 2019, the armed conflict in Iraq raged alongside growing popular demonstrations that led to the prime minister's resignation in December. Although focused on domestic issues, the protests also had an anti-Iranian component, in part

29. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

because of the role that pro-Tehran militias played in the harsh crackdown on the protests. Tehran underlined the simultaneity of the protests in Iraq, Lebanon (both in its sphere of influence) and Iran and blamed them on a foreign plot. Finally, continuous attacks by Turkey against PKK positions in northern Iraq during the year killed dozens of people.[30]

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International[31]
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:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

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

After the escalation in 2018, the year of the most serious incidents since 2014, especially due to the Israeli crackdown on Palestinian demonstrations as part of the Great March of Return in Gaza, levels of direct violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fell during 2019. **According to figures provided by OCHA, 144 people died due to acts of violence related to the conflict during the year, less than half the previous year, when 313 deaths were counted**. Of the total number of fatalities in 2019, 134 were Palestinians and 10 were Israelis, while 15,479 Palestinians and 121 Israelis were injured in the same period. As in previous

Levels of violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict fell in 2019 compared to the previous year, marked by the crackdown on the Great March of Return protests in Gaza

years, most of the incidents were concentrated in Gaza and around the border barrier between Gaza and Israel. The violence mainly took the form of Israeli repression of Palestinian protests, Israeli attacks against Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets in Gaza, rockets and projectiles launched by these Palestinian groups towards Israel and incidents with drones. The most serious events occurred in May and November. In May, Israeli forces shot at Palestinian protesters, prompting Palestinian factions to launch more than 700 rockets into Israeli territory, to which Israel responded with more than 300 airstrikes in the Gaza Strip. Twenty-four Palestinians and four Israelis died in this escalation of violence. In November, rockets launched from Gaza struck the town of Sderot, provoking Israeli airstrikes in the days that followed. One of them killed a senior official of Islamic Jihad and his wife, triggering a counterattack by the armed group, which fired about 450 projectiles towards Israel, most of which hit fields or were intercepted by Israeli forces. The Israeli response was an intense air offensive in which 34 Palestinian people were killed, including 16 civilians. After this escalation of violence, the Egyptian authorities and the UN special envoy for the Middle East mediated to restore the ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip during the year.[32] As part of these dynamics of violence and truces, Israel decreed successive closings and openings of border crossings, as well as restrictions and expansions of the fishing area in some areas of Gaza during the year. There were also some violent incidents in the West Bank and Jerusalem in 2019, including the Israeli suppression of protests near Ramallah and Hebron and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the area of the Temple Mount. Incidents also occurred between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in areas near settlements.

The dynamics of the conflict were also influenced by the electoral climate in Israel during the year, which held elections in April and September, thought the results did not allow the prime minister to form a government. In this context, **policies aimed at further entrenching the occupation of the Palestinian territories continued throughout 2019, through measures such as approval to demolish Palestinian residential buildings in East Jerusalem or permits to build more than 7,000 Israelis homes in Area C of the West Bank**. In September, on the eve of the second Israeli elections in a year, Netanyahu promised that if he was re-elected he would annex Israel to the Jordan Valley and the Israeli settlements of Hebron and stressed that he intended to do so in maximum coordination with US President

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30. See the summary on Turkey (southeast) in this chapter.
31. 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.
32. See the summart on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

Donald Trump. **Netanyahu's plan to incorporate up to one third of the occupied Palestinian territories into Israel was condemned by the Palestinian Authority, the Arab countries, the UN and the EU**. However, the positions of the prime minister and the Israeli government were reinforced by Washington's Middle East policy and its explicit bias in favor of Israeli interests. Following the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem and the suspension of aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) in 2018, **the White House decreed in November 2019 that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories were not illegal. Previously, in March, Washington had recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since the 1967 war.**[33]

Added to this is the Middle East peace plan promoted by Trump's son-in-law, White House Director of American Innovation Jared Kushner, which had yet to be publicly revealed, and the "Peace to Prosperity" initiative that was unveiled in Bahrain, in June, committed to economic investment and resources for Palestine. The latter initiative was rejected by the Palestinian Authority and criticised via mass protests by the Palestinian population alongside the meetings in Bahrain. Thus, the Palestinian authorities supported resuming negotiations with Israel in 2019, but not with the United States as a supporter due to its loss of credibility as a mediator, and expressed their preference for a process under the auspices of Russia and the international community. In a blow to Israeli interests, **at the end of the year the International Criminal Court announced after years of preliminary investigations that there was sufficient evidence to investigate allegations of war crimes in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza**. Still, the ICC had to confirm its jurisdiction over the occupied Palestinian territories. Finally, in 2019 Israel expelled Human Rights Watch's director for Israel and Palestine, Omar Shakir, a US citizen and the first person to be expelled after the approval in 2017 of a controversial law that allows the Israeli government to deport people who support boycotting Israel or who denounce Israeli settlements.

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, 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 civil population. The militarisation and proliferation of armed actors have added complexities to the Syrian scenario, severely affected by regional and international dynamics.

For yet another year, Syria continued to be the scene of high levels of violence in the context of an armed conflict characterised by the participation of many armed actors, the significant influence of the interests and strategies of regional and international actors in the development of hostilities, clashes affecting different parts of the country, with specific dynamics on the different battle fronts and very serious impacts on the civilian population. **Despite the persistent difficulties in establishing general statistics on the impact of violence, the information available concludes that less people died as a result of the conflict in 2019 than in 2018**. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), based in the United Kingdom, at least 11,200 people died in the conflict in 2019, including about 3,500 civilians, while in 2018 the SOHR counted 20,000 deaths. According to ACLED data, meanwhile, the death toll from violence in Syria topped 15,000, compared to the 30,000 reported by the centre in 2018.

As in previous years, the armed conflict was fought on various fronts, each with its pre-eminent dynamics and actors. In general terms, however, **by the end of the year the Syrian regime had regained control of 71% of its territory with the help of Russia, according to the SOHR. The most active operational areas in 2019 were concentrated in the northwest and northeast**. On the northwestern front, despite the agreement between Russia and Turkey to establish a demilitarised area in Idlib in September 2018, the area was the scene of bloody clashes in 2019, mainly between Russian-backed government forces supported by Russia and armed groups led by the jihadist organisation Hayat Tahir al-Sham (HTS), which did not cease its attacks on the regime. The government's harsh air and land campaign to defeat and expel HTS and related groups from this region had serious impacts on the population due to the destruction of essential infrastructure, like hospitals, schools, and agricultural resources, and prompted the UN to condemn the deaths of a large number of civilians

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

(more than 300 died in May alone), the use of weapons such as chlorine gas and the forced displacement of the population. As of September, half a million people had fled because of the violence. Hostilities on this front also affected other areas, such as Aleppo, Latakia and Hama. In the middle of the year, HTS and other opposition groups such as NTS launched a Turkish-backed counteroffensive, while Hezbollah became involved in clashes in support of the Syrian regime, despite having announced that it would reduce its presence in Syria. In this context, Ankara denounced an attack on a Turkish military convoy as a violation of the Sochi agreement reached in 2018. Meanwhile, Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that sought to establish a ceasefire in Idlib. Moscow justified the decision arguing that the resolution did not provide an exception for military operations against armed groups designated as terrorists by the UN. **Thus, in late 2019, Moscow and the Syrian regime intensified the offensive in Idlib, forcibly displacing around 235,000 civilians in a two-week period**. The United States also became involved in the area, declaring the al-Qaeda branch active there (Hurras al-Din) to be a terrorist group. A US military operation in the area in October also caused the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the founding leader of ISIS and promoter of the group's caliphate in Iraq and Syria that he had announced in Mosul, Iraq in 2014. ISIS confirmed the death of its top leader and announced the appointment of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi as his successor.

On the northeastern front, the dynamics varied between the first and second halves of the year. The first half of the year was marked by operations conducted by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) coalition, led by Kurdish forces and supported by the US, intent on eradicating the last positions of ISIS in the border area with Iraq. The epicentres of the violence were in Deir al-Zawr and the town of Baghouz, an ISIS stronghold. **Although the SDF announced that ISIS had been totally eliminated from Syria in March, the armed group continued to claim responsibility for attacks in the following months**, especially in the Hasaka and Qamishli areas. There were also episodes of rebellion by Arab populations against the SDF in the northwest. Meanwhile, Turkey continued in its attempts to create a safe zone in northern Syria, claiming precedent in the 1998 Adana agreement between Turkey and Syria.[34] Turkey and the US began joint patrols in this area, prompting the al-Assad regime to protest. However, the situation took a turn in October, when the Trump administration decided to withdraw US troops from northeastern Syria. The

In 2019, Syria continued to be the scene of high levels of violence in a conflict characterised by the participation of many armed actors, strong influence of regional and international actors and very serious impacts on the civilian population

decision was interpreted as Washington's betrayal of the Kurdish YPG forces, which until then had been key in the fight against ISIS. Before the US withdrawal, Turkey launched an intense air and ground offensive in the area against Kurdish forces as part of Operation Peace Spring. The intensification of violence in the area had serious impacts on the civilian population. The SDF agreed with the Syrian regime on limited deployment in the area to repel the Turkish offensive. Ankara's forces took control of a 140-kilometre strip between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn and issued an ultimatum to the YPG to withdraw. Talks between the US and Turkey and between Russia and Turkey led to fragile ceasefires and the launch of joint patrols in the "safe zone" now supervised by Turkey and Russia, which expanded its presence in northeastern Syria. Meanwhile, the US announced that it would keep troops in Syria to protect the SDF-controlled oil fields. Until the end of the year, Turkey and the SDF were accused of violating the agreement, while human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch warned of abuse and crimes against the mainly Kurdish local population. At the same time, **Turkey was criticised for its plans to repatriate up to two million Syrian refugees, mostly Arabs, to this "safe zone", thereby altering demographic realities in the area.**[35]

In addition to the dynamics on these fronts, there were many incidents of violence in Syria throughout the year that involved Israeli forces, which attacked alleged Hezbollah and Iranian positions, mainly in the south, in the Golan Heights, but also in other areas, including Hama and Aleppo. The clashes between these actors, influenced by the regional dynamics of tension, caused the deaths of around 100 people in 2019.[36] Additionally, the UN Human Rights Council's Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic warned that arbitrary arrests and torture of civilians occurred in areas controlled by the Syrian government, including people who had recently returned to the country. In the south, the secret police arrested many former opposition leaders. The commission also reported that in areas such as Duma, Deraa and Ghoutah, which were strongholds of the opposition, the ineffective provision of services deprived hundreds of thousands of people of adequate access to water, electricity and education. Moreover, the commission drew attention to the extreme living conditions in the al-Hol camp, where some 70,000 people, mostly women and children under 12 years of age, were living poorly. These people included relatives of ISIS fighters who fled the bombings against Baghouz. Likewise, kidnappings, torture and arrests of dissidents were reported in the

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34. See the summary on the peace process in Syria in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.
35. See the summary on Turkey (southeast) in this chapter.
36. See the summary on Israel-Syria-Lebanon in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

areas controlled by HTS. **Given the magnitude of the arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, kidnappings, destruction of infrastructure and lack of services in the country, the commission stressed that the conditions for the sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons did not exist.**

The dynamics of violence during 2019 caused new displacements of the civilian population and at the end of the year Syria remained the country with the largest forcibly displaced population in the world, both internally and outside its borders. According to UNHCR data, 90% of the Syrian refugee population lived in neighboring countries and 50% were minors. Along these lines, the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic also highlighted the effects of forced displacement on children, including child labour, child recruitment and child marriage. The commission also analysed the effects from a gender perspective. An example of this are women forced to give birth in inadequate places and without necessary prenatal or postnatal care, given the severe destruction of hospital infrastructure and the problems faced by Syrian women to prove and document the deaths of their relatives, making inheritance or custody procedures difficult, or to register their sons and daughters, given that nationality is transmitted patrilineally in Syria. In a conflict where sexual violence has played a prominent role, the commission reported investigations into the abuse and rape of LGBTI women and men, including returnees, in government-controlled areas. At the end of the year, **the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) claimed that the Syrian population had suffered the most from chemical weapons attacks in the last decade. According to their data, a total of 1,472 people had died and 9,989 had been injured in 222 chemical attacks, 217 of which were carried out by the Syrian regime.**

The Gulf

Yemen (AQAP)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula 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.

The armed conflict featuring AQAP, and more recently ISIS, continued to be partially overshadowed by the dynamics of the conflict between the Houthis on one side and the government of Abdo Rabo Mansour Hadi and southern secessionist groups on the other side.[37] Nevertheless, **several acts of violence carried out by al-Qaeda and ISIS branches in the country were reported during the year and various analysts indicated that these organisations continued to try to take advantage of hostilities in the country to reinforce their positions, mainly in the south.** The conflict continued to be of low intensity, although the death toll was difficult to determine. One of the most serious incidents reportedly occurred in August, when AQAP militiamen attacked a military camp in the governorate of Abyan (south), killing 20 people after several hours of fighting. The deceased were part of a group that had received training from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that is part of the Saudi-led international military coalition that has fought the Houthis since 2015. The AQAP offensive was preceded by two bloody attacks in Aden, one of which was a suicide attack for which ISIS claimed responsibility that killed 11 people. Another attack against a military checkpoint was also reported in July. Blamed on AQAP, the attack killed five soldiers.

In a context of instability exacerbated by the growing conflict between Hadi government forces and southern separatist groups linked to the Southern Transitional Council (STC), some operations against al-Qaeda were intensified in order to prevent it from capitalising on the climate of destabilisation, especially in August. Thus, the UAE, an ally of the STC, reportedly launched airstrikes against AQAP positions in response to reports that al-Qaeda fighters had mobilised in the Abyan area. An undetermined number of AQAP militants are reported to

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

have died in other UAE attacks outside Aden, according to Yemeni sources quoted by the media. However, Hadi government representatives condemned some of the UAE attacks, claiming that they had killed Yemeni soldiers. **In September, media reports claimed that AQAP militiamen had taken control of the Wadea district in Abyan, a governorate that has intermittently been partially controlled by al-Qaeda in recent years**. In 2017, STC-linked forces had expelled AQAP from this area. Throughout 2019, some incidents were also reported between alleged AQAP and STC members. Additionally, the United States continued to be a significant actor in the conflict. In May, media reports claimed that US forces carried out a drone attack that killed four alleged al-Qaeda militiamen in Bayda governorate. Two others reportedly died in another attack by a manned US aircraft in Maarib governorate in November. In October, the US president also officially confirmed the death of al-Qaeda explosives manufacturing chief Ibrahim al-Asiri during an operation carried out in Yemen two years before. In November, Washington offered rewards worth 10 million dollars to those who provided information leading to the capture of two high-ranking AQAP officers: Sa'ad bin Atef Al Awlaki and Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud Al Qosi. In addition, the capture of the ISIS leader in Yemen, Abu Sulayman Al Adnani, known as Abu Usama Al Muhajir, was reported in June. The leader was intercepted in an operation by Saudi naval forces in collaboration with Yemeni special forces.

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, separatists under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), 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 conflict has been acquiring a growing regional and international dimension and has been influenced by tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia and between Washington and Tehran.

The armed conflict in Yemen followed a trend similar to that of the previous year in 2019. Almost all year long, violent episodes took place that called into question attempts to implement the peace agreement reached in 2018 between Houthi forces and those of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's government, supported by the international coalition led by Riyadh.[38] The dynamics of the conflict were also affected by the rising tensions in the region between the United States and Saudi Arabia on one hand and Iran on the other, which stands accused of supporting the Houthis. At the same time, **tensions and clashes within the anti-Houthi coalition intensified significantly, pitting forces loyal to Hadi against separatist groups in the south**. Like in 2018, despite the complexity of the situation in Yemen, some events occurred in the final months of 2019 that helped to de-escalate the violence and gave rise to limited expectations about setting up a more favourable context for a negotiated end to the conflict. In general terms, however, the levels of violence continued to be very high and the conflict continued to be rated as one of the most intense in the world. **The death toll remained difficult to contrast, but data provided by research centres such as ACLED suggested that around 23,000 people may have died due to the hostilities in 2019**. This figure is relatively lower than the estimated 30,000 fatalities in 2018, also according to ACLED. According to this organisation, the total number of people killed in the Yemeni armed conflict since the violence escalated in 2015 exceeds 100,000. Of this total, some 12,000 were civilians killed in direct attacks, most of them committed by the Riyadh-led coalition. In its September 2019 report, the UN expert committee on Yemen that has analysed the situation in the country since 2014 found a lack of collaboration among various actors to investigate the human rights violations perpetrated in the country. Nevertheless, the evidence gathered

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38. See the summary on the peace process in Yemen in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

confirmed that all parties involved in the conflict have committed abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including acts that constitute war crimes. These abuses include indiscriminate airstrikes, the use of mines, blockades, sieges, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence and child recruitment. Yemen's humanitarian crisis continued to be regarded as the worst in the world by the United Nations.

In the first months of the year, the difficulties in putting the Stockholm Agreement into practice, which was signed in late 2018 under the auspices of the UN, became evident. The stipulations of the agreement included a ceasefire in the port of Al Hudaydah and led to the establishment of a truce supervision mission by the UN (UNMHA). However, Houthi and pro-Hadi forces resisted withdrawing from Al Hudaydah over differences in the composition of the security forces that would take control of the area. **Meanwhile, clashes and other acts of violence continued in the north of the country, in the border area between Yemen and Saudi Arabia and mainly in the governorates of Saada, Hajjah and Al Jawf**. There were also clashes between Houthis and Hajour tribal groups in Al Jawf that claimed dozens of lives. Houthi forces also launched various attacks on targets in Saudi Arabia, including airports and pipelines. Some of them were intercepted by Riyadh, which also attacked targets on Yemeni soil. As ACLED noted, while attacks by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen decreased, offensives continued to be reported that left a high number of civilian casualties. One of the bloodiest incidents occurred in September, when a Saudi attack on a building that the Houthis used as a prison killed more than 100 people. Also in September, **Saudi state company facilities were shelled in Abqaiq and Khurais (eastern Saudi Arabia) in an incident for which the Houthis claimed responsibility, but which the US, Riyadh and European countries blamed on Iran. This reflected the scenario of regional and international tension in the Middle East and its particular projection in Yemen**. There were also armed clashes between Houthis and groups from the south in 2019, especially in the governorates of Dhale, Abyan and Lahj.

Meanwhile, **tensions clearly grew on the anti-Houthi side throughout the year, with periodic and increasingly significant clashes between Hadi's forces and southern secessionist groups linked to the Southern Transitional Council (STC),** supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The most serious incidents occurred in Taiz

Violence occurred throughout the year in Yemen, calling into question attempts to implement the peace agreement reached in 2018 between Houthi forces and those of the Hadi government

and especially in the town of Aden, which was the scene of the highest levels of violence since 2015. In August, a missile attack on fighters of the southern armed group Security Belt caused dozens of fatalities during a military parade, including one of its most prominent commanders, Munir "Abu al-Yamama" al-Yafei. Although the Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, secessionist groups accused forces loyal to Hadi, and particularly the Islamist Islah party, of being responsable for it. In this context, southern forces attempted to consolidate control over the territory of former southern Yemen, which was independent until 1990. Hadi's government accused the UAE of supporting this campaign by southern secessionists and launched a counter-offensive. The escalation of violence killed and wounded dozens, including civilians, in addition to inflicting serious damage on Aden's infrastructure. Given this scenario, Saudi Arabia called on the parties to hold talks in Jeddah to resolve their differences. **After almost three months of fighting, the meetings resulted in the Riyadh Agreement, which was signed by the parties on 5 November and considered a formula to avoid a new war within the armed conflict in Yemen**. The agreement includes the formation of a new government with the same number of representatives from the north as the south, the integration of the forces affiliated to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) into national military and security structures, the withdrawal of fighters and heavy weapons from urban areas in southern Yemen and the inclusion of the STC in the government delegation in future negotiations with the Houthis to end the armed conflict in the country as part of the peace process sponsored by the UN.

The signing of this agreement coincided with a reduction in hostilities between the Houthis on one side and Hadi's forces and the Saudi coalition on the other side in the last quarter of the year. In November, the UN special envoy for Yemen reported that Saudi airstrikes had fallen by 80%, following the Houthis' decision to declare a unilateral ceasefire in September. According to reports, by the end of the year informal contacts were being held between Riyadh and the Houthis to continue to de-escalate along the border area. Despite the partial truce, humanitarian organisations continued to warn of incidents with civilian victims, including thousands of mostly Somali and Ethiopian migrants and refugees along the border. At the end of the year, the truce in the south was maintained in general terms, but amid outbreaks of violence, sharp tensions between the parties and obstacles to implementing the agreement.

Map 2.1. **Socio-political crises**
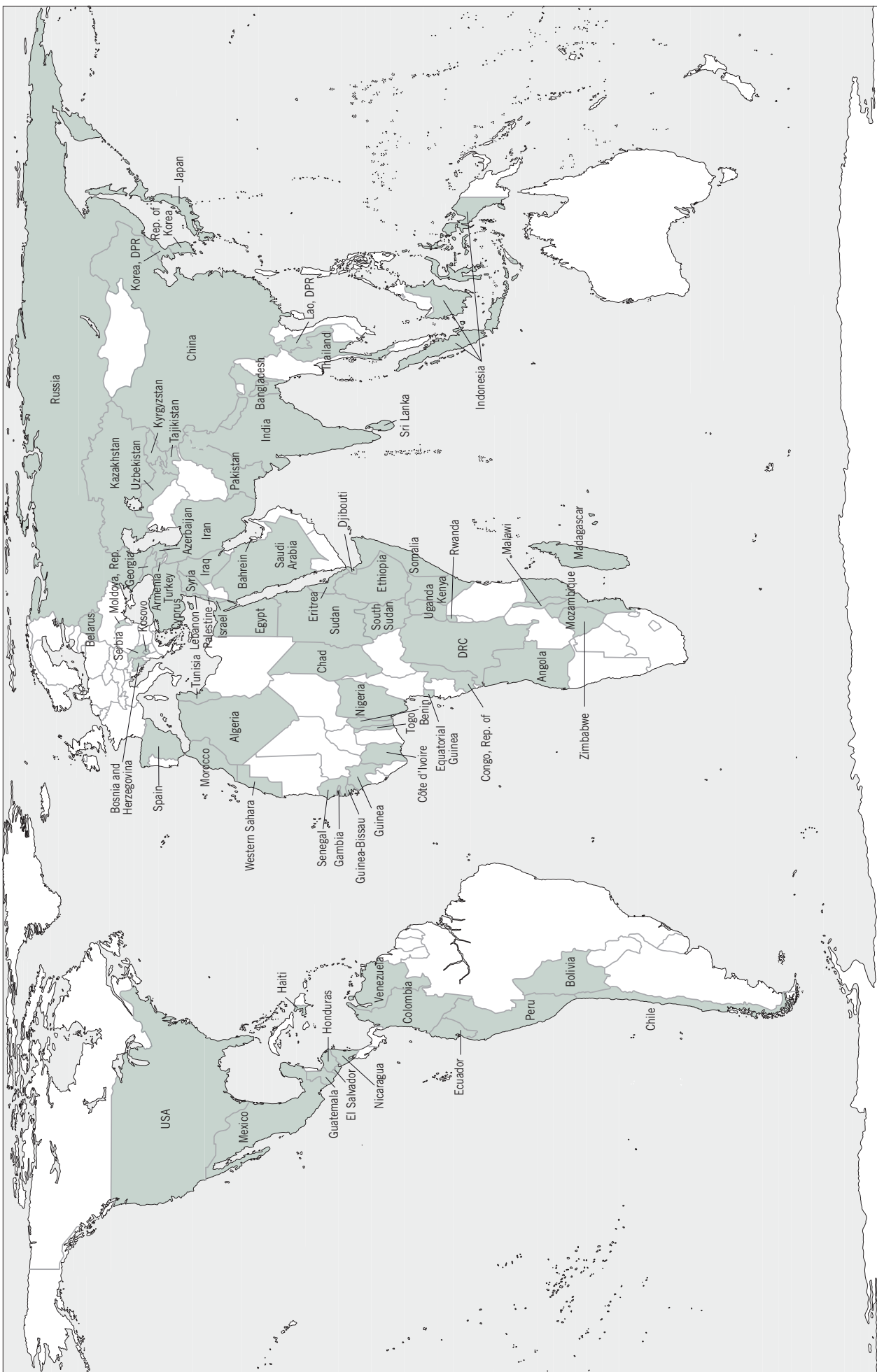
Countries with socio-political crises

2. Socio-political crises

- There were 94 socio-political crises around the world in 2019. The largest number of them were concentrated in Africa (36 cases), followed by Asia (23), the Middle East and Latin America (12 cases in each region) and Europe (11).
- In addition to the conflict in the Lake Chad region, Nigeria saw an increase in violence from criminal groups in the northwest, coupled with the climate of intercommunity violence in the central belt and instability resulting from the electoral process.
- Chad was affected by a serious economic and political crisis, instability in the north and east of the country, attacks linked to intercommunity violence, as well as actions by Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region.
- The serious national socio-political crisis that has shaken the DRC in recent years ended with the holding of elections which handed victory to Felix Tshisekedi in what was the first peaceful transition of power in the country's history.
- During the year there was a serious deterioration in relations between Rwanda and Uganda, as well as between Rwanda and Burundi, and there were actions by the Rwandan-born insurgency FDLR, from its stronghold in the DRC.
- After three decades in power, President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown due to strong mass protests in the country, setting the stage for a new transition in Sudan.
- In Latin America protests broke out or increased in several countries, such as Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Haiti, Ecuador or Venezuela.
- The Indonesian region of West Papua experienced the most significant increase in protests and episodes of violence in recent decades.
- Several simultaneous attacks on Christian churches and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka killed more than 320 people on Easter Sunday.
- The situation in India was worsened by the adoption of new citizenship legislation that discriminated against the Muslim population, leading to intense social protests in which more than 20 people died.
- The situation around the Line of Contact in Nagorno-Karabakh improved, with a decrease in ceasefire violations and the number of victims in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- Mass protests in Iran from November onwards led to a harsh crackdown by the security forces, leaving more than 300 people dead.
- Iraq was the scene of a severe crackdown on mass protests against corruption and nepotism among the ruling class, resulting in the deaths of over 400 people.

The present chapter analyses the socio-political crises that occurred in 2019. 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 2019. 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 2019.

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 2019

Conflict[1] -beginning-	Type[2]	Main parties	Intensity[3] Trend[4]
Africa[5]			
Algeria	Internal	Government, military, social and political opposition, Hirak movement	2
	Government		↑
Angola (Cabinda)	Internal	Government, armed group FLEC-FAC, Cabinda Forum for Dialogue	1
	Self-government, Resources		↑
Benin	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
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, armed groups (UFR, UFDD), political and social opposition, communitary militias	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	1
	Government, Identity, Resources		=
DRC	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↓
DRC – Rwanda[6]	International	Governments of DRC, Rwanda, armed groups FDLR and M23 (former CNDP)	1
	Identity, Government, Resources		=
DRC – Uganda[7]	International	Governments of DRC and Rwanda, 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, EFDM, EIPJD, ELF, EPC, DMLEK, RSADO, ENSF, EIC, Nahda), other groups	2
	Government, Self-government, Identity		↓
Eritrea – Ethiopia[8]	International	Government of Eritrea, Government of Ethiopia	1
	Territory		↓

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 2019 with 2018, using the ↑ symbol to indicate that the general situation during 2019 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). In turn, the socio-political crises regarding Niger and Burkina Faso that were present in 2017 due to the instability generated by the self-called jihadist insurgency are analyzed in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts) in the case of the Western Sahel Region.
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 since *Alert 2016!*
7. Ibid.
8. See summary on Eritrea-Ethiopia in chapter 1 (Peace negotiations in Africa) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace negotiations 2020. Analysis of trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Africa			
Ethiopia	Internal	Government (EPRDF coalition, led by the party TPLF), political and social opposition, various armed groups	3
	Government		=
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	2
	Government		↑
Guinea-Bissau	Internalised 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		↓
Malawi	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	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[9]	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		=
Mozambique	Internal	Government, RENAMO	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, Itsereki, 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	2
	Government, Identity		↑
Rwanda - Burundi	International	Government of Rwanda, Government of Burundi, armed groups	2
	Government		↑
Rwanda - Uganda	International	Government of Rwanda, Government of Uganda	2
	Government		↑
Senegal (Casamance)	Internal	Government, factions of the armed group MFDC	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	3
	Government		↑

9. 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			
Sudan – South Sudan	International	Sudan, South Sudan	1
	Resources, Identity		↓
Togo	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	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	1
	Government, System		↓
Uganda	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Zimbabwe	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
America			
Bolivia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Chile	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Colombia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Ecuador	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
El Salvador	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, gangs	2
	Government		↓
Guatemala	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, gangs	1
	Government		=
Haiti	Internalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, BINUH, gangs	1
	Government		↓
Honduras	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, gangs	2
	Government		↓
Mexico	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, armed opposition groups	3
	Government, Resources		↑
Nicaragua	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	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), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami), International Crimes Tribunal, armed groups (Ansar-al-Islami, JMB)	2
	Government		↓
China (Xinjiang)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition	1
	Self-government, Identity, System		=

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Asia			
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 (Hong Kong)	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Self-government, Identity, System		↑
China – Japan	International	China, Japan	1
	Territory, Resources		=
China – Taiwan	International	China, Taiwan	1
	Territory, Resources		↑
India	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	System, Government		↑
India (Assam)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(IKS), 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	1
	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		↑
Indonesia (West Papua)	Internal	Government, armed group OPM, political and social opposition, indigenous Papuan groups, Freeport mining company	3
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	International	DPR Korea, Rep. of Korea	1
	System		↓
Kazakhstan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, local and regional armed groups	1
	System, Government		↑
Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	International	DPR Korea, Rep. of Korea	1
	System		=
Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea[10]	International	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia	2
	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		=
South China Sea	International	China Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam	1
	Territory, Resources		↑
Sri Lanka	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, Tamil political and social organizations	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑

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

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Asia			
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 – 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 (Transdniestria)	Internationalised internal	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Russia (North Caucasus)[11]	Internal	Russian federal government, governments of the republic of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, armed opposition groups (Caucasian Emirate and ISIS)	1
	System, Identity, Government		↓
Serbia – Kosovo	International[12]	Serbia, Kosovo, political and social representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo, UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX	2
	Self-government, Identity, Government		=
Spain (Catalonia)	Internationalised internal	Government of Spain, Government of Catalonia, political, social and judicial actors of Catalonia and Spain, Head of State	1
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Turkey	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, ISIS, Fetullah Gülen organization	2
	Government, System		=
Middle East[13]			
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	3
	Government		↑

11. In previous editions of this report, the socio-political crises between Russia (Dagestan) and Russia (Chechnya) were analysed separately.
12. 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.
13. 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).

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
Middle East			
Iran (northwest)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group PJAK and PDKI, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)	2
	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[14]	International	Iran, USA, Israel	3
	System, Government		↑
Iraq	Internationalised internal	Government, social and political opposition, Iran, USA	3
	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 (Hijaz Province, Najd Province)	1
	Government, Identity		=

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

2.2. Socio-political crises: analysis of trends in 2019

This section examines the general trends observed in areas experiencing socio-political crises throughout 2019, at both the global and regional levels.

2.2.1. Global trends

During 2019, 94 socio-political crisis flashpoints were identified worldwide, representing an increase of 12 per cent compared to 2018, when 83 flashpoints were identified. As in previous years, the largest number of socio-political crises were concentrated in Africa, which accounted for 36 cases, followed by Asia (23), the Middle East and Latin America (12 cases in each region) and Europe (11). It is worth noting that 16 new socio-political crisis flashpoints have been identified. Five of them were recorded in Africa: in Benin and Malawi, due to the increase in citizen protests and mobilisations against the respective governments

During 2019, 94 socio-political crises were identified: 36 in Africa, 23 in Asia, 12 in the Middle East, 12 in Latin America and 11 in Europe

in the context of the elections; in Algeria, due to the tensions that arose during the year following mass protests against the regime; and two other cases of inter-State crisis as a result of the deterioration of relations between the governments of Rwanda and Burundi and between Rwanda and Uganda. In the Americas, three new cases were identified (Chile, Colombia and Ecuador), where the most significant popular protests of the last decade against the various governments have been recorded, as well as allegations of serious human rights violations stemming from the actions of the state security forces. Five new cases of socio-political crises emerged in Asia and affected China-Taiwan, Kazakhstan, the South China Sea, China (Hong Kong) and India (the latter two linked to strong popular protests against the respective governments). In Europe, there was a notable increase in tensions in Catalonia (Spain) due to the repercussions of the judicial ruling against pro-independence politicians and civil society leaders; while in the Middle East, Iraq was a notable case due to the deterioration of the political situation in the country. In turn, during 2019, the cases of Russia

14. This international socio-political crisis refers mainly to the dispute over the Iranian nuclear program.
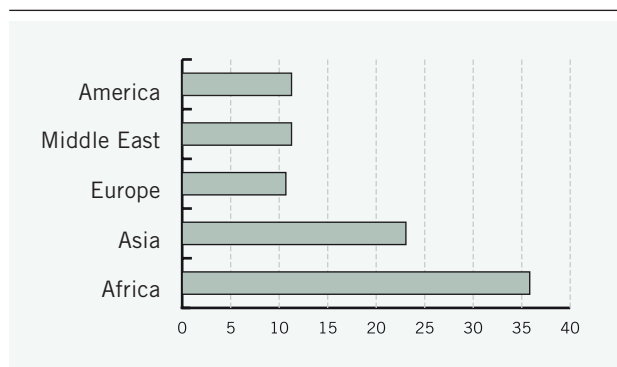
(Dagestan) and Russia (Chechnya), examined separately in previous editions of this report, were merged into a single socio-political crisis under the name of Russia (North Caucasus). On the other hand, three cases considered to be socio-political crises in previous years ceased to be classified as such in 2019, due to the improvement of the political situation in Djibouti, Lesotho and Armenia.

While socio-political crises may be caused by many factors, analysing the scope of the crises in 2019 allows us to identify trends as regards their causes or motivations. In keeping with data observed in previous years, **at global level 71 per cent of the crises were mainly linked to opposition to domestic or international policies implemented by a given government** (Government) (which led to a struggle to seize or erode power), or to opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective state system (System). In Latin America, for example, all the socio-political crises identified were linked to one of these two variables. At the same time, **40 per cent of the socio-political crises worldwide had as one of their main causes demands for self-government and/or identity**, **with this percentage being clearly higher in Europe (more than 82 per cent, 9 of the 11 cases recorded) and much lower in America (8 per cent, only 1 of the 12 cases**). Note that around a third of the socio-political crises (31 per cent) involved disputes over control of territory and/or resources as a particularly important element, although this is a factor that fuels many crises to varying degrees.

In line with previous years, **slightly more than half of the socio-political crises in the world were internal (51 cases or 54 per cent)**, with the case of Latin America being particularly paradigmatic, where once again almost all the cases (except Haiti) were of this type. On the other hand, **almost a third of the global socio-political crises were internationalised internal (25 situations or almost 27 per cent)**, with this percentage clearly higher in regions such as the Middle East (half of the crises) or Europe (55 per cent), and significantly lower in Africa

71 per cent of the socio-political crises had among their main causes opposition to the domestic or international policies implemented by their respective governments or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the respective States

(14 per cent) and Latin America (with Haiti the only case). Finally, **one fifth of the socio-political crises were international (18 cases or almost 19 per cent)**, concentrated in Asia (26 per cent) and Africa (22 per cent). With regard to the **evolution of the socio-political crises**, in 37 per cent of the conflicts (35 cases) there was no significant change, while **in 41 cases (44 per cent) there was a deterioration with respect to 2018**, and **in only 19 per cent of the settings was there some improvement in the crisis** (18 cases). In the Americas, 58 per cent of cases showed a worsening situation (7 out of 12), while Africa accounted for almost half of the improvement globally (8 out of 18). With regard to the **intensity of the socio-political crises**, during 2019 half of them were of low intensity (49 per cent, a percentage similar to the 51 per cent recorded in 2018), one third were of medium intensity (34 per cent, equivalent to last year's figure) and only 18 per cent of the cases had high levels of intensity (17 cases), 11 of which occurred in Africa (6) and the Middle East (5).

In comparison with previous years, **the number of severe socio-political crises followed the downward trend** seen in recent years (albeit with a small deviation in 2018) representing 18 per cent in 2019, 15 per cent in 2018, 20 per cent in 2017 and 24 per cent in 2016. Several settings that had experienced high levels of socio-political crisis in 2018, de-escalated during 2019 to a medium or low intensity. This was the case in the DRC, Nicaragua and Iran (north-west). However, there were also six settings that had recorded medium or low levels of intensity in 2018 and previous years, whose levels of conflict increased substantially and were considered to be of high intensity in 2019: Sudan, Haiti, Indonesia (West Papua), Sri Lanka, Iran and Iran-USA, Israel. It should be noted that, as opposed to 2018 when three cases of socio-political crisis escalated into armed conflict –Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), northern Niger and Burkina Faso–, during 2019 **only the socio-political crisis in northern Mozambique had evolved negatively to the point of being classified as an armed conflict**, caused in part by the actions of insurgent groups with jihadist agendas.

The Middle East accounted for the largest number of high-intensity socio-political crises by region, with 5 cases out of the 12 recorded (42 per cent of the socio-political crises in the area), and a notable crisis in **Egypt** –where the climate of internal socio-political tensions characterised by a shift towards authoritarianism by the government of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, the persistent persecution and crackdown on dissidents, human rights violations, abuses by the security forces and the application of emergency measures continued for another year–; **Iraq** –as a result of mass popular protests against the political system, corruption and nepotism, which were harshly repressed, as well as the escalation of hostilities

between Washington and Tehran at the end of the year which materialised in a series of violent incidents in Iraq–; **Iran** –where mass popular protests against the government were recorded and harshly repressed by the security forces with a toll of more than 300 deaths–; **Iran-US, Israel** –the socio-political crisis linked to the Iranian nuclear programme was influenced by a series of incidents in the Middle East that led to a volatile situation that was dangerously conducive to military escalation–; and **Israel-Syria-Lebanon** –where the socio-political crisis continued for another year, partly as a consequence of dynamics linked to the Syrian armed conflict.

In Africa, the six most serious socio-political crises in 2019 were **Chad** –which continued to be affected by the climate of social and political instability and the escalation of violence during the year due to various crisis flashpoints present in the north of the country (Tibesti region, linked, among other issues, to illegal mining) and the east (Ouaddai and Sila provinces, due to outbreaks of intercommunity violence)–; **Ethiopia and Ethiopia (Oromia)** –where, despite changes in the country under the Government of Abiy Ahmed, a high level of violence persisted, mainly in the north-west (Amhara region), the north-east and the south-central (Oromia), due to numerous intercommunity points of contention and historical grievances that surfaced in the context of the political reforms undertaken by the Government–; **Kenya** –where intercommunity violence persisted for another year, as well as the actions of the Somali armed group al-Shabaab in the north and east, although these were less intense than in 2018–; **Nigeria** –where, in addition to the armed conflict present in the north-east region (Boko Haram),[15] various socio-political crises remain ongoing in the country, which have had repercussions in terms of an increase in violence and instability–; activities of criminal groups in the north-west of the country (Kaduna and Zamfara); intercommunity violence in the central belt (Middle Belt); instability linked to the national electoral process; and tensions in the southern region of Biafra and the Niger Delta[16]–; and **Sudan** – which continued with a climate of high tension throughout the year as a result of the significant mass protests that were subject to a harsh crackdown and led to the fall of President Omar al-Bashir and the opening of a transition of power that was initially hijacked by a military junta.

Half of the socio-political crises worldwide were of low intensity

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

As for the remaining regions, the most intense crises took place in **Haiti** –where a worsening of the political, institutional, social, economic and humanitarian crisis was noted during the year–; **Mexico** –where the homicide rate once again broke a new record, becoming the most violent year since public

Graph 2.2. **Intensity of the socio-political crises by region**
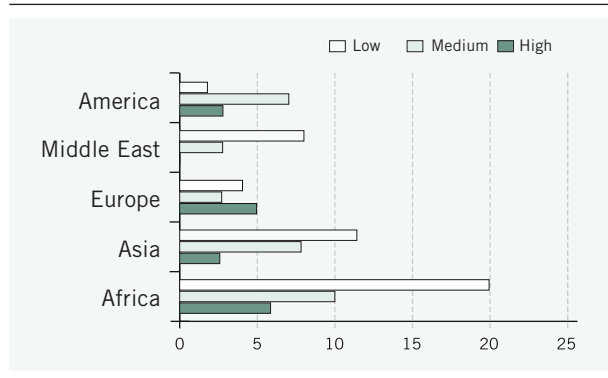
records began; femicides; kidnappings; extortion; people trafficking–; **Venezuela** –a country where the climate of instability, social protests and mobilisations continued, exacerbated by the institutional crisis and Juan Guaidó's self-proclamation as President-elect, which led to moments where the risk of military conflict was high–; **India-Pakistan** –where relations between the governments seriously deteriorated as a result of various episodes of violence in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir–; **Indonesia (West Papua)** –where clashes between the armed opposition group the OPM and the Armed Forces increased, as well as protests and disturbances in the Papua region–; and **Sri Lanka** –whose security situation deteriorated seriously due to several simultaneous attacks that killed more than 320 people and injured another 500.

2.2.2. Regional trends

As in previous years, in 2019 **Africa** remained the main flashpoint of socio-political crises at global level, accounting for 38 per cent of the cases –36 out of 94, a relatively similar figure compared to previous years (33 in 2018, 37 in 2017, 34 in 2016). Five new cases were included with respect to the previous year (Algeria, Benin, Malawi, Rwanda-Burundi and Rwanda-Uganda) while two of them were no longer considered socio-political crises due to lower levels of intensity (Djibouti and Lesotho). As mentioned above, **35 per cent of the high-intensity crises worldwide –6 out of 17– were located in the African continent in 2019**: **Chad**, **Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Kenya**, **Nigeria** and **Sudan** This figure is similar to that recorded the previous year for the African continent, with the only exception being the reduction in the intensity of the crisis in the DRC and the increase in intensity in Sudan. At the same time, there was an **increase in violence in the north of Mozambique**, in Cabo Delgado province, which was

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15. See summary on the Lake Chad Region in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).
16. The situation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria relates to another socio-political crisis. See Table 2.1. Summary of socio-political crises in 2019.
17. See summary on Mozambique (north) in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

now considered an armed conflict,[17] with the tensions between the FRELIMO government and the opposition group RENAMO continuing in the country. It should also be noted that 56 per cent of the crises recorded in Africa (20 out of 36 cases) were **low intensity**. On the other hand, 39 per cent of the cases of socio-political crisis in the continent (14 cases) noted deterioration, representing an increase with respect to 2018 (10 cases). In contrast, **a relative improvement in the situation was observed in eight cases**: Rep. of Congo, Eritrea, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Kenya, DRC, Sudan-South Sudan and Tunisia. Of these, the cases of Ethiopia (Oromia) and Kenya are noteworthy, since although there was a decrease in tensions compared to the previous year, they are still considered high intensity cases. It should be noted that in 39 per cent of the cases (14) **no significant changes was recorded**.

On the other hand, the vast majority of tensions in Africa (23 cases) **were internal (64 per cent)**, similar to the previous year (67 per cent in 2018). Slightly less than a sixth of the crises displayed **elements of internationalisation** (14 per cent, a figure similar to 2018), including the influence of foreign actors, whether non-State armed actors of various kinds –such as the armed organisation al-Shabaab (originating from Somalia) in Kenya–, acts committed by regional or global jihadist groups –such as branches of ISIS and AQIM in Tunisia and Algeria–, the presence of international troops –such as UNOCI in the Ivory Coast or MONUSCO in the DRC–, or the influence of sectors of the diaspora and local armed groups present in neighbouring territories –as in the cases of Eritrea or Rwanda. Only **8 of the 36 socio-political crises in Africa were international in nature, most of them in the Great Lakes region**: Central Africa (LRA), Eritrea-Ethiopia, Morocco-Western Sahara, DRC-Rwanda, DRC-Uganda, Rwanda-Burundi, Rwanda-Uganda and Sudan-South Sudan. Among these, an increase in tension was noted during 2019 in the cases of Rwanda-Burundi and Rwanda-Uganda –which came to be considered new flashpoints on the continent due to the deterioration of relations between the various governments and the climate of accusations and threats–, while the cases of Eritrea-Ethiopia and Sudan-South Sudan evolved positively due to changes in the government in some of the states involved.

As for the root causes of the crises, all them had multiple causes, in line with the global trend. **Two thirds of the socio-political crises that occurred in Africa (26 of the 36 cases, 72 per cent) were linked to opposition to the government** and in three cases –Kenya, Mozambique and Tunisia– **opposition to the system** was also observed. On the other hand,

In Latin America, 58 per cent of the socio-political crises recorded in 2019 experienced a deterioration in their situation

Asia recorded five new flashpoints during 2019: China (Hong Kong), China-Taiwan, India, Kazakhstan and the South China Sea

33 per cent of the socio-political crises in Africa had as one of their main causes **identity and/or self-government demands**, with both variables converging in four conflicts –Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia (Oromia) and Morocco-Western Sahara. In addition, it should be noted that the struggle for **control of resources and/or territory** was also a relevant element in Africa in more than a third (specifically 39 per cent, 14 cases) of the socio-political crises in the continent.

The **Americas** experienced an increase in the number of socio-political crises, from 9 in 2018 to 12 in 2019, representing 13 per cent of the global total. The **three new flashpoints** are located in **Chile, Colombia and Ecuador**, and relate to the increase in mass protests and the serious crackdown on demonstrators. For example, **Chile experienced the most intense and widespread protests in recent decades, with a final toll of 26 deaths, 12,600 people injured and thousands of arrests, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).** As regards the intensity of the crises in the continent, in two cases the intensity was low –**Guatemala and Peru**–, while in three of them –**Haiti, Mexico and Venezuela**– the intensity was high. In the remaining cases (57 per cent), the intensity recorded was medium. However, as in previous years, although Latin America and the Caribbean continued to be one of the regions in the world with the least number of socio-political crises and armed conflicts, they also have the **highest homicide rates in the world, accounting for 11 of the 12 top countries in the ranking** (except South Africa).

On the other hand, all the socio-political crises in Latin America were of an internal nature, with the exception of Haiti, due to the role that the United Nations missions have played in the country in recent years. As for **the evolution of the socio-political crises** in the Americas, **the situation worsened in 58 per cent of cases** (7) – Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico and Venezuela–, compared to the three cases recorded in 2018. **The 12 socio-political crises identified in Latin America had among their main causes opposition to government policies**, which materialised in protests of differing intensities and in the serious crackdowns on protests in countries such as Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Haiti or Venezuela. 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 and Peru.

In **Asia**, 23 socio-political crises were recorded (24 per cent of the total), **five more than those observed in 2018** (18): China (Hong Kong), China-Taiwan, India,

Kazakhstan and the South China Sea. Among them, **13 per cent of cases (three) were classified as high intensity during 2019 –India and Pakistan, Indonesia (West Papua) and Sri Lanka– while in 52 per cent of cases (12) the intensity was low** –China (Xinjiang), China-Japan, DPR Korea-Rep. of Korea, India (Manipur and Nagaland), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, South China Sea, Thailand and Uzbekistan. In relation to the evolution of the socio-political crises in the Asian continent, in **43 per cent of cases (10) a worsening of the situation was observed**, which was particularly serious in those settings with a greater intensity of violence, represented in particular by the tensions between India and Pakistan, Indonesia (West Papua) and Sri Lanka. **In turn, only four cases (17 per cent) saw an improvement in the situation –Bangladesh, India (Manipur and Nagaland) and Uzbekistan– compared to seven cases (37 per cent) observed during the previous year**, while in nine cases (39 per cent) there was no significant change.

As in 2018, Asia continued to be the continent with the highest percentage of **international socio-political crises, six of which were in North-East Asia**, specifically in the area between the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea: the dispute between China and Japan (mainly over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands), North Korea's tensions with its southern neighbour and also with several other countries regarding its weapons programme, the tensions between China and Taiwan, and the crisis in the South China Sea involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. The other main international socio-political crisis was the historic dispute between India and Pakistan. Some **43 per cent of the socio-political crises (10 cases) were internal, and 30 per cent (7 cases)** had a clear international dimension, either due to the presence of regional armed groups and border tensions, as in three of the Central Asian countries –Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan– or because of the transnational links of local armed organisations –as in China's Xinjiang province or the Indian state of Assam–, or due to the presence of armed organisations in neighbouring countries –as in the case of Lao PDR.

As for the root causes, **14 of the 23 socio-political crises in the region (61 per cent) were linked to opposition to the system or to the government**. In six of them –India, Pakistan and the four former Soviet republics of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan– both variables were present; while in another five –the provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang in China, as well as Hong Kong, the dispute between North and South Korea and the situation of the Hmong community in Lao PDR– opposition to the system was identified as one of the fundamental points of contention, alongside other

issues. On the other hand, **identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government** were observed in 11 conflicts (48 per cent), while issues relating to the **control of resources and territory** was were a factor present in a third (35 per cent) of the socio-political crises in Asia.

In Europe, 11 cases of socio-political crisis were recorded, with the notable inclusion of a new case in 2019 relating to the deterioration of the political conflict between Catalonia and Spain, as well as the end of the crisis in Armenia, which ceased to be classified as a socio-political crisis. Following the trend of previous years, **all the cases of socio-political crisis recorded in Europe were classified as low intensity (73 per cent), with no high-intensity cases**. On the other hand, with regard to the **evolution of the socio-political crises**, it is worth noting the increase in tensions in four cases –Cyprus, Spain (Catalonia) and the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia–, the improvement of the situation in 2 of the 11 cases –Russia (North Caucasus) and Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)–, while in the remaining cases (45 per cent) no significant changes were noted. Among the cases where tensions were reduced, the **situation surrounding the Line of Contact in Nagorno-Karabakh improved**, with a decrease in ceasefire violations and in victims of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, as regards situations that have deteriorated, there has been an **increase in the tensions surrounding the conflict over Catalonia's status within Spain, mainly as a result of the sentence handed down to pro-independence civil society and political leaders, among other issues.**

In Europe, it should be noted that all the recorded cases of socio-political crisis were classified as low intensity (73 per cent), with no high-intensity cases

With regard to the root causes, it should be noted that Europe continued to be the region at the global level where disputes related to **identity and/or self-government demands** had the strongest presence, **with 82 per cent of cases** being linked to these factors (9 cases out of 12), a similar percentage to previous years. It should also be noted that 55 per cent of the socio-political crises that took place in Europe were also related to causes linked to the **opposition** of certain groups to government policies or to the **system** as a whole. At the same time, following trends of previous years, **control of territory** was a factor in two of the most prolonged socio-political crises in the region: the dispute between the Government of Cyprus and the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Finally, in relation to the geographical scope of action and influence of the actors involved in the socio-political crisis, the trend observed in previous years continued. Half of the socio-political crises that occurred in Europe (55 per cent) were **internationalised internal, highlighting the role that foreign governments play in certain contexts,**

especially the role played by Russia in certain self-proclaimed independent regions within the framework of countries that had formed part of the USSR: Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Transdniestria in the Republic of Moldova. Almost a third of the cases (27 per cent) were **internal** socio-political crises, while two cases were considered **international** socio-political crises: Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Serbia-Kosovo.

Finally, 12 socio-political crises were recorded in the **Middle East**, one more than in 2018. The new socio-political crisis is located in **Iraq**, which was the scene of mass protests against the corruption and nepotism of the ruling class, which were subject to a harsh crackdown, resulting in the deaths of more than 400 people. It should be noted that the **Middle East was the region of the world with the highest percentage of high-intensity socio-political crises** (5 cases, accounting for 42 per cent, up from three cases a year earlier, when they accounted for 27 per cent). The most severe socio-political crises were recorded in Egypt, Iran, Iran-US, Israel, Iraq, as well as the crisis affecting Israel's relations with Syria and Lebanon. On the other hand, four low-intensity (33 per cent) and three (25 per cent) medium-intensity socio-political crises were observed. In relation to the **evolution** of the crises, **only one case was identified where a relative improvement in the situation was detected with respect to 2018**: **Iran (north-west)**. In five cases the situation did not change significantly with respect to the previous year, while **in half of the cases (6 cases) there was a deterioration in the socio-political crisis**, including the situation in **Iraq**, the mass protests recorded in **Iran** at the end of the year that led to a very harsh crackdown by the security forces with a toll of more than 300 deaths, and the escalation of tensions between **Iran and the USA** linked to the Iranian nuclear programme, in a volatile context that was dangerously close to a military escalation in the Middle East.

As regards the causes of the disputes, **75 per cent of the socio-political crises** recorded in the region (9 out of 12 cases) **had opposition to the internal or international policies of the government or opposition to the system among their main causes**. In almost half of the crises (5 cases representing 42 per cent) identity demands and/or demands for self-government were also one of the most notable motivations. In parallel, four of the socio-political crises in the region were **internal**, five were **internationalised internal** and two were **international**: 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 Arab-Israeli conflict and, more recently, also influenced by the war in Syria.

2.3. Socio-political crises: annual evolution

2.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Chad	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, Resources, Territory Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups (UFR, UFDD), political and social opposition, community militias

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 elections, won without surprises by Idriss Déby, the climate of social instability persisted. Finally, it is worth noting the military interventions in the north against groups based in Libya and against illegal mining, and against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, as well as periodic inter-community clashes over land ownership and uses.

The Chadian Government restricted public space by prohibiting acts of protest against cuts in the supply of butane gas and the use of the CFA franc

Instability in northern and eastern Chad, attacks and reprisals in other parts of the country linked to intercommunity violence, as well as the actions of the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region, persisted.[18] On the military side, there was a notable French military air intervention from 3 to 6 February against a rebel column of the Union des Forces de la Résistance (UFR) coalition of armed groups, consisting of 50 vehicles from the north-east, originating in southern Libya, which was heading for N'Djamena. At the request of President Idriss Déby, French fighters intervened in support of the Chadian army and destroyed around 20 vehicles. The UFR is a group led

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18. See summary on the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

by Timan Erdimi, a nephew of President Idriss Déby and the former chief of staff, currently based in Qatar. On 9 February, the army announced that they had destroyed about 40 vehicles and arrested 250 rebels. The opposition and sectors of civil society criticised the French intervention as further proof of its unconditional support for Déby. In addition, in March hundreds of militants deserted or left the rebel coalition Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD).

As a result of the **outbreaks of violence in the eastern provinces (Ouaddai and Sila), the Government established a state of emergency in August** and extended it for the rest of the year following the escalation of clashes between local farmers and nomadic livestock breeders of Arab origin. The state of emergency was accompanied by a curfew, with the aim of forcibly disarming the civilian population. In addition, **the outbreak of violence in the mining areas of the Tibesti region in the far north of the country over the past year has resulted in dozens of deaths and various attempts to promote talks between the parties**. The Government extended the state of emergency, established in August in the east of the country, to Tibesti. In August, it also announced the deployment of 5,000 troops in the three provinces to tackle the situation of instability, and the closure of the borders with Sudan, CAR and Libya. Finally, on 2 November, the Government and the self-defence militia responsible for the situation reached a pre-agreement establishing a ceasefire. The Government was required to lift the blockade on Miski village and release the militia group, while the militia was required to surrender its weapons. On 5 November the President reinstated the canton chiefs who had been expelled for opposing the Government's decision in August 2018 to change the internal borders which led to Miski ceasing to form part of the Tibesti region and being integrated into Borkou. The final agreement was reached on 11 November, when the militia agreed to a definitive cessation of hostilities and the Government agreed to establish a mechanism to manage gold mining that will lead to profits from gold mining returning to the local population.

In the political and social sphere, the Government restricted public spaces by banning acts of protest against cuts in the supply of butane gas and the use of the CFA franc. In addition, on 23 April the Government rejected the request of the opposition movement Les Transformateurs to become a political party (an organisation created in 2018 that aims to break onto the political scene through the leadership of Succès Masra, a young former economist at the African Development Bank). Different actions organised by this movement were repressed during the year. However, in view of the situation in neighbouring Sudan, where protests over the high cost of living led to the fall of its President, Omar al-Bashir, the Government on 10 May withdrew import taxes on basic commodities such as rice, flour, cooking oil and dates in order to reduce the price and

defuse the protests in the country to avoid a situation of tension such as the one being experienced in its neighbouring country. The renewal of the members of the Cadre National de Dialogue Politique (CNDP) (a forum for coordination between the presidential majority, the political opposition and civil society) remained pending throughout the year due to discrepancies within the political opposition to decide on their representatives, with the members finally being renewed in August. This forum, chaired by Mahamat Zene Bada, secretary-general of the ruling party, Idriss Déby's MPS, held talks throughout the year to agree on the electoral calendar. In May, the CNDP decided to postpone the legislative elections scheduled for that month until the end of the year, on a date yet to be determined. Déby held meetings between 10 and 16 July with the political parties to discuss the elections. Countries from the international community put pressure on the Government to speed up the timetable, grant authorisation to political parties to enable them to carry out their activities and freely organise rallies. The President, Idriss Déby, pressured the electoral bodies to speed up the holding of elections in January 2020, rejecting the proposal of the electoral commission to hold elections in April or November 2020, due to the need to revise the electoral law and to organise a new census, as proposed by the opposition, which denounced the interference by the Government and threatened to boycott the electoral process if it did not accept its demands. The death of a taxi driver on 4 November at the hands of the bodyguards of the President of the National Assembly while they were clearing the roads in N'Djamena provoked strong rejection by society and the mobilisation of thousands of people on 23 November to attend his funeral, an action in which the security forces intervened causing the death of one person.

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

Summary:

Between 1998 and 2003, what has been called "Africa's First World War" took place in DRC.[19] The signing of a series of peace agreements between 2002 and 2003 involved the withdrawal of foreign troops and the creation of a National Transitional Government (NTG), incorporating the former government, the political opposition, the RCD-Goma, RCD-K-ML, RCD-N and MLC armed groups, and the Mai Mai militias. From June 2003, the NTG was led by President Joseph Kabila and four vice presidents, two of whom belonged to the former insurgency: Azarias Ruberwa of the RCD-Goma and Jean-Pierre Bemba of the MLC. The NTG drew up the constitution, on which a referendum was held in December 2005. Legislative and presidential elections were held between July and October 2006, in which Kabila

19. See the summary on DRC (East) in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

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 mandate, which was due to expire in the 2016 elections that were postponed until the end of 2018, contributed to exacerbating instability and political and social mobilization against his stay in power, which was harshly repressed.

The serious political and social crisis at national level that has affected the country as a result of the conclusion of President Joseph Kabila's mandate in December 2016 and its extension until the holding of elections in December 2018, as agreed in the December 2016 Saint Sylvester agreement, **culminated in the holding of elections in a generally peaceful climate in most of the country, which resulted in the victory of Felix Tshisekedi, in what was the first peaceful transition of power in the country's history**. However, it should be noted that between 16 and 17 December 2018, on the eve of the elections, there was a massacre in four towns in Yumbi, in the province of Mai-Ndombe (west of the country) that went unnoticed as it coincided with the electoral process, and in which, according to the UN, up to 535 civilians from the Banunu community were killed by militias from the Batende community. Local security forces and political actors were allegedly involved in this massacre, encouraged by political actors, security forces and the local state administration in the area. Other sources put this figure at over 900 fatalities. The massacre was reportedly preceded by a dispute over the burial of a Banunu community leader. The UN conducted an investigation in which it determined that crimes against humanity may have been committed. The new Government opened an investigation, collaborated with the UN, initiated legal proceedings and replaced many positions in the security forces and local administration.

The serious national political and social crisis that has affected the DRC in recent years culminated in the holding of elections at the end of 2018, which conferred victory to Felix Tshisekedi, marking the first peaceful transition of power in the country's history

On 24 January 2019, Felix Tshisekedi took office as the country's new President after his victory in the controversial national and provincial presidential and legislative elections on 30 December, subject to suspicions of irregularities and alleged electoral fraud. In addition, during the year greater freedom was seen in the political arena as well as an improvement in the security situation, contrasting with the increase in political violence and insurgent actions in the east of the country. The implementation of the December 2016 peace agreement was marked by the splintering of the opposition due to an absence of leadership following the death of historic opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the UDPS opposition party, in early 2017.

The presidential, national legislative and provincial elections were held on 30 December 2018, one week later than planned (23 December) due to a fire that destroyed around 8,000 electronic counting machines stored at an electoral commission building. Amidst accusations of electoral fraud on the part of Martin Fayulu and his Lamuka coalition, on 19 January the **Constitutional Court confirmed Felix Tshisekedi's victory by a narrow margin** over the second candidate, Martin Fayulu, with the candidate Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary coming in third. The SACD and various African countries such as Egypt (the country that assumed the AU presidency in February) endorsed the announcement, celebrating the transfer of power. Both Tshisekedi and Kabila welcomed the results (with some sources speculating on a possible agreement between them), but Martin Faluyu filed a petition with the Constitutional Court alleging electoral fraud and claiming that he allegedly received 62% of the votes and Tshisekedi 18%, according to his estimates and those of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO). The latter, which deployed 40,000 election observers, publicly stated that the official results did not match its own conclusions. Some Governments and diplomatic sources questioned the official results.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) also announced the results of the legislative elections on the basis of which the ruling coalition Common Front for the Congo (FCC) maintained a large majority in the National Assembly, as well as in the provincial assemblies, amidst strong accusations of fraud and protests in several cities, especially in Kikwit (Kwilu province, a stronghold of Martin Fayulu), and to a lesser extent in Kisangani, Mbandaka, Goma and Kinshasa. The CENI postponed the vote until March 2019 in four constituencies, the territory of Beni, the city of Beni, Butembo and Yumbi, due to the Ebola outbreak and security concerns. Finally, the ruling party of President Kabila, the FCC, won 361 of the 485 seats in Parliament, while the coalition that included Felix Tshisekedy's UDPS, the Cap pour le Changement (CACH), won only 49 seats, compared to 90 for the Lamuka coalition. As a result, Tshisekedi did not obtain enough support to choose a prime minister because Kabila's FCC blocked his proposals, which led to new negotiations between the two blocks that ended with the announcement on 6 March of an agreement to form a coalition Government with a prime minister from the FCC. Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba was appointed Prime Minister on May 20. The new Prime Minister had held various positions of responsibility during the Mobutu Sese Seko Governments. He is a member of the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy, one of the main parties that make

up the FCC. The new Government will be formed of 67 members: the prime minister, 5 deputy prime ministers, 10 state ministers, 31 ministers, 3 deputy ministers and 17 vice-ministers. On the Council of Ministers, the CACH obtained 23 seats, while the FCC obtained 42. More than 70% of the Government is made up of ministers who are serving as ministers for the first time. Women's representativeness is 17 per cent, but they hold key ministerial positions, such as Foreign Affairs and Planning. Taken together, the seats held by the FCC in the National Assembly and the Senate represent a majority of more than three-fifths and give the coalition broad legislative powers, and as various sources have pointed out, the transition of power in the country has remained in the hands of Kabila and his acolytes. In the provinces, the FCC had a majority in 25 of the 26 assemblies, while in North Kivu the majority of the seats were held by Lamuka. In addition, the FCC presides over 24 assemblies, and 23 governors have been appointed from among its ranks. Lamuka chairs two provincial assemblies and the CACH chairs one. On 24 April, the National Assembly elected its Parliamentary Committee, headed for the first time by a woman, Jeanine Mabunda, who belongs to the FCC coalition. On 3 September, Ilunkamba presented the Government's programme to the National Assembly and the coalition Government was inaugurated.

Following a meeting of its founding members in Brussels at the end of March, the Lamuka electoral coalition was transformed into a political platform within which Moïse Katumbi was appointed as first coordinator, a position that rotates every three months. Amid accusations of internal dissent, Lamuka's presidential election candidate, Martin Fayulu, continued to demand respect for "the truth of the ballot box" and organised mass public events in Kisangani and Kinshasa. One of the first steps taken by President Felix Tshisekedi, as part of his so-called "100-day emergency programme", and in accordance with the political agreement of 31 December 2016, was to grant a pardon in March to some 700 political prisoners, including lawyer Firmin Yangambi and opposition leader Franck Diongo. The improved political climate facilitated the return of opposition leaders to the DRC, which contributed positively to the emerging balance of power between the country's political forces. The months of May and June, saw the return of three historic political leaders belonging to Lamuka: Moïse Katumbi (two years in exile), Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi (seven years in exile) and Jean-Pierre Bemba. Katumbi's return was made possible by the annulment of a three-year prison sentence for property-related fraud and the suspension of all legal proceedings pending against him. Katumbi welcomed President Tshisekedi's achievements, particularly with regard to granting greater political freedom, and promised to take a pragmatic approach, promote national cohesion and work constructively as a member of the "republican opposition".

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20. See the summary on Rwanda – Uganda in this chapter.
21. See the summary on Rwanda – Burundi in this chapter.

Rwanda	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Rwandan armed group FDLR, political opposition, dissident sectors of the Government party RPF, Rwandan diaspora in other African countries and in the West

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

During the year, the relationship between Rwanda and Uganda,[20] as well as between Rwanda and Burundi,[21] seriously deteriorated and there were actions by the Rwandan-born insurgency FDLR, from its stronghold in the DRC. There was an outbreak of violence in early October in the north of the country, near the border with the DRC, in which 33 people died. A group belonging to the FDLR insurgency entered from DRC and attacked the town of Kinigi, in Musanze district, killing 14 people. Rwandan security forces pursued the assailants, executing 19 and capturing 5. Police arrested the leader of the unregistered opposition party FDU-Inkingi, Victoire Ingabire, on charges of involvement in the Kinigi attacks.

In addition, the Government of Rwanda continued to restrict political freedom and freedom of expression in the country. In September, two unidentified assailants stabbed and killed a senior official of the FDU-Inkingi party, and authorities arrested two people in connection with the crime, although the party leader noted that

the murder was a further attempt by the Government to intimidate the opposition. Subsequently, opposition leader Victoire Ingabire announced on November 9 the creation of a new opposition party, the Development and Liberty for All party (DALFA-Umurinzi). In January, a judicial investigation was launched in South Africa into the murder of former Rwandan intelligence chief Patrick Karegeya, who was found dead in his hotel room in Johannesburg in December 2013. Karegeya, who was a colleague of President Paul Kagame during the RPF rebellion that overthrew the genocidal Government in 1994 and who in turn committed serious atrocities in the country and in neighbouring DRC in pursuit of those responsible for the genocide, had fallen from grace with the regime, he was imprisoned in 2005 and 2006, and in 2007 he went into exile with the former chief of staff, Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, with whom he founded the opposition movement Rwandan National Congress (RNC), and in 2011 a Rwandan court convicted them *in absentia* for offences against the State. In South Africa both suffered numerous assassination attempts, which resulted in the expulsion of Rwandan diplomats, even though Rwanda always denied its involvement. Four Rwandan suspects were implicated in Karegeya's murder, but they left South Africa and were not extradited. In parallel, Rwanda's chief prosecutor in December 2018 had announced that he would appeal the sentence in which dissident Diane Rwigara was acquitted along with her mother, Adeline, and four others, by the Rwandan Supreme Court, of charges of forgery and incitement to rebellion on 6 December. Rwigara is the sister of Assinapol Rwigara, an industrialist who was a major donor to the ruling RPF in the 1990s. She later became a critical voice of the regime and tried to run for election in August 2017, but her candidacy was rejected due to alleged irregularities. In September 2017 she was arrested and imprisoned awaiting trial. Finally, it should be noted that in December 2018 the French justice system abandoned the investigation into the death of Rwandan President Juvénal Habyariamana due to a lack of evidence, a situation that had deteriorated relations between the two countries since the investigation also examined the participation of President Kagame, then leader of the insurgent group RPF, in the launch of the missile that shot down the plane in which he was travelling and triggered the subsequent genocide. Ballistic investigations in 2012 pointed to the possibility that the missile belonged to Habyarimana's presidential guard, and a Rwandan investigation in 2009 ruled that it may have been extremist Hutu sectors that killed Habyarimana because of his willingness to reach an agreement with the Tutsi minority.

Rwanda – Burundi	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	Government of Rwanda, Government of Burundi, armed groups

Summary:
The end of the respective armed conflicts in Rwanda in 1994 and Burundi in 2004 reversed the political and ethnic dominance that had emerged following independence. In Rwanda, the 1959 revolution overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and brought the Hutu elites to power, who were driven out after the 1994 genocide by Tutsi refugees from Uganda, and who installed the RPF, led by Tutsi General Paul Kagame, at the top levels of the country's Government. In Burundi, 40 years of Tutsi military rule ended with an armed conflict and the victory of the largest pro-Hutu faction in the armed rebellion, the CNDD-FDD. Their leader, Pierre Nkurunziza, managed to find a balance within the group allowing him to rise to power. Both have become "strong men" of the region, promoting the development of their countries and an end to conflicts in the area. Rwanda, with the RPF in power, financed Nkurunziza's electoral campaign, which is seen as moderate because it marginalised other sectors of the Burundian Hutu rebellion (Agathon Rwasa's FNL) with connections to his Rwandan Hutu enemy FDLR. Nkurunziza and Kagame have supported one another in the prosecution of their respective insurgencies. However, in 2013 this relationship was severed when the pro-Rwandan M23 rebellion was defeated in DRC (the enemy of the FDLR). Rwanda accused its Burundian neighbour of being the safe haven for combatants whose presence in DRC had until then justified Rwanda's intervention.

The deterioration of the relationship between Rwanda and Burundi persisted, a relation that has worsened in recent years in the wake of the serious crisis in Burundi, because Rwanda has put pressure on its neighbour to grant greater political freedom to reduce the climate of violence in the country. In turn, Burundi has accused the Rwandan regime of being authoritarian, of repressing political opposition and of supporting the Burundian insurgency.[22] Reports leaked in December 2018 regarding allegations by Refugees International that Burundian armed groups, such as FNL and Imbogoraburundi, were forcibly recruiting fighters in Rwandan refugee camps and that the Rwandan authorities might not only be acquiescing but also actively collaborating, thereby contributing to the worsening of relations between the two countries. Subsequently, in late February 2019, a dozen lifeless bodies were found in the Burundian part of Lake Rweru that separates Burundi from Rwanda, with the Burundian authorities claiming that these bodies came from the Rwandan

During the year, the relationship between Rwanda and Uganda, as well as between Rwanda and Burundi, seriously deteriorated and there were actions by the Rwandan-born insurgency FDLR, from its stronghold in the DRC

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22. Then, in July 2018, cross-border attacks were reported of an unidentified armed group from Burundi having attacked the Rwandan town of Cyamuzi, which had already taken place in June. At that time, Rwandan President Paul Kagame warned that his army was prepared to defend the integrity of the country. The East African, *No end to Rwanda-Burundi spat,* 25 August 2018.

side, an allegation that was denied by Rwanda. Tensions persisted throughout the year. In this regard, it should be noted that in November 2019, unidentified armed groups from Burundi attacked military positions in the district of Bweyeye, Rwanda. Subsequently, following a deadly attack in Burundi by an unidentified group, on 28 November the Burundian Government accused the Rwandan Army of having carried out attacks and threatened to retaliate in the event of continued hostilities on the part of Rwanda. Kagame hinted to the Rwandan Parliament that neighbouring countries had been implicated in sponsoring cross-border attacks against Rwanda. Weeks earlier, the chiefs of staff of Rwanda, DRC, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania met in DRC on 24 and 25 October to discuss the possibility of carrying out joint military operations against armed groups in eastern DRC.

Rwanda – Uganda	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	Government of Rwanda, Government of Uganda

Summary:
Both Governments have historically been allies and have played a very important role in the political evolution of the other. The Ugandan Government, led by Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement, came to power in 1986 with the military support of the Tutsi refugee community, including Paul Kagame. In turn, Museveni's Uganda facilitated the creation in the late 1980s of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the group that from Uganda launched the failed offensive in 1990 to defeat the Hutu Government and eventually overthrew it after the 1994 genocide. Since then, both regimes have fought on the same side on several occasions during the wars in the DRC. Since the end of the second war in the DRC, when both countries withdrew from Congolese territory, their relationship has been unequal, although they have been able and willing to negotiate around various conflicts. However, over the past year the relationship has seriously deteriorated due to various factors, mainly Uganda's alleged support for Rwandan dissidents.

The relationship between Rwanda and Uganda seriously deteriorated. Throughout the year, there was an escalation of incidents and retaliations between the two countries that led to the worst case scenario becoming a reality, according to various analyses. On 5 March 2019, the Rwandan Foreign Minister announced that he would close the border with Uganda and advised Rwandans living in Uganda to leave the country, accusing Uganda of arbitrarily arresting Rwandans, hindering and obstructing regional trade and, above all, providing support and shelter to Rwandan armed opposition groups, accusations which were denied by Uganda. Specifically, Rwanda accused Uganda of supporting the Rwanda

National Congress (RNC) movement, and specifically the Rwandan armed groupForces Démocratiques pour la Libération de Rwanda (FDLR).[23] Both organisations are allegedly seeking to overthrow the current Rwandan Government and are being singled out for reviving the ethnic socio-political crises that led to the 1994 genocide. Between April and August both countries took punitive measures against citizens of the other country residing in their own country, such as deportations or executions of persons crossing the border accused of smuggling or spying, and the temporary closure of border crossings.

In July, a summit was held in the Angolan capital, Luanda, between the Presidents of Rwanda, Uganda, DRC and Angola, at which they decided to appoint Angola as a mediator between the two countries with Congolese support. **Finally, Presidents Kagame and Museveni signed an agreement on 21 August in Luanda to normalise relations between the two countries in which they committed to respecting each other's sovereignty, to refrain from destabilising actions, to respect the rights and freedoms of their citizens and to resume cross-border activities.** In September, a high-level Ugandan delegation visited Kigali to discuss the implementation of the agreement. On the other hand, although indirectly related to the above, the Chiefs of Staff of Rwanda, DRC, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania met from 24 to 25 October in DRC to discuss the possibility of carrying out joint military operations against armed groups in eastern DRC. However, security incidents continued to be recorded between Rwanda and Uganda, in particular the shooting of nationals of both countries in the border area, including the death of two Ugandans accused of smuggling tobacco into Rwanda (which led to condemnations by Uganda), the arrest of 35 Rwandans for illegal entry into Uganda and the deportation of 32 others.

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

Summary:
Sudan is immersed in a chronic conflict stemming from the concentration of power and resources in the centre of the country. Apart from the conflicts in the marginalised regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the rest of the country also suffers from governance problems stemming from the authoritarian regime of President Omar al-Bashir who came to power in a coup d'état in 1989 and who exercises tight control and repression of dissidents through state security apparatuses. The tense situation in the country was exacerbated by the separation of Southern Sudan in 2011, as it severely affected the economy of the

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23. Clement Uwiringiyimana, "Rwanda accuses Uganda of supporting rebels", Reuters, 5 March 2019.

country which was 70% dependent on oil sales, mostly from the south. The Sudanese state's coffers saw their income drastically reduced by the loss of control over the export of oil and, later, by the failure to reach an agreement with South Sudan for its transportation through the pipelines that pass through Sudan. An economic situation with high inflation and the devaluation of the currency contributed to the start of significant protests in the summer of 2012 in several cities in the country that, in early 2019, led to the fall of the al-Bashir regime.

After 30 years in power, Omar al-Bashir was overthrown on April 11 as a result of popular mobilisations and protests, the last wave of which emerged in December 2018. The fall of al-Bashir (which did not necessarily imply the removal of the regime), posed important challenges and opportunities for the construction of a new political scenario in the country, which was marked by uncertainties surrounding the new transitional Government's capacity to confront and resolve the important challenges facing the Sudanese state. These include the ravages of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable population and the socio-political crises and historical grievances between the centre and the periphery, which manifested through various violent scenarios in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The citizen protests that had emerged in late 2018 calling for the resignation of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir due to the economic crisis intensified in early 2019, spreading to several parts of the country. These were harshly repressed by the Sudanese security forces, and were denounced by human rights groups, which recorded the deaths of at least 40 people and around two thousand arrests. The intensification of the protests led Omar al-Bashir's Government to publish several decrees to attempt to quell popular discontent, including: the dissolution of the federal Government and the country's 18 state governments, placing members of the security forces in charge of the latter; the delay of the constitutional reform to allow him to run for President again; and the decree of a nationwide state of emergency for one year, a measure not taken since 1999. He also subsequently announced new decrees concerning the state of emergency: the powers and authority of regular forces were increased; unauthorised meetings, demonstrations and strikes were prohibited; control over the outflow of foreign capital from the country was extended; the distribution, sale and transport of fuel outside official channels were prohibited; and the Attorney General was authorised to establish emergency courts throughout the country. In mid-March, the National Assembly ratified the state of emergency decreed by the Government, although it reduced its duration to six months. In parallel, al-Bashir handed over the chairmanship of the National Congress Party (NCP) to Ahmed Harun (who was the subject of an ICC arrest warrant for crimes committed in Darfur) in an attempt to run again and be elected President at the party conference scheduled for April. However, despite

After three decades in power, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown due to strong popular protests in the country, triggering a new transition in Sudan

the measures decreed by the Government, protests in the country continued and intensified.

Popular pressure finally led to the announcement on 11 April by the Minister of Defence, Awad Mohamed Ahmed Ibn Ouf, of the overthrow and arrest of al-Bashir by the army, informing citizens of the creation of a Transitional Military Council (TMC) that would remain in power for two years. At the same time, the Constitution was suspended and a state of emergency was declared for three months. Abdel Fattah Burhan was appointed President of the TMC. Sudanese civil society rejected the creation of the military junta and demanded that power be handed over to citizens. The African Union (AU) reacted by giving the TMC 15 days to hand power back to the country's citizens under the threat of expulsion from the body, which was later extended to three months. At that time, talks were initiated between the TMC and the opposition coalition led by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) movement to agree on a shared, civilian-led transitional Government. Tensions escalated as a result of increased crackdowns and attacks on protesters by state security forces, particularly the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). On 3 June, the worst attacks by the security forces in a crackdown on demonstrators were recorded, leaving an estimated total of at least 108 people dead and more than 500 injured, according to the Sudanese Central Medical Committee. The crackdown was condemned by the United Nations and many countries, although a veto by China and Russia prevented a resolution by the UN Security Council to condemn it on 4 June. The United States condemned the crackdown and made Sudan's removal from the list of "terrorist sponsors" conditional on the implementation of a power-sharing agreement with civilians. For its part, the AU reacted on 6 June by suspending Sudan from the body and demanding the creation of a transitional Government led by civilians.

After months of negotiations mediated by the AU and Ethiopia, plagued by socio-political crises, protests, acts of repression, pressure and incidents, on 17 July the Military Council (TMC) and the opposition coalition (FFC) reached a political agreement for the **creation of a transitional Government**. This political agreement was enshrined as a constitutional agreement on 4 August, and a formal signing ceremony was held on 17 August in Khartoum. The main points of the deal were as follows: the transition period will last 39 months before elections are held; the Sovereign Governing Council will be composed of 11 members (six civilians and five military) and will be headed by a general for the first 21 months and by a civilian for the last 18 months; the Prime Minister will be nominated by the FFC and confirmed by the Sovereign Council; the Government Cabinet will be composed of no more than 20 ministers elected by the Prime Minister, except for the Internal Affairs and Defence portfolios, which will be chosen by the military members of the Sovereign

Council; the legislative body will be formed within the first 90 days of the signing of the agreement, and will not exceed 300 persons, of whom at least 40 per cent of the seats should be allocated to women; the FFC alliance will have 67 per cent of the seats and the remaining 33 per cent will go to other political parties not linked to al-Bashir; the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF paramilitary corps will form part of the military institution under the command of the chief of the Armed Forces; the **Government's priority during the first six months of the transition period will be to bring peace to the war-torn regions: Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile**; the transitional Government will work on legal and economic reforms, as well as outlining a balanced foreign policy.

On August 21, economist Abdalla Hamdok took office as prime minister of the FFC-nominated transitional Government, and the TMC chief general Abdel-Fattah Burhan assumed the position of chairman of the Sovereign Council. In a joint statement on 21 August, the Troika (the United Kingdom, the United States and Norway) welcomed Hamdok's appointment. At the same time, on 19 August, the Sudanese Court of Justice commenced a trial against former President al-Bashir, charging him with corruption and illegal possession of foreign funds, and sentencing him to two years in prison. Bashir also faces charges related to the 1989 coup that brought him to power and for organising violence against protesters in early 2019. The Government cabinet was formed to include representatives from all regions of the country in order to obtain greater legitimacy. As a result of progress in the formation of the civilian transitional Government, the AU –through its Peace and Security Council– lifted the agency's suspension of Sudan on 6 September. On 22 June, Hamdok announced the establishment of an independent committee of inquiry into the June deaths of pro-democracy protesters, with this report being due for submission in three months' time. The Sudanese Human Rights Commission estimated, from police records, that a total of 85 people were killed in the 3-12 June crackdown in Khartoum, while the FFC maintained that at least 127 protesters were killed and hundreds more injured. At the same time, thousands of Sudanese demonstrated in several cities on 21 October, urging the country's new authorities to dissolve the former ruling party of the overthrown leader Omar al-Bashir (NCP). In late November, the Government arrested and imprisoned Ali al-Haj, the party's secretary-general, and passed a bill to dismantle the former regime, including the dissolution of the NCP. In turn, the new authorities approved legal reforms to increase the protection of civil liberties.

On the other hand, during the year, and particularly since the commencement of negotiations between the TMC and the civilian groups opposing the regime regarding the formation of the transitional Government

in the country, various steps were taken to de-escalate the violence in the regions at war and to ensure the reopening of peace talks.[24]

Other highlights include, in late October, the head of the RSF paramilitary forces, Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti", announcing the withdrawal and return to Sudan of some 10,000 RSF soldiers from the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, with the Government reporting that only 5,000 units remained deployed. Prime Minister Hamdok was appointed by the regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to serve as President for one year beginning in February 2020, assuming the position Ethiopia has held since 2010. Finally, it should be noted that the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Sudan warned at the end of the year that 9.3 million people in the country (almost one in four) will need assistance by 2020, of which five million will require humanitarian assistance, including 2.4 million children suffering from acute malnutrition.[25]

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, 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) further limited democratic openness by increasing the verticality of the regime and the repression of the political opposition. The 2009 Counter-Terrorism Act helped decimate the opposition. The attempt since 2014 to

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24. See summary on Sudan in Chapter 1 (Peace negotiations in Africa) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2020
25. OCHA, SUDAN. Situation Report. *Last updated: 12 Dec 2019.* Available at: https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/

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 significant protests and deadly repression in the Oromiya region, which contributed to increased tension. Social protests contributed to the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in early 2018 and the appointment of Abiy Ahmed, who undertook a series of reforms aimed at easing ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties.

The year 2019 was marked by the process of reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the rejection by political actors and sectors of civil society of the changes undertaken by the Government that culminated in outbreaks of intercommunity violence. This climate of violence claimed hundreds of lives throughout the year. Numerous intercommunity tensions and grievances ignored by previous Governments surfaced in the context of the political reforms undertaken by Abiy Ahmed's Government. **In May, the federal attorney general charged,** *in absentia*, **former NISS intelligence chief Getachew Assefa and 25 other NISS officials with serious human rights violations committed during their tenure**. The Government of the Tigray region continued to hide Getachew, who was also a presidential advisor and senior official of the TPLF party. The commander of the prison in Jijiga (capital of the Ogaden region) was also arrested and deported to Ethiopia in May on charges of serious human rights violations in the prison.

The areas of the country most affected by intercommunity violence were the north-west (Amhara region), north-east and south-central areas (Oromia). Among the most significant occurrences was the killing of 200 people from the Gumuz community in the Agi Agew area (Amhara) in early May in retaliation for attacks in the Benishangul-Gumuz region in which 18 people were killed between 26 and 28 April. In June, assassinations of senior Government officials took place in the Amhara region, which was described as an attempted coup d'état against this region, with the federal Government intervening to control the situation and carrying out acts of repression against the Amhara political opposition. On 22 June, the President of the region, Ambachew Mekonnen, and two of his advisors were assassinated in the capital, Bahir Dar. Hours later, the chief of staff, General Seare Mekonnen, and a retired officer were killed in Addis Ababa. The Government claimed that these killings were connected and were part of a plot orchestrated by Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige, who was apprehended and executed in a firefight near Bahir Dar on 24 June. On that same day, 50 people were killed by a group of assailants, which could be linked to the attempted coup d'état. Following the attack, police arrested nearly 250 people suspected of taking part in the plot, including members of the security forces, opposition leaders and supporters of the Amhara ethno-nationalist party National Movement of Amhara. Finally, 86 people were killed during protests in Addis Ababa and other parts of Oromia state in October in protest against the indictment of an activist, Jawar Mohammed, who had been one of the architects of the protests that helped to bring Abiy to power in 2018, and who subsequently accused him of acting authoritatively like his predecessors. The influential Orthodox Church criticised the Prime Minister's response to the clashes on 27 October, saying he had failed to protect members of the congregation because the Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which is linked to the Amhara community, had suffered attacks at some of its locations. Finally, the campaign of forced disarmament undertaken by the Government in the Lower Omo Valley (in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's State, SNNPS) caused dozens of deaths due to its rejection by the local population. In November, the UN warned of two million internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of the climate of intercommunity violence that was shaking the country.

On the political front, a new party was formed in May, the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (ECSJ), which brings together seven opposition groups and will be led by veteran opposition leader Berhanu Nega. On 30 July, Parliament decided to postpone local and district elections to be held in conjunction with the 2020 legislative and regional elections. Two important issues took place in November. Firstly, the ruling coalition formed of four ethnic-based parties, the EPRDF, created in the late 1980s to overthrow the Mengistu dictatorship and which has governed the country since 1991, decided to merge into a single party in order to compete with better guarantees of success in the elections scheduled for 16 August 2020, at the behest of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The creation of the party was also an attempt to reduce ethnic tension and the ethnic divisions that have defined the country, seeking to promote national unity and the integration of ethnic groups under a common project. Three of the four parties (the Amhara ADP, the Oromo ODP and the multi-ethnic SEPDM) agreed on 21 November to merge and create the new party, which will be called the Prosperity Party (PP), whilst the party that had dominated the coalition until Abiy Ahmed came to power, the Tigre minority's TPLF, refused to join the new project, fearing that its influence would be restricted. Under the Abiy Government, the TPLF has seen its power reduced, and various analysts have pointed out that the enmity between the TPLF and the Abiy Government has led to the coalition existing only on paper.

Secondly, **the population of the Sidama community in the south of the country voted in a referendum on November 20 to decide whether the region should become a semi-autonomous federal state**. The date of the referendum was postponed during the year, leading to an escalation of protests in July to demand greater autonomy for the Sidama community which caused dozens of deaths as a result of the delay in the referendum. The electoral commission ruled that 98.5% of the people who participated in the referendum voted in favour of the

creation of the new state, in a process that took place in a climate of freedom and democratic normalcy. The Sidama community represents 4 per cent of the country's population, being the fifth largest national community, and the largest in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's State (SNNPS) from which it will be split off. Historically, sectors of the Sidama community have demanded to have their own state, which has led to socio-political crises in the SNNPS region, home to 56 ethnic groups. Various analysts have pointed out that this step, which will make the Sidama region the tenth state, may be an incentive for other communities (Wolayta, Hadiya, Gurage, Keffa, among others) to seek to have their own ethnic state. After the referendum, a complex process was to be launched to create a new state administration that will have the power to levy taxes and control schools, police, health and other services. A climate of concern grew among the non-Sidama population of the new state, especially in the town of Hawassa.

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government of Ethiopia, regional government, political (OFDM, OPC) 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. In parallel, the Oromiya region has experienced a cycle of protests initiated by the student movement in 2014 against the Ethiopian regime due to demands linked to the perception of marginalization of the Oromo people, which were strongly repressed. It is also worth noting the recurrence of outbreaks of violence between Somali livestock communities and Oromo farming communities along the border between the Oromiya and Somali regions due to resource competition and the demarcation between the territories of both communities and in remote areas from both regions and the repressive intervention of the Liyu Police, which contributes to exacerbating the situation and increasing violence. Social protests contributed to the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in early 2018 and the appointment of Abiy Ahmed, who undertook a series of reforms aimed at easing ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties.

In the Oromia region, violent intercommunity clashes and severe socio-political crises between Oromo sectors competing for power took place at the same time as the demobilisation of the OLF began. Between 12 and 13 January, the army carried out air strikes in western Oromia against members of the OLF who had rejected the peace agreement, killing seven civilians. The federal Government denied having carried out air strikes, but claimed that it had conducted a stabilisation operation following a request from the regional Government. **On 24 January, the regional Government and the armed group OLF signed a ceasefire agreement,** under which the OLF combatants promised to enter cantonments for their disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). However, subsequently there was an attack by the OLF on 28 January which resulted in the death of two farmers in the Amaro district. This was followed by further clashes between the OLF and federal law enforcement agencies. The Government announced that 1,000 OLF rebels surrendered their weapons and were cantoned in DDR camps. According to reports by some media, certain sectors of the OLF committed sporadic acts of violence which could not be confirmed, but in general the level of violence decreased.

At the end of May, the OLF led by Dawud Ibsa agreed to work together with the main ruling Oromo party, the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) and the Government of the region. The OLF committed to supporting initiatives to enable the regional Government to regain control of the situation. In a joint statement by the President of the Oromia region, Shimeles Abdissa, Dawud Ibsa, and the Deputy Chief of Staff, Berhanu Jula, the OLF announced that it would never again have an armed wing. In addition, a reconciliation committee composed of senior leaders was formed to mediate between the OLF and the ODP. This committee submitted a report highlighting the work done to canton the OLF militia with the aim of rehabilitating and training its members and encouraging their reintegration into society. In parallel, in May there were also developments in the merger between the OLF and the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), led by Professor Merera Gudina.

Kenya	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, System, Resources, Identity, Self-government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ethnic militias, political and social opposition (political parties, civil society organisations), SLDF armed group, Mungiki sect, MRC party, Somali armed group al-Shabaab and al-Shabaab sympathizers 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 detriment of the remaining ethnic groups. In 2002, the authoritarian and kleptocratic Daniel Arap Moi, who had held power for 24 years, was defeated by Mwai Kibaki on the back of promises to end corruption and redistribute wealth in a poor agricultural country whose growth is based on tourism. However, Kibaki's subsequent broken promises fostered a climate of frustration, which meant that the opposition leader Raila Odinga became a threat to Kibaki's hegemony of power. Odinga did not base his campaign on tribal affiliation but rather on change and on the building of a fairer society. The electoral fraud that took place in 2007 sparked an outbreak of violence in which 1,300 people died and some 300,000 were displaced. This situation led to an agreement between the two sectors through which a fragile government of national unity was created. A new presidential election in 2013 was won by Uhuru Kenyatta, who was tried by the ICC in connection with the events of 2007, though the court dropped the charges in 2015. In parallel, several areas of the country were affected by inter-community disputes over land ownership, also instigated politically during the electoral period. Furthermore, the illegal activities of the Mungiki sect, Kenya's military intervention in Somalia has triggered attacks by the Somalian armed group al-Shabaab in Kenya and the subsequent animosity towards the Somalian population in Kenya, presenting a challenge to the country's stability. Another factor in 2012 has been the growing government pressure on the secessionist movement Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), whose goal is the independence of the country's coastal region.

Intercommunity violence continued during the year, as did the actions of the Somali armed group al-Shabaab in the north and east, although a reduction was noted in the number of incidents and their savagery. June was the most active period of the year for al-Shabaab, when it attacked military and police posts and border checkpoints. The highlight of the year was the attack on a hotel in the Westlands area of Nairobi on 15 January, which after a 17-hour siege led to the deaths of 21 civilians, all 6 members of al-Shabaab and the injuring of at least 30. Secondly, according to sources, between eight and ten policemen were killed on 15 June, when an explosive was detonated as they drove through the border area with Somalia in Wajir County. On 19 June, a Nairobi court convicted three people for collaborating with the armed group in the attack on Garissa University in 2015, which killed 148 people.

ACLED brought the number of deaths linked to al-Shabaab actions and intercommunity violence to more than 200, significantly lower than the 406 deaths recorded in 2018 and the 730 deaths in 2017. In this regard, it is worth noting the reduction in the number of deaths at the hands of the police in 2019 compared to previous years, as revealed by Deadly Force.[26] In 2015, 143 people died at the hands of the police, rising to 205 people in 2016, 256 in 2017, 219 in 2018, while the figure fell to 105 people in 2019 (as of 30 September), a reduction of 47% in one year. The escalation of police violence in 2017 coincided with the country's electoral cycle. Finally, it is worth noting the clashes between militias linked to different communities throughout the year in the northern part of the country, among other issues mainly as a result of cattle theft, border demarcations between the territories of different communities and reprisals for previous attacks linked to land ownership disputes.

On the other hand, there was a notable increase in tensions between Kenya and Somalia following the discovery of hydrocarbon deposits in a disputed maritime area between the two countries. The International Court of Justice in The Hague postponed the hearing on this issue, initially set for September, to November and then to June 2020. In November, the Presidents of both countries met and decided to normalise relations, after an escalation of tensions between the two for much of the year, during which direct flights between the two countries were interrupted and ambassadors were called back for consultation, among various measures of pressure.

Somalia (Somaliland – Puntland)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Territory Internal
Main parties:	Republic of Somaliland, autonomous region of Puntland, state of Khatumo

Summary:

Both regions are in a conflict over the control of the border regions of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn since 1998. These three regions, which make up the SSC administration, are geographically within the borders of Somaliland, but most of the clans in the region have ties to those in Puntland. Since then there have been sporadic clashes and attempts at mediation. In 2012 these regions created the Khatumo state (Dervish State of Somalia), adding further complexity to the situation. In 2016, the Khatumo and Somaliland Governments began peace talks, but the Khatumo President and Vice-President clashed and created two separate administrations claiming to be the legitimate Government. One of these ended up negotiating its inclusion within Somaliland.

The tense relationship between the two Governments, which were at odds over the control of the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) region, continued during the year, with sporadic clashes between the respective militias and security forces. Attempts at negotiations between Somaliland and Somalia, with the aim of integrating the former into a federal Somalia, were the backdrop for the tensions. In the Sanaag region, rival clan militias clashed in Duud Arraale and El Afweyn between 7 and 8 July, killing 25 people. Also in Sanaag, Somaliland

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26. Deadly Force is a database of killings committed by the police. The Nation Newsplex project of the Kenyan Daily Nation newspaper, seeks to record all the deaths resulting from police operations in Kenya, based on public reports, including information from individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors. The database is populated with information collected from the media, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority, other government agencies and counts performed by human rights organisations.

forces clashed with the troops of Colonel Arre on 10 July –who had defected from Somaliland to Puntland in 2018– leaving three Somaliland soldiers and one Arre soldier dead. After Karin's troops took over the town of Arre on 26 July, fighting broke out the next day, resulting in the deaths of two Somaliland soldiers. In August, senior leaders from the area met to mediate between the Somaliland Government and Colonel Arre, a Puntland ally, and agreed to a cessation of hostilities and the start of negotiations. On 6 October, the President of Somaliland agreed to put an end to hostilities in Sanaag against the Arre militia. However, in November, in the disputed border regions of Sool and Sanaag, between Puntland and Somaliland, tensions continued and a number of armed clashes were recorded between groups with ties to one or the other group. In August and October, two Warsangeli clan militia leaders and their troops defected from the Somaliland Army to Puntland. This was the third major military defection from Somaliland's security forces to Puntland in 2019. On 18 September, in Ceel Afwayn, Sanaag region, violence between the Habar Yoonis and Habar Jeclo sub-clans of the Isaaq clan erupted again, resulting in a number of deaths.

North Africa - Maghreb

Algeria	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, military power, political and social opposition, Hirak movement

Summary:
Having held the presidency of Algeria since 1999, Abdelaziz Bouteflika has remained in office despite suffering from a serious illness that has kept him out of the public eye since 2013. A shadowy coalition of political and military figures has held on to the reins of power behind the scenes, popularly identified among the Algerian population as "le pouvoir". In 2019, the announcement that Bouteflika (82) would run for a fifth term triggered mass popular protests of an intensity not seen since the country's independence in 1962. Popular pressure forced his resignation and, since then, the military establishment has tried to control the transition and has taken measures such as the persecution and arrest of certain figures associated with the old regime. The peaceful protest movement Hirak has continued to mobilise against corruption, the influence of military power on politics and the ruling class in general, insisting on its demands for a transition to a genuinely democratic system capable of promoting political, social and economic reforms.

During 2019, Algeria was the scene of a profound upheaval and of mass and persistent popular protests against the Government and the leadership at levels not seen since the country's independence in 1962. **The protests were triggered in February when, despite his fragile health and few public appearances in recent**

years, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (82) announced that he would run for a fifth term in the elections scheduled for April. In early March, protests brought together some 800,000 people in the capital, Algiers, and two million more in various parts of the country. In the following months, mass demonstrations continued, mainly on Fridays, in the framework of a peaceful movement (Hirak) mobilised under the banner of rejecting a fifth mandate. Bouteflika tried to quell the popular outcry against his re-election by promising that, if he won, he would push through a series of measures, including an independent inclusive national conference to adopt constitutional, political and economic reforms; a constitutional referendum; and an independent mechanism to organise new early presidential elections. However, these announcements did not dissuade protestors. Thus, in mid-March the President decided to withdraw his candidacy and postpone the elections. Shortly afterwards, on 2 April, he was forced to resign (after two decades in office) after the army led by the powerful chief of staff, Gaïd Salah, and the ruling FLN party triggered a constitutional clause declaring him unfit for the job. Despite Bouteflika's resignation and increasing crackdowns, protests continued to bring together tens of thousands of people who demanded the dismantling of the old regime and denounced the attempts of the military power to control the transition. The former leader of the Upper House of Parliament, Abdelbaker Bensalah, was appointed interim President until elections were held in July, but various social and political sectors of the opposition (from Islamists to centre-left groups) announced a boycott of the elections and demanded the formation of an independent electoral commission, among other issues. Broad sectors expressed their rejection of any initiative promoted by Bensalah and other actors linked to the former regime, including a proposal for a national dialogue that was received with scepticism and interpreted as an attempt to co-opt critical parties and associations. Some analysts highlighted that the Algerian authorities were trying to take advantage of the absence of clear leadership in the protests and the failure to articulate a common set of demands. At the same time, however, notable were the peaceful nature of the protests and the unity in calling for regime change. **Against this backdrop, and reflecting the internal struggles within the former regime, the army and the interim Government instigated the arrest of many people from Bouteflika's** entourage, including his brother, Said Bouteflika (considered to be one of the main figures in power behind the scenes in recent years), the former head of intelligence Mohamed Mediene, two former prime ministers and several parliamentarians, among others.

In the following months, the Algerian authorities also intensified the crackdown by dispersing peaceful protests, placing obstacles to the arrival of demonstrators at the regular protests being held in the capital, the blocking of meetings of political and human rights groups and the arrest of critical voices, including a Berber activist who died in prison in May while on hunger strike. Two other

people were reported to have died in connection with the protests, although the circumstances were unclear, as well as nearly 200 injuries. According to the NGO Human Rights Watch, **hundreds of people were detained in 2019 from the beginning of the protests, some of them released without charges, but others were charged with offences or conspiracy against state institutions, weakening the authority or morale of the army, among other crimes**. Other forms of repression and intimidation included website closures and the arrest of journalists and human rights activists. Faced with the impossibility of holding elections in July, the interim government in Bensalah attempted to offer certain concessions and insisted on opening a national dialogue between the Government and civil society. This took place in a context in which various initiatives by sectors of civil society and organisations linked to political parties had been set up to attempt to make proposals and outline roadmaps for a transition. Opposition sectors, including secularists and Islamists and the student movement, maintained their distrust and refusal to participate in the preparatory meetings for the talks. The demands of the protests continued to focus on the march on Bensalah, the end of Gaïd Salah's *de facto* military power and the establishment of a constituent assembly to radically reform the Algerian political system. In September, the final report of the Government-led national dialogue committee recommended presidential elections, which were scheduled for later in the year. However, calls for a boycott were made by various political forces and social sectors, which intensified after it became known that all the candidates were figures linked to the former regime. Elections were held on 12 December, and former Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune was elected with 58 per cent of the vote. Officially, 39% of the electorate was reported to have participated, but observers said it was 15%. The elections took place in a climate of protests and further arrests of hundreds of demonstrators. At the end of the year, General Gaïd Salah's death from a heart attack was announced, which added uncertainty to the future political scene in Algeria.

> *The announcement that Abdelaziz Bouteflika would run for a fifth term of office prompted mass peaceful protests in Algeria against the Government and the behind-the-scenes leadership in the North African country, prompting the President's resignation*

Western Africa

Nigeria	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Resources, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, livestock and farming communities, 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.

In Nigeria, there has been an increase in violence and instability in addition to the conflict surrounding the actions of Boko Haram, which affects the country's north-eastern provinces and the Lake Chad Basin.[27] **This increase was felt in the north-west of the country, based on the activities of criminal groups, which has compounded the permanent climate of intercommunity violence in the central belt and instability linked to the electoral process.** Firstly, there was an increase in political violence linked to the electoral cycle in the country that took place during the first quarter of the year. On 23 February, the federal presidential and legislative elections were held, and on 9 March, the governor and state legislative elections. In most states there was an increase in political violence between supporters of the different parties contesting the seats of government in these states and mainly between supporters of the ruling party, President Muhammadu Buhari's All Progressive Congress (APC), and supporters of the main rival party, Atiku Abubakar's People's Democratic Party (PDP). On 27 February the electoral commission conferred victory to the candidate and incumbent President Buhari, who won 56% of the votes, while Atiku rejected the results. Political violence claimed at least 40 lives and injured dozens of people in February, half of them on election day in the states of Rivers and Akwa Ibom. There were around ten serious incidents in which groups of mercenaries and hired saboteurs attacked party offices and vehicles, rallies and gatherings. At the same time, certain states held their state elections at different times, prolonging the climate of political violence throughout the year in different parts of the country and leading to criticism by international observers of the intimidating and violent conditions in which the elections took place.

Secondly, there has been an **increase in the actions of criminal groups in the north-west of the country since 2018** that continued throughout the year, mainly in

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27. See summary on the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina and Kaduna states, which executed hundreds of civilians, committed kidnappings for ransom, looted and burned dozens of localities, all of which led to the deployment of military operations to deal with the looting. **The annual toll in these four states alone was more than 2,000 fatalities as a result of the actions of criminal groups**, security forces and also civilian self-defence militias. In recent years, civilian self-defence groups have been organised to attempt to deal with this increase in crime. The actions of the self-defence militias led to an increase in violence through the commission of extrajudicial executions of suspected members of criminal groups, which in turn provoked new spirals of retaliation from one group to another in response to the attacks. **The UNHCR warned in late September that the escalation of violence had led to the displacement of 40,000 people who were forced to flee to neighbouring Niger** in the last 10 months. Amnesty International had already published a report on the state of Zamfara in July 2018 (the state most affected by gang violence) stating that the state was at the mercy of criminal groups who had killed hundreds of people in the last two years in remote locations that were difficult for law enforcement to access. However, it should be noted that in July, the Zamfara state authorities reached a peace agreement with the criminal groups to end the violence, which included the surrender of their weapons in exchange for an amnesty. The agreement was to be replicated in the neighbouring state of Katsina where the Government began peace talks with criminal groups to stop their attacks. These talks reduced the violence in October, although a climate of low-intensity violence persisted.

This crime wave compounded the historic intercommunity conflict **between nomadic herders from northern Nigeria and the agricultural communities of central and southern Nigeria** which has been taking place in the country's central states known as the "middle belt". Community clashes were observed in spirals of action-reaction that exacerbated the climate of violence, including the looting and burning of fields and the theft and slaughter of livestock. The most affected states were Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Taraba and Adamawa, with hundreds of deaths as a result of intercommunity fighting. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of the OHCHR, Agnès Callamard, submitted a report accusing the Nigerian Government of passivity and failure to stop the violence between farmers and cattle breeders that has been affecting the centre of the country for several years, as well as the kidnappings and criminality in the north-west that have claimed thousands of lives in the last year. The Government rejected the report, which also noted the extrajudicial executions committed by the security forces in the country. Local and international organisations such as HRW and Amnesty International also held state security forces responsible for numerous abuses and extrajudicial killings of suspects in police custody. It should be added that in

Criminal violence in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina and Kaduna states in Nigeria claimed 2,000 lives in 2019

the oil-rich Niger Delta states, kidnapping for ransom of expatriate workers linked to oil corporations and wealthy Nigerians has become widespread, a situation that has also increased in northern Nigeria in recent years, where entire villages have been displaced to avoid kidnappings and attacks by criminal gangs. Finally, with regard to the situation in Biafra, 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the war and the humanitarian disaster it caused, with estimates of between one and five million people killed by the humanitarian blockade to which the region was subjected in order to suffocate the self-determination movement. Various local and international human rights organisations noted that during 2019, violent persecution of social actors and civilians suspected of being sympathizers of the independence movement (considered a terrorist movement by the Nigerian state) continued.

2.3.2. Americas

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

El Salvador	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, gangs

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 line with the trend observed in recent years, the homicide rate in 2019 was substantially reduced from that of the previous year. After reaching an all-time high in 2015 (103 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, making El Salvador the most violent country in the world), the homicide rate has been steadily declining (81 in 2016, 60 in 2017, 51 in 2018 and 35 in 2019). **According to official data, in 2019 there were 2,383 homicides, 29% less than the previous year.** The drop in this rate was especially notable from June onwards, following the inauguration of the new President, Nayib Bukele, former mayor of San Salvador who won the February presidential elections in the first round, being the first in the country's recent history not to run under the

banners of the parties ARENA or the FMLN. According to some studies, the number of homicides per day after he assumed office was reduced from nine to four. In this regard, the Government noted that August was the least violent month of the twenty-first century, while October had been the least violent month since the end of the civil war in 1992. While some security experts argue that the time period is too short to establish any correlation between the decline in homicides and the policies of the new Government, and that the number of homicides had already declined substantially in the first half of the year (by 13 per cent, according to some data), the Bukele Government maintains that its strategy against crime and insecurity, called the Territorial Control Plan, was clearly bearing fruit. **After taking office, Bukele publicly ruled out any kind of agreement or truce with the maras and also announced the tightening of measures against them**. Shortly thereafter, he was widely criticised for appointing as chief of police a person who had previously been accused of ordering extrajudicial executions. According to the Government itself, the Territorial Control Plan aims to have a special impact on the control of imprisoned mara leaders (minimising their communications with the outside world), cutting funding to the maras, and strengthening the State's security forces. One month after beginning his mandate, Bukele announced the recruitment of 3,000 new soldiers, as well as improving and upgrading the technological equipment of the Armed Forces and the Police. In an attempt to counteract the criticism that some of its actions generated among human rights organisations, the Government announced in the second half of the year the acceptance of a visit by a delegation from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, as well as the launching of the International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES), which will receive support from the OAS and United Nations and will be headed by the Guatemalan Ronalth Ochaeta.

Haiti	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, BINUH, gangs

Summary:
The current crisis affecting the country, with mass protests and numerous episodes of violence recorded in 2019, is linked to the accusations of corruption, electoral fraud and negligence in the action of the Government of President Jovenel Moïse. However, the situation of institutional paralysis, economic fragility and socio-political crisis began to worsen after the forced departure from the country of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, who avoided an armed conflict with the rebel group that had taken over much of the country. Since then, the deployment of a Multinational Interim Force and later of a UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH, replaced by MINUJUSTH in 2017 and by BINUH in 2019) and the

greater involvement and coordination of the international community in normalising the situation in the country have led to progress in certain areas of its governance, but have not succeeded in achieving political, social and economic stability, nor have they reduced the high levels of corruption, poverty, social exclusion and crime rates, or completely eliminated the control held by armed gangs in certain urban areas of the country.

While significant anti-government protests had already taken place by the end of 2018, the political, institutional, social and economic crisis that the country is experiencing reached its peak during 2019. As a result of the virtually continuous protests throughout the year, with frequent clashes between demonstrators and police, more than 70 people had been killed and over a hundred injured by early November. At the same time, the violence linked to armed groups operating in certain neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince and other cities increased significantly. In addition, the worsening economic situation exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country. In November, **the United Nations warned that more than 3.7 million people were in urgent need of food aid**. For its part, the National Human Rights Defense Network warned of the risk of death from starvation for the more than 11,000 prisoners in the country. In late November, an IMF delegation that visited the country noted that Haiti was facing an unprecedented economic crisis with devastating consequences and noted that if the social crisis continues, there is a risk of an economic recession greater than 1.9% of GDP in 2019. Faced with this situation, in mid-November the Government was forced to request help from the international community to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the country.

While major protests had already taken place between October and November 2018, in which 12 people were killed and more than 50 injured, the protests became mass and continuous protests from early February 2019, after a report emerged that the Government and the President himself, Jovenel Moïse, might be involved in the misappropriation and embezzlement of significant amounts of money (more than 2 billion dollars) from the PetroCaribe fund, which provided access to Venezuelan oil at low interest rates to several countries in the region. According to several media outlets, the worsening economic crisis and the growing shortage of fuel and other goods, or the perception that the Government was failing to keep its election promises, also contributed decisively to the fact that thousands of people, rallied by the opposition, took to the streets to demand the President's resignation. In February, 26 people were killed in the course of the fighting and looting. Despite the fact that (i) Moïse announced the creation of a national dialogue committee at the end of February, (ii) the Government submitted a package of measures to tackle the economic crisis as early as mid-February and (iii) Moïse dismissed Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant in May, protests and calls for his resignation continued throughout the year, with continued blockades, acts of vandalism, and clashes between demonstrators and

police. In a context of increasing commodity shortages as the year progressed, the protests increased in intensity, especially in mid-September. **On 1 November, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that since 15 September alone at least 42 people had died and 86 others had been injured.** In November and December the protests were somewhat less well attended, and schools and shops resumed their activity after almost two months of paralysis, but there were still abuses by the police (according to the opposition) and significant episodes of violence and acts of vandalism and looting in which several people were injured and many items of street furniture were damaged.

The social, economic and humanitarian crisis was also affected by the tension between the Government and the opposition and by the institutional paralysis that occurred throughout the year. **In 2019 alone, Moïse appointed three prime ministers** (the third of whom, Fritz-Willian Michel, had not yet been ratified in office at the end of the year after it transpired that he had attempted to bribe congressmen to vote in his favour) and had to hold a vote of confidence that he ultimately lost by a small margin of votes. Finally, it should be noted that during the year there was also a notable increase in the violence associated with criminal gangs operating in several cities in the country. According to some analysts, such groups are used both by the Government and by certain sectors of the opposition to intimidate dissent or to encourage unrest and instability. In fact, during the year it became known that some Government officials and police had been involved in a massacre that took place in November 2018 in the La Saline neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince, in which at least 26 people were killed. Although the number of deaths associated with these types of agents has not emerged, conflicts between rival gangs were constant and frequent throughout the year. The National Human Rights Defense Network reported that in 2019 more than 40 police officers had been killed, while in 2018 the number was 17.

The United Nations stated in early November that since 15 September alone at least 42 people had died and a further 86 had been injured in Haiti

Honduras	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, gangs cartels

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 an important degree of social and political polarisation in the country. The current phase of the crisis, which has led to mass anti-government protests and serious episodes of violence, was exacerbated after the 2017 presidential election between outgoing President Juan Orlando Hernández and Salvador Nasralla (a candidate who is politically very close to Zelaya) in which Hernández, finally re-elected by a narrow margin of votes, was accused of electoral fraud.

Anti-government protests continued throughout the year, albeit at a lower intensity than the previous year, but according to data available in early 2020 the homicide rate increased slightly, following several years of gradual decline. According to official data, which is quite similar to that provided by the Observatory of Violence of the National Autonomous University of Honduras, 3,996 homicides were recorded in 2019, 7.1% more than the previous year. These data break with the downward trend observed since 2014, when Honduras was the country with the highest homicide rate in the world (87 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants). In 2017, for example, these fell by 26% with respect to 2016, while in 2018 they fell by another 6% with respect to the previous year. However, Honduras still has one of the highest homicide rates in the world. According to the 2019 Global Study on Homicide published by the United Nations (which uses 2017 data) Honduras had the third highest rate in the world behind El Salvador and Jamaica. In 2019, the departments with the highest homicide rates were Cortés, Francisco Morazán, Olancho and Atlántida. 55% of the people killed were under 30 years old. According to the Observatory of Violence, 2019 also saw an increase in the number of massacres (62 throughout the year, significantly more than the 33 recorded in 2018) and femicides (319 women murdered between January and October, leaving a total of 5,555 since 2006). The human rights commissioner complained that 90% of femicides go unpunished.

Protests against President Hernández took place almost continuously throughout the year. Although no figures were released on the number of people killed, injured or arrested in the course of the protests, it is estimated that they were less intense than those last year, when, according to the National Human Rights Commission, 31 people died, more than 1,600 were arrested and a state of emergency was temporarily imposed. In January, coinciding with the anniversary of Hernández's inauguration, thousands of people demonstrated throughout the country demanding his resignation. However, protests increased sharply from

April onwards, after the Government approved two decrees to reform the health and education system, which, according to the opposition, opened the door to the privatisation of services and the mass dismissal of staff. Despite the Government's revocation of these decrees on 2 June, protests, clashes and riots (several buildings in the capital were burned) continued. **At the end of June, the Government deployed the Armed Forces throughout the country indefinitely to assist the Police in the maintenance of public order**. The protests escalated again in October, shortly after a United States federal court convicted the President's brother of drug trafficking and other charges. In August, this same court had accused Hernández of having received 1.5 million dollars from drug trafficking for his election campaign in the 2013 presidential elections. Faced with such a scenario, tens of thousands of people demonstrated throughout the country and the main opposition leaders, including former President Manuel Zelaya (defeated in a coup d'état) and Salvador Nasralla (Hernández's rival in the 2017 presidential elections that triggered the political crisis currently gripping the country) formed a coalition to force the President's resignation. Another factor that caused tension between the Government and the opposition during the year was the attempt to reform the criminal code, which the opposition believes could lead to harsher penalties for opponents of the Government. Despite these facts, it is also worth noting that during the year numerous negotiations were held to implement the agreements reached during the so-called National Dialogue held under the auspices of the United Nations, which ended in December 2018. Particularly noteworthy is the progress made in electoral reform (the composition of the Electoral Supreme Court, the establishment of a second round of elections, among other issues), which received technical support from the OAS.

Mexico	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, armed opposition groups

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.

According to data released by the Ministry of Public Security in early 2020, the **number of homicides in 2019 was 35,588 –slightly higher than the previous year (34,655)–, making it the most violent year since the public records on homicides began to be kept**. These data confirm an upward trend in the number of homicides in recent years, having increased dramatically since former President Felipe Calderón launched the so-called "war on drugs" at the end of 2006. According to official data, from December 2006 to April 2018, 250,547 homicides had been recorded in Mexico, so that by the end of 2019 the total number of homicides probably exceeded 300,000. The homicide rate in 2019 (27 murders per 100,000 inhabitants) also exceeded that included in the United Nations 2019 Global Study on Homicide (24.8, with data from 2017). According to this report, Mexico has the 12th highest homicide rate in the world (24.8, homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, while during Calderon's tenure it was less than 10), higher than countries such as the Philippines or Afghanistan. It should be noted that 10 of the 11 homicide rates higher than the Mexican homicide rate (all except South Africa) were from Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The data published by the Government, which generally coincide with those published by centres such as the organisation Causa en Común, also identified an increase in **other forms of violence, such as femicides (1,006 in 2019, 912 the previous year), kidnappings (from 1,559 in 2018 to 1,614 in 2019), acts of extortion (8,523, up by 29%) or people trafficking (up by 12% on the previous year)**. In absolute numbers, the states with the highest number of homicides were Guanajuato, Mexico, Michoacán, Jalisco and Baja California; while in relative terms it was Colima (107 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants), Baja California, Chihuahua, Morelos and Guanajuato. In some states, the increase in homicides on the previous year was very notable, such as in Sonora (57%), Hidalgo or Aguascalientes (32%). At national level, the homicide rate increased significantly in the first six months of the year and stabilised (though without decreasing) in the second half of the year.

In January 2020, the Government also issued a report that 61,637 people had disappeared in Mexico in the so-called "war on drugs" since 2006, a figure significantly higher than the approximately 40,000 cases acknowledged by the Government in 2018. According to the Government, some 9,000 people disappeared in that year alone. The report, based on data collected by the Attorney-General's Office, states that most disappearances were concentrated in 10 states, particularly Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Durango. During the first year of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's mandate, some 800 hidden graves were discovered containing more than 1,120 bodies, bringing the figure to 3,631 since 2006.

López Obrador began the year by stating that his National Peace and Security Plan would focus on tackling the causes of violence, emphasizing education, health and

employment issues, and distancing himself from the strictly security-led approach of his predecessors in office. As the year progressed, however, **debate centred on the creation and deployment of the National Guard, a corps of some 70,000 troops made up mainly of Army and Navy officers** led by a former general. This fact led to numerous criticisms of the Government by civil society organisations that consider that the creation of the National Guard entails the militarisation of public security in Mexico. After several debates and parliamentary procedures to ensure that the Armed Forces are able to serve in public security matters, the National Guard began its operations in May and was gradually deployed throughout the territory over the year. In spite of this, during 2019 there was an increase in conflicts both between drug cartels and between the latter and the state security forces. As proof of this, up to November, 382 police officers had died in the course of these clashes. The year also saw numerous massacres and episodes of high-intensity violence, mostly linked to rivalry between groups for the control of drug-trafficking markets and routes, fuel theft (one of the priorities of the Government during the year, which deployed thousands of military personnel to protect oil pipelines) extortion, kidnapping and even the avocado industry. Dozens of groups took part in the clashes, including the New Generation Jalisco Cartel (CJNG) and the Sinaloa Cartel. Among the episodes that generated the most media attention during the year were the killing of 19 people in August by the CJNG in Uruapán in response to the deployment of the National Guard in the region; the killing of 23 people in Guanajuato between 7 and 9 June for control of the crude oil market; the killing of 28 people at the end of August in the state of Veracruz as a settling of scores between organised crime groups; the killing of 13 policemen by the CJNG on 14 October in Michoacán; the killing of 14 cartel members on 16 October in Guerrero State; or the killing of 26 people in Ciudad Juárez in early November by the Mexicles group, in an episode of violence in which 35 vehicles were burned and several bomb threats were recorded. However, one of the episodes that had the greatest political impact during the year was the arrest by the National Guard of Ovidio Guzmán (the son of "Chapo" Guzmán, leader of the Sinaloa Cartel) in mid-October in Culiacán, the capital of Sinaloa. After the Sinaloa Cartel deployed dozens of foot soldiers in the city and eight people died in clashes between them and the state security forces, the Government decided to release Ovidio Guzmán in order to prevent a further escalation of the violence. It should also be noted that selective attacks against social leaders or journalists continued to occur throughout the year.

Nicaragua	
Intensity:	2
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.

Despite a significant decrease in the intensity of violence associated with the political and social crisis that began in April 2018, anti-government protests, clashes between demonstrators and security forces or armed pro-government groups, and constant reports of mass human rights violations, took place throughout the year. Figures on the impact and magnitude of the crisis differ significantly depending on the sources. Thus, in early October, the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights declared that between **April 2018 and the end of September 2019, 651 people had been killed, 4,922 had been injured, 516 had been kidnapped and 853 remained missing**. If these data are compared with those supplied at the end of 2018, it can be inferred that according to this association in the first nine months of 2019 some 90 people died and another 344 were injured. These figures are somewhat higher than those offered by other organisations, such as Articulación de Movimientos Sociales (belonging to the opposition platform Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco), according to which 24 opposition members were killed between January and July, particularly in the department of Jinotega. However, these figures differ significantly from those provided by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which states that between April 2018 and September 2019, 328 people died, 3 were declared missing, 130 remained in prison and more than 88,000 had left the country. According to the IACHR, the vast majority of these figures were recorded in 2018. However, the Government only acknowledged the deaths of 199 people. On the other hand, human rights organisations and bodies (such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International and several Nicaraguan organisations) **reported continuous and mass human rights violations at various times during the year, such as excessive use of force by the police, arbitrary arrests, harassment and attacks on opposition groups, disappearances, disproportionate sentences, lack of due process in trials, attacks on specific groups such as students, journalists or religious followers, etc.** At the end of the year, for example, the Permanent Commission on Human Rights stated that it had received more than 3,000 complaints of alleged human rights violations committed or encouraged by the State. In December, 70 civil society organisations denounced the systematic

violation of human rights in Nicaragua. However, on most occasions the Government considered that such information and accusations were biased or politically motivated. The Government rejected the Human Rights Council's resolution of condemnation issued in April and the report submitted by the same organisation in which they made 250 recommendations to the Government, just as it denied the entry to OAS personnel wishing to examine the situation in the country first-hand. For its part, the Government denied many of these allegations and in turn claimed to be gathering evidence on the crimes committed by certain demonstrators during the protests that it could bring to the International Court of Justice.

South America

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

Summary:
Although President Evo Morales' resignation and departure from the country at the end of 2019 were precipitated by accusations of fraud in the presidential elections held that same year, the country has been immersed in a process of political and social polarisation practically ever since former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada went into exile in the United States in 2003 following the crackdown on anti-government protests in which more than 100 people died. After a period of uncertainty during which two Presidents took power on an interim basis, Evo Morales won the elections in December 2005, becoming the country's first indigenous leader. However, his actions while in Government, especially the agrarian reform, the nationalisation of hydrocarbons and the approval of a new Constitution, were hampered by the strong opposition of several political parties and the eastern regions of the country which, led by the department of Santa Cruz, demanded greater autonomy. Alongside the political struggle between the Government and the opposition, in recent years Bolivia has faced one of the highest rates of social conflict in the continent, with protests of different kinds linked to sectoral labour demands, the activity of mining companies or the rights of indigenous peoples. The political crisis became especially acute in 2016 after the ruling party lost –by a narrow margin of votes, marking Evo Morales' first electoral defeat– a referendum on constitutional reform on whether or not to allow Evo Morales a further re-election and thus to compete in the 2019 presidential elections.

Bolivia went through the most intense political and social crisis in recent times, which resulted in the deaths of 35 people, hundreds of people injured and President Evo Morales and Vice-President Alvaro García Linera seeking political asylum in Mexico. The crisis began

Bolivia experienced the most intense political and social crisis in recent times, which resulted in the deaths of 35 people, hundreds of people being injured and political asylum being sought by Evo Morales

shortly after the preliminary results of the presidential elections were made public, in which Morales was ahead of his opponent, Carlos Mesa, by a margin that forced a second round of voting. However, after the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE) halted the scrutiny of votes for 24 hours, the distance separating the two contenders had widened significantly and exceeded the margin needed to proclaim Evo Morales the winner of the first round by a few tenths. The OAS declared that the Supreme Electoral Court's explanations for halting the scrutiny of votes were confusing and insufficient, while both Carlos Mesa and the opposition as a whole, in addition to the governments of certain countries, complained of electoral fraud. The OAS and the EU called for a repeat of the elections. Mass protests and clashes between Government supporters and opponents began in several provinces of the country the day after the elections, even before the Supreme Electoral Court officially declared Evo Morales the winner of the elections on 24 October. The protests, clashes, riots, burning of public buildings, roadblocks and blockades of cities continued and intensified in the following weeks, especially in departments such as Santa Cruz, La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, Tarija and Sucre, with a final toll of a number of deaths and many people injured. The OAS began an audit of the electoral process and its results on 31 October and submitted its preliminary report on 10 November, identifying serious irregularities and urging the Government to repeat the elections. Morales accepted the recommendation, but a few hours later, following pressure from the head of the Armed Forces, he went into exile in Mexico along with his Vice-President. Two days later, in the absence of the politicians of the ruling MAS party, the Legislative Assembly appointed the former second Vice-President of the Senate, Jeanine Áñez, as interim President of the country. It declared its intention to call new elections and to pacify the country. Following this decision, and Evo Morales' statements from Mexico describing his departure from power as a coup d'état, mass protests were held by followers of the former President in various parts of the country. The day after Áñez approved a decree exempting the Armed Forces from criminal liability in the containment of the protests, 9 protesters died in Cochabamba and another 10 in El Alto, all from gunshot wounds. Finally, in view of the criticism of the decree and the magnitude of the protests, the decree was repealed at the end of November. **The Ombudsman's Office noted that since the beginning of the crisis, but especially since the new Government took office, 35 people had died and several hundred others had been injured**. On the political front, at the end of November Parliament passed a law (supported by the party of the previous Government, MAS) which annulled the October elections, stipulated a 120-day period for the calling of new elections and established a new electoral authority for this purpose. At the same time, the new interim Government filed a criminal complaint with the Prosecutor's Office against

Morales for sedition and terrorism due to his alleged messages inciting violence. In addition, it was also revealed that the new Government intended to arraign Evo Morales before the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity due to his inciting union groups to lay siege to certain cities and impede the food supply. Morales also accused the interim Government of inciting the armed forces to violently suppress the protests. In early December, the OAS submitted a more detailed report on what it considered serious irregularities and manipulations of the vote-counting process in the October elections, concluding that a detailed analysis of the evolution of the count made it statistically unlikely that Morales would win in the first round.

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

Summary:
Although the trigger for the mass protests and numerous episodes of violence that were recorded in 2019 was the increase in the price of the metro, both analysts and the organisations that called for the protests maintain that the real causes of the social discontent that exists in the country are the political and economic model that has governed the country in recent decades. Some of the aspects of the country's political and economic governance that were criticised during the protests were the precariousness of the health and education systems, the growing privatisation of the pension system, water system or other sectors of the economy, the increase in the price of housing, medicines and public transport, the growing perception of corruption and the increase in inequality and poverty rates.

Chile experienced the most intense and widespread protests in recent decades, with a final toll of 26 deaths, 12,600 people injured and thousands of arrests, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). These figures differ slightly from those provided by the National Institute of Human Rights (INDH), which reported the same number of deaths, the hospitalisation of some 3,400 civilians, more than 220 people receiving severe eye trauma and more than 8,800 arrests. All the reports published by human rights bodies and organisations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights or the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) identified serious human rights violations committed by State security agents. By way of example, the IACHR denounced sexual violence, torture and other degrading and humiliating treatment committed during arrests of demonstrators. Similarly, in mid-November, the National Institute of Human Rights declared that it had recorded 346 lawsuits, of which 246 were linked to allegations of torture and 58 to allegations of sexual violence. At the end of October,

the Prosecutor's Office announced the commencement of 840 investigations into alleged human rights violations. Of these, 597 were filed against the National Police Force (*Carabineros*), 45 against the Army, 16 against the Investigative Police and 8 against the Navy.

The protests began after the Government announced, on 6 October, an increase in public transportation system fares, which prompted hundreds of people, mainly students, to organise to evade paying their metro fare in the capital, Santiago. Support for this measure gradually grew and, over the following days, led to the complete paralysis of the metro system and conflicts between police and protesters took place. On 18 October, the protests and unrest spread to several parts of the country and the Government imposed a state of emergency, initially in Santiago and later in 15 of the 16 regional capitals, and arranged for the deployment of military personnel to control the protests. In cities such as Santiago, Valparaiso and Coquimbo, a curfew was also decreed. **Although initially the protests were motivated by the increase in the price of public transport, as time passed the scope of the demands grew and the number of supporters increased, with the focus of the protests broadening to include the high cost of goods and services, low pensions, the economic and social policy of Sebastián Piñera's Government and criticism of the political class and democratic institutions**. At the end of October, more than a million people gathered in the capital to protest against all of these issues and also against the state crackdown, since by that time 20 people had already been killed and several hundred injured in the course of the protests and riots that took place in various parts of the country. In spite of the lifting of the state of emergency on 27 October, the dismissal of the entire Government and the submission of a package of economic reforms (pensions, health and salaries) major protests continued in November. In the middle of the month, the legislative and executive powers announced an agreement to hold a plebiscite, in April 2020, on whether or not a new Constitution should be drafted. Despite the fact that the levels of protests and violence have dropped significantly since the announcement of these measures, significant protests, roadblocks and disturbances of varying intensity continued to occur in various parts of the country until the end of the year, causing the death of at least three people.

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

Summary:
The mass protests that took place in 2019 are closely linked to the rejection by part of the population of the Government action of President Iván Duque, but also to

issues of a more structural nature relating to the political system and the economic model that has governed the country in recent decades, such as criticism of judicial corruption or impunity, or the growing perception that the high levels of economic growth that the country has experienced have not led to a reduction in inequality. Although without reaching the same size as the 2019 protests, significant sectoral protests have been recorded in recent years, such as the mass demonstrations against a higher education reform project in 2011 or the so-called National Agrarian Strike in 2013. Under Iván Duque's mandate, signs of social unrest increased, as evidenced by the holding of a popular consultation against corruption in August 2018; the so-called National University Strike between October and December 2018, which also saw clashes; the so-called "Lantern March" in January 2019, which demanded the resignation of the attorney general due to several cases of corruption and the perception of a sense of impunity regarding the murder of civil society leaders; and the recurring criticism of Duque for slowing down the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement between the Government and the FARC.

The country experienced the most important anti-government protests in recent decades, with a toll at the end of the year of 6 deaths, around 800 people injured (half of them police and half civilians) and more than 250 arrests. The protests, which took place in several parts of the country, began in late November and were very active by the end of the year. The main reasons for the protests were the rejection of the Government's economic policy and, more particularly, of several laws on tax, labour and pension reform. As the demonstrations progressed, the opposition's agenda expanded, as exemplified by the document containing thirteen demands that the so-called National Strike Committee delivered to the President, Ivan Duque, in view of the talks he had entered into with various political and social actors to contain the scope of the protests. Some of these demands include full compliance with the peace agreement between the Government and the FARC, the passing of anti-corruption laws, the implementation of commitments made by the current and previous Governments to various groups (students, indigenous people, agricultural workers, etc.) or the purging of the police force and the dissolution of the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad. The protests began on November 21 in several Colombian cities, and included roadblocks, damage to street furniture and numerous clashes between police and protesters. In the early days of the protests, the Government ordered the closure of border crossings with Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela, while the mayor of Cali decreed a curfew to prevent what he considered acts of vandalism by the protesters. In addition, Iván Duque accused certain opposition leaders of orchestrating and capitalising on the protests and criticised the fact that the protesters were using violence to achieve political aims. However, as the protests took hold and grew, the Government offered to hold talks with the country's leading social and trade union organisations. For their part, both the UN and human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch criticised the excessive use of force during the protests and demanded an investigation to determine who was responsible.

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

Summary:
Although the crisis that broke out at the end of 2019 is linked to the agreement between Lenin Moreno's Government and the IMF to reduce the public deficit through a decree that drastically cut public spending and increased tax collection, in previous decades the country had already seen numerous protests and episodes of political and social polarisation. In fact, since the late 1990s, there have been three Presidents (Abdalá Bucaram, Jamil Mahuad and Lucio Guitérrez) who have not completed their terms for political reasons. During the mandates of former President Rafael Correa (2007-2017) there were also important protests linked to the Government's management, the approval of the new Constitution in 2008 and his decision to run for a third term (the second under the new Constitution). In addition, both during Correa's tenure and those of previous Presidents, there were recurring protests and sporadic outbreaks of violence linked to the impact of certain mining and oil exploration projects on the Amazon and other parts of the country.

Ecuador experienced one of the most intense protests in recent years after tens of thousands of people throughout the country staged demonstrations of various kinds in the first half of October, following the approval of a decree which, among other issues, intended to eliminate a fuel subsidy. According to a report issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, **9 people were killed, more than 1,500 were injured and 1,382 others were arrested**. For its part, the Ombudsman's Office estimated that 11 people were killed, 1,340 were injured and 1,192 were arrested. On 1 October, President Lenin Moreno announced a decree that would introduce several tax and labour measures, including the elimination of a fuel subsidy that had been in place for more than 40 years and led to increases in gasoline prices of more than 120%. This decree was part of an agreement with the IMF reached in March which intended to reduce the fiscal deficit (through cuts in public spending and tax increases) so as to be given access to lines of credit worth more than 4.2 billion dollars. According to some analysts, the agreement with the IMF provided for the modification or elimination of programmes and policies that had led to very significant reductions in poverty and extreme poverty in recent years. Moreno's announcement provoked a strike by hauliers and protests and roadblocks throughout the country, led mainly by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and its related political movement, Pachakutik. On 3 October, in response to the outbreak in Quito of numerous riots and episodes of violence, including looting and clashes between protesters and police, the Government decreed a state of emergency, and days later ordered what the opposition labelled a curfew (the Government, however, noted that it had only restricted night-time movements around strategic

Government buildings and military and police bases). The demonstrations increased in the following days and, **faced with the mobilisation of thousands of people in the vicinity of the National Assembly and the presidential Palace, the Government moved the capital from Quito to Guayaquil**. The Government accused former President Rafael Correa and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro of orchestrating the protests with the aim of perpetrating a coup d'état, but both parties denied the accusations.

In the face of intensified protests and widespread roadblocks (affecting the Pan-American Highway and 17 of the 24 provinces), Moreno returned to Quito on 9 October and offered to hold talks with the opposition under the auspices of the United Nations and Ecuador's Episcopal Conference. Although the content of the talks was not released, on 14 October the Government withdrew decree 883 (popularly known as the "Paquetazo"), which substantially reduced the intensity of the protests. On 23 October, the CONAIE announced that it was abandoning talks with the Government because it considered that the Government was continuing its strategy of repression and harassment against indigenous leaders. It is worth noting the commencement of an investigation by the Attorney General's Office against the President of the CONAIE for mentioning the creation of his own army of indigenous movements during a public appearance. Faced with numerous complaints of repression and attacks on the press (more than 100 attacks on journalists were recorded in the first two weeks of October), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights visited the country between 21 October and 8 November. At the end of the month, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report accusing the State security forces of unnecessarily and disproportionately using the crackdown.

In early December, however, the Government criticised such a report as reflecting the opinion of the opposition only and ignoring the intensity, quantity and degree of coordination and premeditation of the episodes of violence by protesters. The Government accused the CONAIE of using urban guerrilla tactics, stating that during the protests 435 police officers were injured, 108 vehicles affected, or 45 ambulances attacked. Finally, it should be noted that at the end of November the Ombudsman's Office announced the creation of the Special Commission for Truth and Justice with the aim of assessing the complaints submitted and following up on cases of human rights violations.

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 political, social and humanitarian crisis gripping Venezuela worsened considerably during the year and at certain times there was even a risk of a military conflict

The crisis gripping Venezuela worsened and at certain times there was even a risk of a military conflict after Juan Guaidó proclaimed himself acting-President of the country and dozens of countries recognised his office

after the recently appointed President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, proclaimed himself President-elect of the country at the beginning of the year and dozens of countries (56 at the end of the year, mainly in the Americas and Europe) recognised his office. Guaidó's self-proclamation came a few days after Nicolás Maduro took office for a second six-year term, which was not recognised by many Governments because it was considered to stem from a presidential election –in May 2018– that did not meet international standards. Guaidó, who had been appointed President of the National Assembly five days before Maduro's swearing-in, cited Article 233 of the Constitution. **The United States and most Latin American countries recognised Guaidó, and the European Parliament also voted to recognise him as interim President. In contrast, countries such as China, Turkey and Russia did not.** In the days following Guaidó's self-proclamation, some 40 people were killed in the course of demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country. Subsequently, in February, several people were killed and several hundred injured in the clashes that took place as a result of attempts by the United States and the opposition to bring humanitarian aid convoys into the country, with the Government closing all border crossings with Colombia and Brazil, claiming that it was a provocation and denouncing a possible invasion of the country by the United States. As the Government itself acknowledged, some 400 members of the state security forces, mainly from the National Guard, defected and crossed the border into Colombia. However, most of the Armed Forces remained loyal to the Government. According to human rights organisations, summary executions and numerous attacks on protesters by pro-

government paramilitary groups were reported in the riots in late February. **At the end of April, Guaidó urged the Armed Forces to rebel against the Government and overthrow Maduro**. Although further defections were recorded, the Government maintained control of the situation and described the opposition's action as a coup d'état. In the days following Guaidó's appeal, the clashes between Maduro's supporters and detractors increased. For its part, the Government stepped up its crackdown on certain sectors of the opposition. During the month of May, 15 opposition parliamentarians were arrested, left the country or took refuge in the embassies of various countries. During the rest of the year, the opposition continued to report police and military repression, human rights violations and harassment of opposition politicians. According to several media outlets, both the latter situation and the attempt to bribe opposition politicians escalated at the end of the year in view of the National Assembly session in early January 2020 where a vote was to be held (as eventually took place) to extend Guaidó's presidential term for another year. The second quarter also saw continued tensions and war-like rhetoric between the Maduro Government and the United States. However, in late 2019 the United States Congress passed a law ruling out any military action in the country and instead strongly advocated political negotiations between Maduro and the opposition. Political tensions between Venezuela and the neighbouring countries of Brazil, Colombia and Peru also increased at the end of the year after Maduro accused those countries of supporting an assault on a military barracks in the state of Bolivar in which more than 100 rifles and a large amount of ammunition were stolen and in which several hostages were taken and one person was even killed. According to the Government, this military action was politically motivated and intended to attack military units in Táchira, Zulia, Barinas, Aragua, the Capital District and Sucre, although some media outlets denied this version.

The political and social crisis occurred alongside a clear deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the country. In October, the United Nations declared that **more than 4.5 million people had left the country since 2015, although the actual number was much higher because this figure did not include people who had fled the country through illegal border crossings**. In April, the United Nations warned that seven million people were in need of assistance, although some local organisations say the figure could be much higher. Some sources warned of chronic product shortages, the risk of collapse of the health system and power cuts, which were very frequent throughout the year. In mid-April, the Government reached an agreement with the International Federation of the Red Cross for the mass distribution of emergency aid. With regard to the human rights situation, there were reports of mass human rights violations throughout the year. In September, the United Nations Human Rights Council approved sending a mission to the country to investigate extrajudicial killings

and forced disappearances. Finally, it should be noted that, according to the United Nations Global Study on Homicide 2019, published in the middle of the year, which collects and analyses data from 2017, Venezuela had a rate of 57 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (the second highest in Latin America, behind El Salvador, with 62) and is clearly the Latin American country where this rate has experienced the greatest increase in recent decades, climbing from 13 in 1991 to 57 in 2017. The situation in the capital, Caracas, is particularly alarming, with a homicide rate of 122. According to the Venezuelan Violence Observatory (OVV), more than 333,000 homicides were recorded between 1999 and 2018, and the rate of impunity is 92%. According to this observatory (the only source available in the absence of official data on the matter), 23,047 homicides were recorded in 2018, making Venezuela the country with the highest homicide rate in Latin America (81.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, far above the 51 recorded in El Salvador). As for the number of protests, the Venezuelan Social Conflict Observatory (OVCS) said that in the first six months of 2019, 10,477 street protests (with mainly political and social demands) had been recorded, 97% more than in the same period of the previous year.

2.3.3. Asia 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.

The socio-political crisis in the country continued along several lines, with ISIS claiming responsibility for new incidents of violence, as well as an increase in tension which triggered violent clashes in areas along the border with Kyrgyzstan in the Ferghana Valley. On the one hand, Tajikistan was affected in 2019 by several episodes of violence that the authorities attributed to ISIS and for which the group claimed responsibility, although some analysts highlighted a lack of information, in a context of restrictions on freedom of the press, which made it difficult to verify the perpetrators of the acts. Among the incidents, a riot in a maximum security prison in the Vahdat district (near the capital) in May resulted in the deaths of 29 prisoners and three security guards. ISIS claimed responsibility for the acts in June, stating that the attackers were members of its group. According to the Ministry of the Interior of Tajikistan, 17 of the 29 dead were members of ISIS and three others were members of the Islamic Renaissance Party (PRI), a party involved in the armed conflict of the 1990s and the 1997 peace agreement, and a political party subject to institutional repression since 2015, when it was outlawed, and then designated as a terrorist organisation in 2016. The Ministry of Justice said the instigators of the riots included Gulmurod Halimov, son of Behruz Gulmurod, a former special operations colonel and police commander in Tajikistan who defected in 2015 and joined ISIS, becoming the organisation's military chief in 2016. According to the Government, other prisoners involved belonged to outlawed groups such as Jamaat Ansarullah and the Islamic Movement of Turkistan. The deadly riots were preceded by further riots in November 2018 in another high security prison in Khujand (north), also claimed by ISIS, with 25 prisoners and two security guards dead (some sources put the figure at around 50). The May riots once again led some activists to question the prison situation in the country, which is subject to serious overcrowding and allegations of torture, rulings handed down against people with no links to the violence, as well as the need for rehabilitation programmes for people convicted on charges related to terrorism and extremism.

Tensions rose again in November, when an attack was led on a border post near the Uzbekistan border. According to the authorities, some 20 ISIS fighters carried out the attack, resulting in the deaths of 15 attackers, one policeman and one border guard, with five other fighters being arrested. The authorities also claimed that the group had crossed over from Afghanistan. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and put the number of border guards killed at ten. The area was blocked to press access. Some analysts drew attention to the doubts surrounding what happened. In addition, the Government announced in April the return of more than 80 children and adolescents from Iraq, children of mothers imprisoned by the Iraqi authorities on charges of belonging to ISIS. According to the Tajik Government, some 1,900 people of Tajik nationality had joined ISIS

in Syria and Iraq, and some sources put the number of Tajik fighters currently in Afghanistan in various armed groups at around 100. On the other hand, tensions increased in the Ferghana Valley (an area between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, with numerous enclaves and disputed border sections). During the year, violent intercommunity clashes between the populations of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, involving border guards from both countries,[27] occurred around Vorukh (Tajikistan's enclave in Kyrgyzstan) the Kyrgyz region of Batken that surrounds it, and around the districts of Bobojon Ghafurov (Tajikistan) and Leylek (Kyrgyzstan). Ten violent clashes during the year resulted in several deaths and several dozen people injured. Following the July clashes, which led to Kyrgyzstan evacuating some 600 residents from the Batken region, the Presidents of both countries met in the disputed area. In the September clashes, Tajikistan denounced the deployment of some 300 Kyrgyz troops. Some analysts warned that the use of weapons by the civilian population in the clashes represented a qualitative leap compared to intercommunity border clashes in previous years.

East Asia

China (Hong Kong)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

In 1997, after more than 150 years of British rule and several years of negotiations culminating in the Sino-British Agreement in 1984, China regained sovereignty over Hong Kong under the principle of "one country, two systems". Under this principle, Beijing committed to respect (for 50 years) the institutional idiosyncrasies and self-government of the enclave, guaranteeing its status as a special administrative region and a "fundamental law" that provides for a relatively autonomous regional government with executive, legislative and judicial powers. Since then, the citizens' movement and the political parties which advocate greater democratisation and autonomy for Hong Kong and reject the interference of the Central Government in the enclave's domestic affairs have significantly increased their institutional strength, popular support and capacity for protests. Although both central and regional authorities claim to be sensitive to the demands of the majority of citizens and have sometimes put forward proposals for political reform, the scale of the protests increased significantly in the two decades following Hong Kong's handover by the United Kingdom. In the second half of 2014, hundreds of thousands of people participated in mass protests (popularly known as the Umbrella Revolution or "Occupy Central") against a series of electoral reforms proposed by Beijing. From then until the outbreak of mass protests in 2019, there were also numerous anti-government demonstrations and recurrent episodes of tension between Hong Kong citizens with different views on the political status of the region and its relationship with the rest of China.

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27. See summary on Kyrgyzstan in this chapter.

In 2019, the country experienced the most widespread and intense protests in recent decades, to the extent that some analysts maintain that the political situation in Hong Kong represents China's greatest challenge since Xi Jinping came to power. According to some accounts made public at the end of the year, two people died, some 2,600 were injured and more than 7,000 had been arrested during the protests, which began at the end of March and continued throughout the year. Indeed, at the end of March, thousands of people protested against attempts by the Hong Kong regional parliament to pass a bill amending the extradition laws and allowing, among other matters, the surrender of fugitives to Chinese jurisdiction. According to some analysts, this bill led to fears among many citizens that Hong Kong's regional autonomy could be undermined and that Beijing could use the legal coverage of the new legislation to extradite political leaders who oppose the current status quo in the region. While initially the protests revolved primarily around the withdrawal of the bill, as the protests progressed new demands were included (such as the investigation of alleged police abuse during the demonstrations and the resignation of Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam) as well as demands that had been raised by citizens in the past, such as the introduction of universal suffrage in the election of the Legislative Council or the Regional Government. Despite the protests at the end of March, Carrie Lam declared her intention to continue with the aforementioned bill, triggering renewed and more widespread protests at the end of April, when over 100,000 people gathered in the vicinity of the regional parliament.

The protests reached a turning point in June, when the Hong Kong regional Government announced the suspension of controversial amendments to extradition legislation after hundreds of thousands of people (one million according to organisers) began to hold protests which triggered the most severe violence in decades during clashes between the police and protesters and led to the closure of public buildings for several days. After Lam's announcement, hundreds of thousands of people (up to two million according to some sources) continued to protest for the complete withdrawal of the bill. On 1 July, to mark the 22nd anniversary of the United Kingdom's handover of sovereignty to China, dozens of protesters stormed the Legislative Council headquarters, while at the end of the month there were further clashes with police after several people, including passengers, were attacked at a train station. In early August a general strike forced the cancellation of some 200 flights, while days later, between 12 and 14 August, thousands of people occupied the international airport, causing more flights to be cancelled and serious clashes between protesters and the police. On 1 September, the protesters gathered at the airport again. During the month of August, public transportation was affected by the protests, and thousands of high school

and college students decided not to attend classes in order to participate in the demonstrations. Although Carrie Lam announced the definitive withdrawal of her bill, protests continued during September and even increased at the beginning of October on the occasion of the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the ban issued by the regional Government on wearing masks during mass gatherings in public places. November saw some of the most intense conflicts of the year, especially after thousands of protesters occupied several universities. The two-week police siege of the Polytechnic University, in which some 1,100 people were arrested, had a particularly strong media impact. On 24 November, district council elections were held, with a record 71% turnout, and were described by some analysts as a referendum on the protests taking place. The pro-democracy parties achieved the best result in their history, gaining control of 17 of the 18 districts in the election and tripling the number of seats (from 124 to 388), while the parties close to Beijing suffered a severe defeat and lost more than 242 seats. Protests resumed in early December, with demands that went further than the mere withdrawal of the amendments to the extradition law, and remained very active at the end of the year.

DPR Korea - USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea[28]	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia

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

After a year in which good progress in the inter-Korean and North Korean-United States negotiations on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula led to a reduction of military tensions to a minimum, tensions increased again substantially after the failure of the summit between the United States and North Korean leaders held in February. Beyond the accusations regarding blame for the

28. This international socio-political crisis relates mainly to the dispute over the North Korean nuclear programme.

stalling of the aforementioned negotiations, the military conflict and the warmongering rhetoric became evident from April onwards, coinciding with the joint military exercises historically carried out by the United States and South Korea. According to Pyongyang, these contravene the *de facto* commitment that both countries supposedly made in 2018 within the framework of the détente that took place during that year. A few days after the end of such exercises, North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles, the first since December 2017. The United States Government tried to minimise such launches by assuring that they did not imply a violation of the commitments adopted by Pyongyang in 2018 (which according to Washington only affected nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests), but at the same time it criticised such launches because it considered that they did imply a clear violation of several resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. The North Korean Government continued to carry out short-range missile launches in July, August, October and November. At the end of the year, several media outlets even speculated on the possibility that North Korea had tested a new type of missile capable of being fired from submarines. Tensions were especially high in August, coinciding with the new joint military exercises that the United States and South Korea carried out during practically the entire month and in the month of November, with the presentation of South Korea's new defence strategy, which foresees a substantial increase in South Korean military expenditure. In November, despite the fact that the United States and South Korea agreed to postpone the military exercises scheduled for the beginning of the month in order to resume talks between the United States and North Korea, which have been stalled since February, the North Korean armed forces fired several artillery shells near the disputed maritime border in the direction of South Korea. In parallel with these actions, at various times during the year the North Korean Government warned about the possibility of resuming the testing of its nuclear and ballistic missile programme if there was no significant change in the United States negotiating strategy by the end of 2019. Finally, it is also worth noting the military incident that took place in July, when the South Korean Air Force fired hundreds of warning shots at Russian planes patrolling the region along with Chinese planes, which, according to Seoul, had violated their airspace by flying over the Dokdo Islands (East Sea or Sea of Japan).

South Asia

Bangladesh	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	Government (Awami League), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami), International Crimes Tribunal, armed groups (Ansar-al-Islam, 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 loosing party, leading to governments that have never met the country's main challenges such as poverty, corruption or the low quality of democracy, and have always given it to one-sided interests. In 2008, the AL came to power after a two-year period dominated by a military interim Government was unsuccessful in its attempt to end the political crisis that had led the country into a spiral of violence during the previous months and that even led to the imprisonment of the leaders of both parties. The call for elections in 2014 in a very fragile political context and with a strong opposition from the BNP to the reforms undertaken by the AL such as eliminating the interim Government to supervise electoral processes led to a serious and violent political crisis in 2013. Alongside this, the establishment of a tribunal to judge crimes committed during the 1971 war, used by the Government to end with the Islamist opposition, especially with the party Jamaat-e-Islami, worsened the situation in the country.

Tensions in the country around various issues remained, although the levels of violence decreased compared to previous years. The first flashpoint was the elections. Following the announcement of the results of the parliamentary elections held on 30 December 2018, which gave victory to the ruling Awami League party, which won 288 of the 300 seats, there followed accusations of electoral fraud by the opposition, particularly by the BNP party. In addition, international actors such as the EU, the United States and the United Kingdom expressed concern about possible electoral fraud. In March, local elections were held under a climate of violence. At least seven people died in episodes of violence linked to the electoral process. In addition, the elections were boycotted by the main opposition party, BNP, and there were clashes between members of this political force and the governing party. The various elections left the governing party with almost total control of the country's many institutions. At the same time, tensions between the Government and BNP continued over the imprisonment of opposition leader and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who had to be transferred from prison to hospital and whose release continued to be demanded by BNP. The second source of tension was the Government's counter-insurgency strategy, which intensified after the attacks in Sri Lanka. The security forces carried out numerous arrests during the year of persons accused of belonging to different armed organisations of an Islamic nature and certain clashes and actions by armed groups were recorded. The Government noted that ISIS did not have a significant presence in the country, but the armed organisation disseminated messages and videos of support from Bangladeshi insurgents on several occasions. It should be noted that the regional political situation also had an impact on the Bangladeshi crisis. Firstly, the humanitarian crisis of the Rohingya refugee population

in Bangladesh entering from Myanmar remained unresolved. Attempts to return the Rohingya population to Myanmar failed, and there was a worrying increase in rhetoric that sought to link the Rohingya community to the Islamist insurgency. On the other hand, the adoption in India of legislation that gave people from Bangladesh who professed religions other than Islam access to Indian nationality deteriorated relations between the two countries.[29]

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

Summary:
In May 2014, the Hindu nationalist party BJP won the elections and took over the country's Government, led by Narendra Modi as prime minister. In 2019, Modi repeated his election victory. Since then, the Government has promoted a Hindu nationalist governance programme accompanied by discriminatory rhetoric, measures and policies against the Muslim population. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India had increased in previous decades, especially following the serious violence in Gujarat in 2000, when a train carrying Hindu pilgrims caught fire and 58 people were killed, and violent riots broke out, killing nearly 800 Muslims and more than 250 Hindus (although civil society organisations claim the numbers were much higher). Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat and a member of the ultra-nationalist Hindu organisation RSS, was accused of collusion and even incitement to violence against the Muslim population. In 2019, the Modi Government adopted several measures considered to be highly detrimental to the Muslim community, including the withdrawal of the special autonomy and statehood status from Jammu and Kashmir; the National Register of Citizens in Assam, which excluded two million Muslims from Indian citizenship; and the adoption of the Citizenship Act, excluding Muslims from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh from being granted Indian citizenship.

India was the scene of intense social protests in December after parliament approved the Citizenship Act, which caused an enormous social controversy by establishing that the population migrating to the country from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who were Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains or Parsis could be granted Indian citizenship, but excluded the Muslim population. The protests, involving hundreds of thousands of people, began in the north-eastern state of Assam and spread to other states.[30] The protests were led by sectors of civil society that pointed to the discriminatory nature of the legislation against the Muslim population, noting that it was a violation of the secular nature of the Indian Constitution. The Act was also met with rejection by large sections of the

population of Assam, who oppose the nationalisation of the immigrant population from Bangladesh, pointing out that it seriously jeopardises the fragile demographic balance of north-east India. The protests were particularly intense in the state of Uttar Pradesh (20% of the population of this state is Muslim) where **at least 19 people were killed in clashes with the police**. Five other people were killed in Assam after being shot by security forces in different demonstrations. In addition, there were thousands of arrests. The protests escalated after police carried out a violent operation against students demonstrating at Jamia Millia Islamia University in Delhi, arresting more than 100 people, and Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh, where dozens of arrests were also made. The Government imposed a state of emergency on large areas of the capital. In addition, it was announced that a National Register of Citizens would be implemented, similar to the one in Assam, which received enormous amounts of criticism from human rights organisations, who highlighted the serious discrimination it had provoked against the Muslim population.

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.

The armed activity of insurgent groups in Assam was significantly reduced, and by the end of the year there was speculation that an agreement would be signed between the Government and many of the insurgent organisations still active in the state. According to figures provided by the South Asia Terrorism Portal

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29. See the summary on India and India (Assam) in this chapter.
30. See summary on India (Assam) in this chapter.

research centre, two insurgents were killed during 2019 as a result of the conflict. One of the most serious acts of violence occurred in May, when a grenade explosion –in an attack claimed by the armed group ULFA(I)– injured six people. Subsequently, the leadership of the armed group stated that they would not use bombs in public places, after several civilians were injured in the attack. In addition, during the year several insurgent leaders turned themselves in to the police and there was speculation that the commander in chief, Paresh Baruah, had lost contact with the group's members. The situation is said to have worsened for the armed group following an operation launched by the Myanmar Armed Forces against the Naga NSCN-K armed group in Taga, an area where other armed groups operating in India are also based, including the ULFA(I) and the NDFB-S. In this operation the leader of the ULFA-I Jyotirmoy Asom was allegedly killed. At the end of the year, the Indian Government extended the ban on the ULFA (including all its factions) for a period of five years.

At the same time, **the crisis was worsened by the adoption in December of the Citizenship Act** which established that Indian citizenship would be granted to immigrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who were Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains or Parsis, but excluded the Muslim population. **The approval of this legislation led to intense social protests that later spread to the rest of the country**.[31] Assam had already been the scene of numerous protests on the issue of citizenship, with significant social tensions between the indigenous population of Assam and people of Bangladeshi origin, due to the fragile demographic balance of the state and the fear of nationalisation of migrants from Bangladesh. This was compounded by protests from human rights organisations and the Muslim population who pointed out that the legislation was clearly discriminatory and Islamophobic. In fact, two million people were excluded from the National Register of Citizens, after 33 million people had to prove their nationality over the past four years in order to be included in the register. This left out many people who lacked the necessary documentation to complete the bureaucratic procedures under which the new legislation demanded their nationality. Assamese organisations noted that, faced with demands for a ban on illegal immigration by some sectors of Assamese society, the Indian Government is using the religious issue as a legal instrument regardless of the religion professed by the immigrant population. **At least five people were shot dead by police during protest demonstrations despite the Government's curfew, and hundreds were arrested.**

At least five people were killed in the Indian state of Assam in the Citizenship Act protests, which spread to the rest of the country

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.

Relations between India and Pakistan seriously deteriorated during the year as a result of various episodes of violence in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which has been the subject of a dispute between the two countries ever since independence and partition in 1947. Around one hundred people died as a result of various acts of violence in the dispute between the two countries. A serious attack in February that killed 45 Indian soldiers led to accusations of Pakistani complicity with the events by the Indian Government and led to an escalation of military and diplomatic tensions between the two countries. The Indian Air Force said it had carried out pre-emptive air strikes against a Jaish-e-Mohammad training camp on Pakistani territory, a claim denied by Pakistan. In turn, the Pakistani Government announced the capture of an Indian military pilot (who was later released in what Pakistan described as a "gesture of goodwill") and the shooting down of Indian planes on Pakistani territory, while the Indian Government alleged the shooting down of another Pakistani plane on Indian territory. In addition, the Indian Government threatened to cut the flow of rivers that run into the Indus, endangering the continuity of the Indus River Treaty between the two countries, which guarantees the distribution of water resources,

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31. See summary on India in this chapter.

indispensable for the survival of the population and the local economy, which is essentially agricultural. In March, the tension eased slightly with the return of the high commissioners of each country to their respective embassies. In addition, a joint technical meeting was held to facilitate the movement of Sikh pilgrims from India visiting holy sites in Pakistan, although the Indian Government noted that this was not a resumption of bilateral talks. **In August, tensions seriously escalated with the withdrawal of the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir.**[32] This situation led the UN Security Council, at the proposal of China (echoing a historic demand of Pakistan), to hold a closed-door meeting in August on the situation in Kashmir –the first in decades. Although no joint statement was agreed, several diplomats called on the parties to limit any unilateral actions in response to the crisis as much as possible. A further meeting was to be held in December, also at the request of China, but was postponed as the United Nations mission on the ground failed to submit its report. Armed clashes between the two armies on the Line of Control (the *de facto* border between India and Pakistan) resulted in the deaths of some 50 people throughout the year, mostly soldiers. Calls for talks throughout the year failed to materialise and in September, in a speech to the United Nations, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan warned India that its actions could lead to a new war.

Violence in Jammu and Kashmir led to increased tensions between India and Pakistan, raising fears of a renewed armed conflict between the two countries

Sri Lanka	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, Tamil political parties and social organisations, armed group National Towheed Jamaat (NTJ)

Summary:
In 1983, the armed Tamil opposition group known as the LTTE began an armed conflict that ravaged Sri Lanka for almost three decades. The increasing marginalisation of the Tamil population by the Government, which was mainly composed of Sinhalese elites, following the decolonisation of the island in 1948, led the armed group to call for the creation of an independent Tamil State using armed means. From 1983 on, every phase of the conflict ended with a failed peace process. In 2002, Norwegian-brokered peace negotiations were commenced after a ceasefire agreement was signed, the failure of which led to the resumption of the armed conflict with great intensity in 2006. In May 2009, the Armed Forces defeated the LTTE militarily and recovered all of the country's territory after killing the leader of the armed group, Velupillai Prabhakaran. In the years that followed, thousands of Tamils remained displaced and took no steps towards reconciliation. In addition, the Government refused to investigate war crimes during the

armed conflict, denying that such crimes had been committed. However, in 2015 the presidential and parliamentary elections resulted in the formation of a new Government, which led to the implementation of a number of political reforms and tentative progress in the investigation of crimes during the armed conflict.

The situation in Sri Lanka deteriorated dramatically and was the scene of a very severe episode of violence. More than 320 people were killed (mostly locals, but also at least 40 foreigners) and 500 were injured in several simultaneous attacks on Easter Sunday in churches around the capital city of Colombo and Batticaloa, as well as at three luxury hotels in Colombo. The attacks were committed by a previously unknown Islamist group, the National Towheed Jamaat (NTJ), with ISIS claiming responsibility, and constitute the deadliest attacks abroad and the most severe episode of violence in Sri Lanka since the end of the armed conflict in 2009. More than 1,800 Muslims were arrested after the attack and at least 15 people, including 6 minors, were killed in one of the police raids as a result of clashes with the police and the detonation of explosives by suicide bombers. Subsequent parliamentary inquiries identified serious security breaches on the part of the Sri Lankan authorities, since the head of the intelligence services had allegedly received information about the high risk of attack prior to the events and did not provide an adequate response to these threats. In addition, the head of the attacks, extremist preacher Mohamed Zahran, had been investigated by the intelligence services prior to the attacks. The chief of police and the former secretary of defence were arrested for negligence and failure to prevent the attacks. The attacks were followed by several episodes of violence against the Muslim community in the country, including attacks on mosques and businesses owned by Muslims.

On the political front, presidential elections were held in November, with the SLPP candidate, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, brother of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, winning by a large majority. Gotabaya served as Secretary of Defence from 2005 to 2015 and was the head of the Armed Forces during the final years of the armed conflict and during the military operations that brought the conflict and the armed group LTTE to an end in 2009, with accusations of serious human rights violations and war crimes (such as the intentional bombing of civilians, hospitals and humanitarian centres) against the Tamil civilian population being levelled at the army. Following his election, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe of the opposition UNP party resigned, leading to the inauguration of Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister. The return of the Rajapaksa clan to government control of the country increased concern among broad sectors of civil society and human rights organisations, as well as certain third-party countries.

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32. See summary on India (Jammu and Kashmir) in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

Gotabaya had announced during the election campaign that he would not continue the Sri Lankan Executive's commitments to the UN Human Rights Council on reconciliation and accountability for human rights violations during the armed conflict. On the other hand, prior to the configuration of the new Government, the appointment of General Shavendra Silva as commander of the armed forces had been condemned by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, due to his involvement in human rights violations during the armed conflict

In Sri Lanka, the election victory of Gotabaya Rajapaksa increased the concern of human rights organisations regarding the lack of accountability for human rights violations during the armed conflict

Southeast Asia and Oceania

Indonesia (West Papua)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, OPM armed group, political and social opposition, 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.

Clashes between the armed opposition group the OPM and the Armed Forces as well as protests and unrest in the Papua region (administratively divided into the provinces of Papua and West Papua) increased dramatically, with the final result of tens of people killed and tens of thousands forcibly displaced. As regards the clashes between the OPM and the Armed Forces, violence in Nduga district (and surrounding regions such as Puncak, Puncak Jaya or Lanny Jaya) have increased exponentially since December 2018, after 17 people were killed by the OPM in a single attack. This action, the largest in the region in recent years in Papua, led to the start of a counter-insurgency campaign by the Armed Forces and the Police with air strikes and heavy artillery that resulted in the deaths of some 20 civilians and an undetermined number of combatants and soldiers. The mortality rate associated with the conflict in 2019 has not been established,

but according to information published in the press, around 30 soldiers and combatants could have died in the course of the aforementioned clashes. In addition, in October a network of local NGOs reported that 189 people who had left their homes due to the violence had died between early December 2018 and October 2019, mainly from disease and malnutrition. A report issued by local authorities in Nduga district in April noted that more than 20,000 people had left their homes due to the violence, although some NGOs put the figure at more than 32,000 and the Government reduced it to about 3,500. Although by the end of 2018 the Armed Forces had already been accused of numerous human rights violations, including the use of white phosphorus, such accusations continued throughout the year. In January, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, stated that she had requested permission to visit the region and conduct an investigation into these allegations. In March, a representative of the National Committee for West Papua stated before the UN Human Rights Council that the Armed Forces were committing numerous human rights violations in Papua, mainly directed against the Papuan population.

With regard to the protests linked to the political conflict in Papua, most notable were those that took place in August and September. In August, at least 10 people were killed in Jayapura and Deiyai district as a result of protests in more than 30 cities across Indonesia, after Papuan students were attacked and harassed in Surabaya and Malang on August 17, Indonesia's Independence Day. Dozens of people were arrested in connection with these incidents, which prompted the Government to deploy thousands of police and military personnel to the regions most affected by the protests, such as Manokwari, Sorong, Timika and Wamena. In some of these cities, several buildings were set on fire. **September saw the most intense spiral of violence of the year, when 43 people (33 according to Human Rights Watch) were killed in the city of Wamena and several others in cities such as Jayapura**. The incidents began after a group of Papuan university students were attacked in their residence (one died and two others were injured) and days later a school teacher made racist insults against a Papuan student in the same city of Wamena. By the end of September, dozens of people had been killed and more than 16,000 had left the city (according to Government figures) as a result of the spiral of violence that mainly affected people coming from other parts of Indonesia. Following these incidents, in which numerous public buildings, shops and vehicles were set on fire, some analysts warned that Islamist organisations in Indonesia had called for the defence of the non-Papuan Muslim population living in the Papuan region, thus exacerbating the risk of community or religious clashes. In Jayapura, where four people were killed, and in other cities, incidents

of violence were also reported. At the end of the year, on the occasion of Papua's Independence Day, dozens of people were arrested as part of the mobilisations to commemorate the event. **On the political front, it is worth noting that in October, following the above-mentioned spiral of violence, President Widodo visited the Papuan region and indicated his willingness to meet with the leaders of the Papuan secessionist movement**, mainly the United Liberation Movement of West Papua, which had previously called for such talks to be facilitated and observed internationally. In April, a group of lawyers asked the Supreme Court to review the legality of the 1969 referendum after which Indonesia annexed the Papua region and which several human rights organisations said did not meet the minimum standards of transparency, despite being organised and supervised by the United Nations.

2.3.4. Europe

Russia and the Caucasus

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 around the ceasefire line improved significantly, in keeping with developments at the end of 2018, and in contrast to previous years, with lower levels of tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to the ACLED database, in 2019 there were about 15 conflict-related deaths (down from about 50 the previous year) and several people injured. The victims, members of the security forces of both countries, were caused by violations of the ceasefire around the militarised Line of Contact. During the year, the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan committed to strengthening the ceasefire

and the direct communication mechanism adopted in 2018 to facilitate the prevention of incidents. However, there was no commitment yet to a practical arrangement for the expansion of the limited OSCE observer team monitoring the ceasefire. At some points during the year, there were increases in security incidents, such as in June, which led the co-mediators to urge the parties to refrain from provocative actions, including the use of snipers. In the midst of the arms race that still affects the region (military spending of 4.8% of GDP in 2018 in Armenia, 3.8% in 2017; 3.8% in Azerbaijan, the same as in 2017), both countries carried out military exercises, and levelled mutual criticism against one another. Within such exercises, in March Azerbaijan mobilised 10,000 troops, 500 tanks and 300 missile systems, among other military equipment, in large-scale exercises over five days, shortly before the March summit between Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders, which drew criticism from the Armenian Government.

On the other hand, political tension increased at times during visits to Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenian political officials, such as the trip in February by the Director of the National Security Service, who expressed support for new Armenian settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh, a policy strongly criticised by Azerbaijan due to the difficulties that it creates for an eventual agreement on the status of the territory and for the return of the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh displaced by the war. The August visit of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian to Nagorno-Karabakh, in which Pashinian claimed that Nagorno-Karabakh was an Armenian region, also triggered criticism from Azerbaijan. For his part, Azerbaijani President Ilhan Aliyev stated in November that Nagorno-Karabakh had always been Azerbaijani territory and accused Armenia of genocide during the war. On the other hand, Nagorno-Karabakh held local elections in September, without international recognition. Relations between the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Government of Armenia also deteriorated.

Russia (North Caucasus)[33]	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Type:	System, Identity, Government Internal
Main parties:	Russian Federal Government, Governments of the republics of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)

Summary:
The North Caucasus is the scene of several hotbeds of tension, in the form of conflict between federal and local security forces, on the one hand, and jihadi insurgent actors, on the other. The violence is the result of a combination of factors, including the regionalisation and Islamisation

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33. In previous editions of this report, Russia (Dagestan) and Russia (Chechnya) socio-political crises were analysed separately.

of the insurgency in Chechnya (a republic that was the setting for two wars, between 1994-1996 and between 1999 and the beginning of the 21st century) as well as the impact of policies persecuting Salafist Islam adherents, serious human rights violations, deficits in governance and social unrest. Over the years, local armed structures were established in republics such as Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, connected regionally through the so-called Caucasus Emirate. From the end of 2014, several commanders in the North Caucasus proclaimed their loyalty to ISIS, breaking away from the Caucasus Emirate and establishing a Caucasian branch linked to ISIS (Vilayat Kavkaz). In addition, part of the insurgency moved to Syria and Iraq, joining various armed groups. The levels of violence have fluctuated in the various republics (being considered an armed conflict in the case of Dagestan between 2010 and 2017), while in the North Caucasus as a whole, armed violence has subsided in recent years. In addition to the armed violence, other flashpoints include serious human rights violations, especially against activists, human rights defenders and independent journalists, as well as disputes over borders, inter-ethnic tensions, rivalries for political power and criminal violence.

The North Caucasus continued to be affected by multiple flashpoints, including armed conflict between the security forces and the ISIS-linked insurgency, with a decrease in fatalities compared to previous years. Security forces carried out numerous counter-insurgency operations in the region and imposed counter-terrorism measures, while the insurgency perpetrated various attacks, including attacks against police posts. The death toll was around 30 between January and November, according to the independent website Caucasian Knot. Unlike in previous years, when Dagestan was the republic that recorded the highest number of deaths, in 2019 Kabardino-Balkaria was the most affected in terms of fatalities, with a dozen deaths, almost all of them members of the regional insurgency. It was followed by Dagestan, with a dozen insurgents killed; and Chechnya, with eight fatalities. Half were insurgents and half were members of the security forces. In other areas, such as Ingushetia and the Stavropol region, there were also deaths and people were injured. ISIS claimed responsibility for several attacks, including against several policemen in the Chechen capital in June and against a police post in July in the Achkhoi-Martan district of Chechnya, which resulted in several deaths and people injured. The Russian authorities arrested several people on charges of belonging to ISIS and planning attacks. In turn, a former Chechen commander from the second Chechen war, Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, was killed in Berlin in August. Sources close to the victim pointed to a connection between his death and the Russian security services. Furthermore, in November the head of Ingushetia's Centre for Combating Extremism was assassinated in Moscow, an attack that some media outlets attributed to a conflict between the victim and elements close to Sheikh Batal-Khadji, one of whose leaders was killed in 2018.

On the other hand, **the region continued to be affected by serious human rights violations, including torture, arbitrary detentions and kidnappings, with new allegations of abuse emerging in 2019**. In March the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture condemned the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment against detainees in Chechnya. Similarly, the Russian organisation LGBT Network reported in January on arrests and torture by the Chechen authorities against gay men and lesbian women, with figures of 40 arrested and two people killed. In addition, the director of the Chechen branch of the human rights organisation Memorial, Oyub Titiyev, was released in June after 18 months in prison. He was sentenced in March to four years in prison on trumped-up charges denounced by human rights organisations. Furthermore, political and social tension increased around the 2018 agreement between Chechnya and Ingushetia to outline the border. Thousands of Ingush citizens protested in March, demanding a referendum on the agreement and the resignation of Ingush President Ynus-Bek Yevkurov, with several people injured in clashes with security forces, raids and arrests. Yevkurov resigned in June. Parallel negotiations between Chechnya and Dagestan for the demarcation of their border were also affected by tensions in Ingushetia and protests in Dagestan, and both authorities announced the suspension of the process in April. There were also social tensions in Dagestan over the protests in Meusisha against the construction of a new canal, with several people injured in clashes with the police and the federal security service. Moreover, the conflict situation in the North Caucasus took place against a general background of political and social tensions in Russia in 2019 surrounding the September local elections, with mass protests in July and August in Moscow and large-scale arrests.

South-east Europe

Serbia – Kosovo	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Government International[34]
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

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34. The socio-political crisis between Kosovo and Serbia is considered "international" since although its international legal status remains unclear, Kosovo has been recognized as a State by more than a hundred of countries.

of Serbia within the Yugoslav federation. The NATO offensive, unauthorised by the UN, paved the way for the establishment of an international protectorate. In practice, Kosovo was divided along ethnic lines, with an increase in hostilities against the Serb community, whose isolationism was in turn fostered by Serbia. The territory's final status and the rights of minorities have remained a constant source of tension, in addition to Kosovo's internal problems, such as unemployment, corruption and criminality. The process of determining this final status, which began in 2006, failed to achieve an agreement between the parties or backing from the UN Security Council for the proposal put forward by the UN special envoy. In 2008, Kosovo's Parliament proclaimed the independence of the territory, which was rejected by the Serbian population of Kosovo and by Serbia.

Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo remained high, following the stalling of talks and with Serbia placing its army on combat alert along the border, while political instability increased in Kosovo. In 2019, Kosovo maintained in force the application of 100% tariffs on the import of products from Serbia. This measure, taken in 2018 in protest against Serbia's campaign against the international recognition of Kosovo, triggered in late 2018 an increase in tensions between them, the suspension of negotiations, as well as the resignation of the Kosovo Serb mayors of the four Serb-majority towns in northern Kosovo, creating a power vacuum. The maintenance of tariffs in 2019 deepened the dispute between Kosovo and Serbia and between Kosovo and the Serbian areas of Kosovo. The Kosovar authorities called extraordinary municipal elections to be held in northern Kosovo on 19 May. The refusal of the Central Election Commission in April to validate the candidatures of the Kosovo Serb party "The Serb List" drew criticism from those affected and from the Government of Serbia, and the measure was eventually revoked. The Serb List obtained 90% of the votes in the four Kosovar municipalities with a Serbian majority. In July, Kosovo Serb businesses in the four municipalities went on a two-day strike to protest against the tariffs. In turn, Kosovar Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj dismissed Serbian Local Government Administration Minister Ivan Todosijevic in April after he described the Kosovar Albanian population as terrorists and accused them of filing false war crimes complaints.

Tensions between Kosovo and Serbia also increased following an operation in May by Kosovo police against smuggling and organised crime in several areas of northern Kosovo, which resulted in 29 arrests, including 19 local police and two officials from the UN mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, in which a dozen people, including ten civilians, were injured. In response, **the Government of Serbia claimed that the operation was designed to intimidate the Serbian population in northern Kosovo and that it constituted a threat to stability and peace**. **In addition, it ordered the Serbian Army troops along the border to place themselves on combat alert** to protect the Serbian population if tensions escalated. The Serbian

Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo remained high, against the backdrop of the cancelled bilateral talks and political instability in Kosovo

President warned that if there was an escalation of the conflict or an attack against the Serbian population, the Serbian state would be victorious. The Kosovar President urged the Kosovar Serb population to remain calm and support the police. For its part, the NATO mission in Kosovo, KFOR, called for calm and said it was closely monitoring the situation. The UN noted that the arrest of the two UNMIK officials (who were later released) did not respect their immunity and announced an investigation into the events. Tensions remained high in the following months. It was revealed that the Kosovo Police allegedly refused to allow entry into Kosovo by persons holding Serbian passports. Serbia's Defence Minister complained in July that the Kosovar authorities had prevented him from entering Kosovo. The Kosovar Government denied that there was ever any ban in place.

Political uncertainty also increased in Kosovo. **Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj resigned in July after being summoned by the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, bodies of the international judicial system of Kosovo, based in The Hague, which investigate crimes against humanity, war crimes** and other crimes committed in the period of the armed conflict, between 1998 and 2000, in relation to allegations contained in a Council of Europe report on crimes perpetrated by Kosovo Albanian KLA guerrillas. From 2018 until November 2019, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office had summoned around one hundred former combatants for interrogation, including Haradinaj. The coalition in Government rejected the appointment of a new prime minister, leading to the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of early elections in October. The Kosovo Albanian nationalist party Vetevendosje (Self-determination) won with 26% of the vote. Half of the polling stations in Kosovo were ordered to be recounted and more than 3,700 votes cast in Serbia were declared invalid. The results were a turning point in the political map of Kosovo, with the KDP being excluded from the Government for the first time since Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008.

Western Europe

Spain (Catalonia)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government of Spain, Government of Catalonia, political, social and judicial actors in Catalonia and Spain, Head of State

Summary:
In its current phase the conflict over the status of Catalonia centres around the clash between, on the one hand, the

aspirations for Catalan independence held by a large section of population, including political and social actors, within Catalonia and, on the other hand, the defence by the Spanish State and another large section of population, including political and social actors, within both Spain and Catalonia of Spain's territorial integrity and –to varying degrees– their defence of national unity, Spanish national sovereignty and/ or the interpretation that the current regulatory framework prohibits Catalonia from exercising self-determination. Accordingly, the conflict is active at various levels, mainly between actors in Catalonia and Spain and within Catalonia, and also has international ramifications. There are different narratives and interpretations surrounding the origins and causes of the problem, as well as its evolution and possible solutions. Among other elements, the right to self-determination and the defence of Spain's territorial integrity have been invoked, appeals have been made to long-standing grievances in areas such as resources, competencies and recognition of the identity and nation, as well as the diverse range of aspirations within Catalonia and the limits of legality. The independence movement grew in political and social strength from 2012 onwards, two years after the Constitutional Court's ruling that restricted Catalonia's new Statute of Autonomy –which had been approved in 2005 by all the political forces of the Catalan Parliament (except the Popular Party), was restricted by the Spanish Congress and subsequently ratified in a Catalan referendum (2006) where it received 74% of the vote (49% voter turnout)– all against a backdrop of economic crisis, cuts in rights and public spending, and social upheaval. This was the beginning of what has been called the "sovereignty process", with political and social actions being undertaken by multiple actors with a view to exercising self-determination and achieving independence, who in turn were questioned and/or persecuted by other actors from political and judicial spheres in Catalonia and Spain. These actions included a popular consultation held on 9 October 2014, in which 2.3 million people participated and 80.76% of them voted in favour of Catalonia becoming an independent state. In the Catalan parliamentary elections of 2015, which was taken to be a plebiscite by the pro-independence parties, the latter obtained 47.74% of the votes and a parliamentary majority (72 of 135 seats). In 2017 tensions escalated following a succession of events, including the approval in the Catalan Parliament of the laws on the self-determination referendum and on the legal transition in an expedited procedure which the opposition denounced with claims that its rights and statutory and constitutional legality had been violated –leading to the majority of the opposition consequently abstaining from the vote; the holding of a referendum on 1 October (43% voter turnout, with 90% voting in favour of independence) which had previously been blocked by the Constitutional Court, and baton charges by police against peaceful participants, a thousand people injured and the closure of 14% of the polling stations, according to the Catalan government; the acceptance of the result in favour of independence and the suspension of independence by the Catalan President himself on 10 October, and a declaration of the creation of an independent republic on the same day by the pro-independence parties; the declaration of the creation of a Catalan republic and the start of a constitutional process approved by the Catalan Parliament on 27 October (70 votes in favour, 10 against, 2 abstentions and 53 absences); the application of article 155 of the Constitution, through which the State Government took control of the autonomous region of Catalonia; the preventive imprisonment and the commencement of a large-scale judicial process against Catalan social and political leaders, which culminated in October 2019 with heavy prison sentences. In recent years, there have also been other legal proceedings brought against

politicians, police officials and activists, in a trend that has seen the judicialisation of the political dispute in a context that has prompted some political leaders –including the then President of the Catalan government Carles Puigdemont– to leave Spain, many of whom have been living abroad ever since. Figures abroad, such as Puigdemont, have promoted the internationalisation of the conflict, including through the creation of the so-called Council for the Catalan Republic. The conflict has led to political tensions and the paralysis of the government, the polarisation of society and the media, as well as protests of various kinds. On the other hand, between 2018 and 2019 the Spanish and Catalan governments attempted to hold talks, which included the Pedralbes Declaration (2018), although they faced many obstacles.

Tensions surrounding the dispute over the status of Catalonia increased, mainly due to the sentencing of pro-independence political and civil society leaders, which widened the divide between State institutions, the Government and political parties at national level, on the one hand, and a large political and social section of the population in Catalonia, on the other. The crisis in 2019 was felt in various areas, including the judiciary, civil society, politics and the media in both Catalonia and Spain and, as in previous years, also had an international impact. In the legal sphere, the judicialisation of the dispute in previous years led to the handing down of a judgment in the so-called "trial of the sovereignty process", concerning the events that took place in Catalonia around the referendum date of 1 October, after the oral phase had been completed between February and June 2019. The Supreme Court handed down its judgment on 14 October, sentencing the two pro-independence civil society leaders Jordi Cuixart (President of Òmnium Cultural) and Jordi Sànchez (President of the Catalan National Assembly, ANC) as well as six members of the dismissed Catalan government who facilitated the consultation (Oriol Junqueras, Jordi Turull, Dolors Bassa, Raül Romeva, Joaquim Forn, Josep Rull) and the then President of the Parliament (Carme Forcadell) to between 9 and 13 years in prison and full disqualification from holding public office for the crimes of sedition –and in some cases also for embezzlement. Three former members of the Catalan government (Meritxell Borràs, Santi Vila and Carles Mundó) were issued fines for disobedience and were disqualified from holding public office for 1 year and 8 months. The ruling caused a shockwave within the independence movement and other sections of Catalan society who opposed the judicialisation of the dispute, which increased political and social tensions in the final quarter of the year. It triggered numerous protests in many Catalan towns, including a mass march to Barcelona airport on the same day of the ruling, organised by the Tsunami Democràtic platform – which caused the cancellation of 110 of the 780 flights scheduled that day, according to Aena– as well as mass marches lasting several days from various locations (Berga, Castelldefels, Girona, Tarragona, Tàrrega and Vic), all of which converged on Barcelona on 18 October in a mass protest on a day when some unions also called for a general strike in Catalonia. There were also several

nights of riots in the cities of Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida and Girona, with participants claiming various motives, according to press reports. Human rights organisations reported excessive use of force during police baton charges and other actions that contributed to increasing the tension, both by the National Police and the Mossos d'Esquadra (the regional police of Catalonia). The Ministry of the Interior put the number of people arrested in the first seven days of the protests at around 200, and the number of injured at 600, of whom –according to the same sources– 289 were police officers. Several people were seriously injured, including a young man who was run over by a Mossos d'Esquadra van and several civilians who lost the sight in one eye. 70 journalists were injured, 69% of them as a result of police actions, according to the media observatory Mèdia.cat. The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, expressed concern regarding numerous reports of attacks on journalists, by demonstrators and police officers, and regarding the insecurity faced by journalists covering the conflict, as well as the allegations of the disproportionate use of force and inappropriate use of riot gear. The Commissioner strongly condemned the violent attacks and acts of vandalism and at the same time urged the Spanish authorities to reconsider the use of rubber and foam bullets. In the final months of the year, new protests were held. Among them, in November, several thousand demonstrators who had been called to protest by Tsunami Democràtic cut off the AP-7 motorway in La Jonquera and blocked the border crossing with France for 24 hours, in rejection of the ruling and appealing to the international community to pressure the Spanish government to enter talks regarding the conflict in Catalonia. 20 people were arrested –19 of them by the French Gendarmerie– and subsequently released, with some being charged and handed cautions. Tsunami Democràtic also called for protests before and during the football match between the Barcelona and Real Madrid football clubs on 18 December in defence of "rights, freedom and self-determination" and urged the Spanish government to engage in talks.

In a public statement on 19 November, the international human rights NGO **Amnesty International expressed its concern regarding the definition of the crime of sedition in the Spanish Criminal Code, which it considered to be too general, as well as the loose interpretation of this crime by the Spanish Supreme Court, which according to Amnesty International entails a violation of the principle of legality** –contained in the European Convention on Human Rights– because it allows for the criminalisation of acts arising from the exercise of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In the case of Sànchez and Cuixart, Amnesty International considered that the ruling excessively and disproportionately restricted their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and urged the Spanish authorities to release them and provide guarantees that would allow them to overturn their convictions. With regard to the former members of the Government and Parliament, it pointed out that they may have committed a crime that is legitimately punishable due to the office they held, but that because of the vague definition of the crime with which they were charged and an overzealous interpretation, the ruling violated the principle of legality. It therefore urged the Spanish authorities to ensure that in the event that any legal appeals are filed by the convicted persons, the said authorities take due account of the breach of the principle of legality.

Other legal proceedings continued throughout the year. In this sense, the President of the Catalan government, Quim Torra, fought a trial against his disqualification from holding public office before the High Court of Justice of Catalonia, where he was accused of a crime of disobedience for not removing a banner bearing yellow ribbons –a symbol representing demands for the freedom of pro-independence prisoners– from the Palau de la Generalitat during the pre-election campaign, in defiance of an order of the Central Electoral Board. In November, Torra attended the first hearing of the trial. Furthermore, the Spanish National High Court set the date of January 2020 for the commencement of the trial of the Commissioner of the Mossos d'Esquadra, Josep Lluís Trapero; the ex-director of the Mossos d'Esquadra, Pere Soler; the ex-secretary general of Catalan Internal department, César Puig (who were all accused of the crime of rebellion); and autonomous police mayor Teresa Laplana (accused of sedition, due to her failure to prevent the referendum of 1 October and the protests before the Ministry of Economy on 20 and 21 September 2017). In turn, among other legal proceedings under way, the trial against the former members of the Parliament's Bureau and the former Member of Parliament Mireia Boya (which was scheduled to begin that month) was suspended in November. They face charges of disobedience for allowing the parliamentary processing of the laws, of 6 and 7 September 2017, on the referendum and on the legal transition. Joan Josep Nuet's diplomatic status after he was elected to Congress led the High Court of Justice of Catalonia to refer his case to the Supreme Court, while the Court of Justice of Catalonia retained its jurisdiction to rule on the rest of the defendants and ordered a new trial to be held in 2020.

As regards the international legal impact, the EU Court of Justice ruled in December that Oriol Junqueras, the pro-independence political leader and a candidate who was elected during the 2019 European Parliamentary elections in May (in pre-trial detention since November 2017) had immunity as an MEP from the date of the announcement of the results, therefore requiring his release. The Court noted, however, that it was the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to assess the effects of the immunity in other proceedings (in reference to the case against Junqueras for the 1 October referendum), with a ruling being issued from 14 October. The Supreme Court will decide how to implement the EU Court of Justice's ruling, which was expected by the beginning of 2020. In turn, hours after the European Court's ruling, in December the European Parliament

authorised the election of the former President of the Generalitat Carles Puigdemont and former regional Minister of Health Toni Comín, who were both elected as MEPs in the May elections (withdrawing the ban imposed on them since the reactivation of the Euro-order) and who will therefore take their seats in January 2020.

In the political sphere, in the framework of the negotiations concerning the investiture of a new government in Spain following the parliamentary elections of November 2019, the year ended with the expectation of an investiture agreement being signed between the ERC and PSOE parties, to be ratified during the first few days of January 2020, which would include the creation of a dialogue table between the governments and a popular consultation in Catalonia on the agreements reached at that dialogue table, according to reports at the end of December. As part of the agreement, through its abstention, ERC would facilitate the investiture of a coalition government between the PSOE and Podemos. For its part, JxCAT warned that this party did not feel that it was bound by the agreement between the PSOE and Podemos and accused the ERC of undermining the struggle for independence. As regards the talks between the Catalan and Spanish governments, both executives considered the talks to have stalled in February 2019 and levelled mutual accusations. On 20 December 2018, after a brief meeting between the Presidents of the Spanish and Catalan governments, Pedro Sánchez and Quim Torra, at the Palau de Pedralbes, both governments issued the so-called Pedralbes Declaration. According to the text, both governments agreed on the following: that there was a conflict over the future of Catalonia, that they both defended an effective dialogue that would convey a political proposal with broad support within Catalan society, that forums for dialogue should be promoted that would allow society's needs to be met and for progress to be made in providing a democratic answer to the demands of Catalonia's citizens (within the framework of legal certainty), and that the path of dialogue requires the effort of all institutions, political actors and citizens. The two governments differed in their assessment of the scope of the Declaration and its nuances.

The Declaration was preceded by months of rapprochements and disagreements between the two executives after the PSOE came to power in June 2018 following a vote of no-confidence against the Popular Party, supported by the pro-independence groups ERC and PDeCAT. In January 2019, several meetings took place at ministerial level, which were intended to move forward in the implementation of the Pedralbes Declaration, including the architecture of the talks themselves. The negotiations addressed the creation of a dialogue table involving political parties in order to tackle the most politicised issues, which would be complemented by the bilateral Generalitat-State Commission, enshrined in the Statute of Catalonia and reactivated on 1 August 2018 (having been suspended since July 2011). Disagreements arose between the two

governments over the make-up of the political parties' dialogue table that was to emerge from the Pedralbes Declaration. Even so, at the beginning of February the Spanish government accepted the inclusion of an intermediary to "faithfully report" the progress of the political parties' dialogue table, in reference to ERC and JxCAT's demand for a rapporteur. The discussions regarding this intermediary role and the talks between the governments as a whole, led to strong criticism from the Popular Party and the Citizens party, which described it as a betrayal of the unity of Spain and called for a demonstration against the talks to be held on Catalonia's future, which took place on 10 February and brought together 45,000 people, according to the police (200,000, according to the organisers).

In addition to pressure from political opposition parties, the talks were also influenced by the negotiations relating to the approval of the state budget (and the position of ERC and PDeCAT that the entire budget should be amended), as well as the situation surrounding the preventive detention of Catalan political and civil society leaders and the commencement of the oral hearing phase of the trial against them. Even before the demonstration was held, the Catalan and Spanish governments considered the negotiations to have failed. Spain's PSOE Government blamed the Catalan government for the suspension of the talks due to the latter's rejection of the framework proposed for them which, according to the Spanish government, had from the outset excluded the self-determination of Catalonia and the holding of a referendum outside the framework of the Constitution. The Government did not definitively end the talks, but insisted that the only possible framework for dialogue was to do so within the rule of law and according to the Spanish Constitution. For its part, the Catalan government accused the Spanish government of abandoning the talks and attributed it to pressure from right-leaning political parties. The Catalan government reiterated its position that the political parties' dialogue table should be held at the state level. It also accused the Spanish government of lacking the courage to put the mechanisms for talks into practice, and of rushing to close a deal that was not yet ready. It noted that they would continue to sit at the negotiating table. On the other hand, during the year there was only one meeting (in February) of the dialogue table of Catalan parties, which was called for the first time in November 2018 by the President of Catalonia as a parallel forum to the negotiations between the Spanish and Catalan governments –in which the PP, Ciutadans and the CUP refused to participate. At the February meeting of this forum for dialogue, the Catalan President made public the 21-point document that he had handed over to the Spanish President at the brief meeting between the two in December 2018. Among other points, the document called for the recognition of the right to self-determination of the people of Catalonia and its effective implementation, international mediation and an end to threats to apply Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, among other matters.

2.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

Egypt	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

Within the framework of the so-called "Arab revolts", popular mobilisations in Egypt led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak at the beginning of 2011. During three decades, Mubarak had headed an authoritarian government characterised by the accumulation of powers around the Government National Democratic Party, the Armed Forces and the corporate elites; as well as by an artificial political plurality, with constant allegations of fraud in the elections, harassment policies towards the opposition and the illegalisation of the main dissident movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The fall of Mubarak's regime gave way to an unstable political landscape, where the struggle between the sectors demanding for pushing towards the goals of the revolt, Islamist groups aspiring to a new position of power and the military class seeking guarantees to keep their influence and privileges in the new institutional scheme became evident. In this context, and after an interim government led by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the electoral triumph of the MB in the parliamentarian and presidential elections seemed to open a new stage in the country in 2012. However, the ousting of the Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, when he had just been in power for one year, opened new questions on the future of the country in a context of persistent violence, polarisation, political repression and increasing control by military sectors.

The situation in Egypt continued to be characterised by the **consolidation of the shift towards authoritarianism at the hands of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's Government and the persistent persecution and repression of dissident voices**, in a context also marked by the state of emergency that has been in force in the country since 2017 due to the conflict in the Sinai Peninsula.[35] During 2019, the Government promoted certain controversial constitutional changes that were ratified in April in a referendum denounced by various voices due to a lack of guarantees and accusations of fraud. **The legal changes introduced mean that al-Sisi can extend his current mandate from four to six years and opt for another two terms, allowing him to remain in power until 2034**. In addition, the constitutional reform allowed al-Sisi to appoint a number of authorities and senior members of the judiciary, thereby reducing the scope for independence of the judiciary and extending the power of the military in Egyptian political life. During the year, the Government also promoted changes in the controversial law governing the activity of NGOs in the country, but the amendments were considered cosmetic among sectors of civil society. International NGOs such

as Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the new regulations maintain most of the restrictions on civil society organizations. As an example, the law prohibits NGOs from conducting research or opinion polls without Government authorisation and from engaging in activities perceived as "political" or "harmful to national security", and it allows for strict monitoring of NGOs by security forces.

At the same time, the climate of harassment and persecution of critical and dissident voices, including academics, journalists, human rights defenders and activists, continued in 2019. In the first months of the year, there were arrests of demonstrators who mobilised to denounce the negligence of the authorities after a train accident in which about twenty people died. On the eve of the referendum on the reform of the Constitution, at least 160 activists who had questioned the amendments were also arrested, according to HRW. In a regional context marked by mass protests in countries such as Sudan or Algeria, al-Sisi publicly warned the Egyptian population about the risks of the protests. During the second half of the year, the mass arrests intensified after an Egyptian businessman based in Spain, Mohamed Ali, posted on social networks criticising al-Sisi for mismanagement and abuse of public resources. The accusations (denied by the President in a televised speech) encouraged mass anti-government protests in several cities in the country, including Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta and Suez, and a crackdown response by the security forces. According to various sources, **between September and December more than 4,000 people had been arrested**. Throughout the year, arrests were also made of people accused of supporting, financing or belonging to terrorist groups. An **extensive use of the death penalty during mass trials on charges allegedly linked to political violence** was also denounced. Hundreds of people have reportedly been sentenced to death in military and civilian trials, according to HRW. During the year, at least 15 people arrested on political charges were executed, according to the Egyptian Front for Human Rights. UN experts also warned of arbitrary executions in the country, with evidence of confessions being given under torture or unfair trials in at least nine cases. During 2019, **the alarm continued to sound regarding the situation of the detainees, including former President and Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Mursi, who died in prison in June**. UN experts indicated that the conditions of his detention may have led to the death of the Islamist leader. In addition, Egypt remained one of the most dangerous countries for journalists (some 30 reporters remained under arrest at the end of 2019, some accused of spreading fake news) and the authorities continued their policy of blocking news, political or human rights websites –more than 600 sites have reportedly been closed since 2017, according to HRW. It is also worth mentioning that harassment of women's rights activists (including travel bans outside the country) and the

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35. See summary on Egypt (Sinai) in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

LGTBI community continued (transgender people were arrested and charged with terrorism, among other cases).

Iraq	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Internationalised, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, Iran, USA

Summary:

The United States-led international invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime and the shaping of a new political system. The new system set up at Washington's behest divided the Government along sectarian lines. Against this backdrop, in recent years there has been an increase in feelings of alienation and frustration with a ruling class perceived as corrupt and motivated by personal and group interests, at the expense of citizens' quality of life. Thus, since 2015, there has been a succession of mass demonstrations (mainly led by young people) denouncing the endemic corruption, governance deficits, serious problems in the provision of services, unemployment and lack of future prospects. In 2019, mass anti-government protests and a severe crackdown by the security forces exposed the serious political crisis gripping the country, the lack of legitimacy of its authorities, and misgivings concerning the influence of external actors (and in particular Iran's growing prominence in the region) in Iraqi affairs.

During 2019 **Iraq was the scene of serious tensions as a result of mass protests against the political system, corruption, nepotism and economic mismanagement by the ruling class. Protests were harshly repressed, resulting in the deaths of more than 400 people and more than 20,000 people injured**. Although the country has seen periodic popular protests since 2015, the events linked to last year's demonstrations were considered by some analysts to be the most serious since the United States invasion of the country in 2003. The protests (mostly peaceful and at times involving up to 200,000 people) were also more sustained and involved a diverse range of groups, including the unemployed, students, civil society activists and tribe members. The situation highlighted the fragility and lack of legitimacy of the system of Government established after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, discontent with a model of power based on sectarian divisions and irritation at Iran's growing influence in some sectors of the Iraqi population, including among Shiites. Although there were protests against corruption that led to clashes with the security forces in the south of the country in the first months of the year (Najaf in May and Basra in June) the most significant events were concentrated in the second half

Iraq was the scene of serious tensions as a result of mass protests against the political system, corruption, nepotism and economic mismanagement by the ruling class that were harshly repressed, resulting in the deaths of more than 400 people

of the year. Anti-government demonstrations intensified in early October and the trigger was reportedly the decision by Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi to demote a popular general, considered by some sectors to be a hero for his role in the fight against ISIS. The fact that the general belonged to the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) and the CTS' competitive relationship with the Hashd al-Shaabi militia conglomerate (the most powerful of which are linked to Iran) was interpreted by some sectors as a surrender to the Hashd paramilitary groups.

The protests quickly expanded their demands and focused their criticism on the corruption, lack of jobs and serious problems in public services. **Protests in Baghdad and in various cities in the south of the country (which later expanded to other areas in the north and centre of the country) were subject to a harsh crackdown by security forces, who used tear gas and firearms to disperse them**. Demonstrators also attacked Shiite Islamist party headquarters and paramilitary groups. In the first week of protests alone, 149 protesters and eight members of the security forces were killed. The harsh response by the authorities did not quash the movement, nor did the package of measures announced by the Mahdi Government (creation of jobs, punishment of corrupt officials, aid to the poorest population, changes in the cabinet), and the protests continued in the following weeks. Against this backdrop, the highest Shiite authority in the country, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (who usually speaks only in situations of serious crisis) denounced the crackdown and demanded an investigation into the events, while Shiite political leader and cleric Moqtada al-Sadr expressed his support for the protestors and demanded the resignation of the Government. Press reports said the top leader of Iran's al-Quds Revolutionary Guard unit, Qassem Soleimani, travelled to Baghdad in November to secure an agreement that would allow the Government to continue. In the middle of that month, meanwhile, the UN mission in Iraq (UNAMI) proposed a roadmap for resolving the crisis (publicly supported by al-Sistani) that included such issues as an immediate end to the violence, the release of detainees, an investigation into the disappearance and excessive use of force against demonstrators, and electoral reforms, among other measures.[36]

At the end of November, demonstrators set fire to the Iranian consulate in Najaf, highlighting Tehran's critical influence in Iraq among some of the sectors protesting, including in Shiite-majority areas. The security forces and militia responded strongly, killing 44 people in Najaf and Nassiriya. Following these events, al-Sistani asked Parliament to withdraw its support for Mahdi. The Prime Minister resigned and by the end of

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36. See the summary on the Middle East in Escola de Cutura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2020. Analysis of Trends and Scenarios*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2020.

the year the political forces had not managed to agree on the formation of a new Government. In December, protests continued, alongside reports of attacks and deaths of demonstrators (some of them by stabbing) allegedly at the hands of pro-Iranian militia supporters or collaborators of state forces. The UNAMI warned of credible allegations of killings, abductions and arbitrary detentions by "militias", "third parties", "armed groups" or "saboteurs" and reported continuing and severe human rights abuses. According to the UNAMI's assessment, from 1 October to 9 December, violence during the protests had caused the deaths of 424 people and injured some 8,758, including members of the security forces, although the latter figure climbs to almost 20,000 if we include those affected by injuries caused by gas inhalation, for example. The UNAMI reported that, unlike in the past, the Iraqi authorities did not allow access to official hospital statistics on those affected by the demonstrations or visits to interview victims. Several analysts attempted to provide keys to understanding the dynamics of the protest movement in Iraq and the difficulties for a rapid solution to the crisis in the country. Among them, the widespread mistrust of the political class and democratic mechanisms (partly due to experiences of electoral fraud, nepotism, cronyism and the use of parties for personal projects, among other factors) was mentioned; the generational element (most of the protesters are under 30 years old, who represent 67% of the population and are experiencing growing frustration with the country's governance failures); the short term response of the authorities (linked to their inability to offer an attractive future project); and the difficulties for the protest movement to channel its demands for deep structural changes in a political system that they perceive as corrupt and incapable of improving the living conditions of the population despite the country's oil wealth. Against this backdrop, **the escalation of hostilities between Washington and Tehran at the end of the year, which materialised in a series of violent events in Iraq and the death of the Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in a United States attack in Baghdad, threatened to further destabilise the internal scenario in Iraq.**[37]

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 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.

In line with what was observed the previous year, the historical international socio-political crisis involving Israel, Syria and Lebanon –with Iran becoming progressively more directly implicated– led to various incidents that allegedly cost the lives of almost one hundred people (94 deaths according to non-official accounts). **Most of the acts of violence linked to this socio-political crisis occurred on Syrian territory and affected the Golan Heights area (occupied by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war) but also other areas, such as Quneitra, Deir al-Zour, Aleppo, Hama and even Damascus**. Thus, in January, Israeli air strikes in the south of the Syrian capital on facilities that allegedly belonged to Iran and related militias were followed, in apparent retaliation, by attacks on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights area. Israeli forces responded with a new attack on the forces of al-Quds (the Iranian military unit in charge of overseas operations) which reportedly killed 12 people. Despite Russian warnings to Israel about its operations in Syria, Israeli forces again attacked a Hezbollah observation post in Quneitra (south) in February and launched an air operation against an alleged Iranian weapons depot in Aleppo in March, reportedly killing several Iraqi and Iranian fighters. In April, Israeli attacks affected the Syrian regime's infrastructure in Hama, while in May, Damascus reported the interception of Israeli missiles launched from the Golan Heights area that were intended to hit Iranian targets in the Syrian capital. The summer months saw the bloodiest incidents: Israeli air strikes against Syrian pro-Government forces, Iranian and Hezbollah assets in the Golan Heights area, Homs and Damascus between June and July reportedly killed 35 people, including at least seven civilians. In September, an alleged Israeli attack in the east near the Iraqi border reportedly killed a further 18 Iranian and Iraqi fighters. In November, after intercepting four rockets fired from the Golan Heights into Israel, Israeli forces launched an offensive against Syrian and Iranian targets that reportedly killed 23 more people. In December, two other incidents against pro-Iranian militias in Syria's Deir al-Zour province left 10 people dead, in acts that Hezbollah blamed on Israel. During the year, there were reports of further Israeli offensives aimed at preventing drone attacks from Syria on Israeli territory.

The incidents linked to this tension also affected Lebanese territory. **The action that caused the greatest alarm in 2019 was the Israeli offensive against Hezbollah**

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37. See the summary on Iraq in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

in Beirut in August. **Two Israeli drones launched an offensive against Hezbollah positions in the area of Dahiyah, a stronghold of the Shiite group to the south of the Lebanese capital**. A day later, another Israeli offensive was reported in eastern Lebanon against the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), an organisation also supported by Iran. The strike on Beirut was declared by the Lebanese authorities to be a "declaration of war" (in the words of the Lebanese President) as well as the most serious operation since the war in 2006, and they called on the international community to denounce the flagrant violation of the country's sovereignty. The Hezbollah leader, meanwhile, noted that this hostile action called into question the terms that had been in force since 2006. Indeed, in September, the first artillery exchanges in years took place between Israel and Hezbollah, although no casualties were recorded. **During 2019 the parties also exchanged threatening statements. For example, the Hezbollah leader warned of the possession of numerous missiles with the capacity to strike Israel, while senior Israeli military officials stressed that in a future war no distinction should be made between the Lebanese Government and Hezbollah.** In this sense, it should be noted that after the formation of the new Lebanese Government at the beginning of the year, the Lebanese authorities issued a declaration claiming the right of the Lebanese to resist the Israeli occupation and aggression, in what was considered a cover for Hezbollah's military structures.

It should be added that successive UN reports on UNIFIL operations and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) noted the systematic violations of Lebanese airspace by Israel and reported on Israeli actions to close tunnels across the so-called Blue Line, among other incidents. While no progress was made on the border demarcations, certain communications were held to resolve the maritime boundary disputes between Lebanon and Israel, at the behest of the United States. Finally, it should be noted that the dynamics of this tension during 2019 were also influenced by other stances taken by Washington, in particular the decree signed in March by the Trump Administration recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Syria and Lebanon rejected the measure and United Nations stated that the United States declaration did not change the status of the Golan Heights.

Lebanon	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Hezbollah (party and militia), political and social opposition, armed groups ISIS and Jabhat al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Saraya Ahl al-Sham

Summary:
The assassination of the Lebanese prime minister, Rafiq Hariri, in February 2005 sparked the so-called "Cedar Revolution" which, following mass demonstrations, forced the withdrawal of the Syrian Armed Forces (present in the country for three decades), meeting the demands of Security Council resolution 1559, promoted by the USA and France in September 2004. The stand-off between opponents of Syria's influence (led by Hariri's son, who blamed the Syrian regime for the assassination) and sectors more closely linked to Syria, such as Hezbollah, triggered a political, social and institutional crisis influenced by religious divisions. In a climate of persistent internal political division, the armed conflict that broke out in Syria in 2011 has led to an escalation of the tension between Lebanese political and social sectors and to an increase in violence in the country.

Unlike previous years when the tensions were mainly determined by the influence of the armed conflict in neighbouring Syria and in particular by acts of violence in border areas, **during 2019 the situation in Lebanon was particularly marked by mass anti-government protests which intensified in the second half of the year**. 2019 began with the announcement by Prime Minister Saad Hariri of the formation of a new Government of national unity after a nine-month suspension following the parliamentary elections. After the approval of the new Government by the Parliament in February, attention focused on economic reforms and the new Government's budget proposal, which triggered the first protests against the austerity measures in May. Since then, protests by military veterans and civil servants, among other groups, followed, and clashes between the demonstrators and the security forces occurred. **The protests intensified in late September and took on a mass dimension in October after Hariri announced a tax on the use of the WhatsApp social network as part of his Government's austerity package. The protests (considered the largest in the last decade) began in Beirut, but spread throughout the country**, with complaints of corruption and economic mismanagement by the ruling class and demanding the resignation of the Government. Demonstrators occupied public places to hold their debates and denounced the confessional political system prevailing in the country. Some analysts highlighted as characteristic elements of these protests their mass and decentralised nature, the support for the demonstrations throughout all regions and communities, the fact that the protests transcended religious divides, among other elements.[38] The role of women in the movement was also notable.[39]

During the protests, several incidents occurred that resulted in the deaths of five people. Among them were two Syrian refugees who died in a building that caught fire during the protests, two people who were shot by the bodyguards of a parliamentarian who tried to join the protests and was attacked by the demonstrators, and another who was shot by a soldier who was trying to disperse the protestors. At the same time, dozens of people were injured in various clashes between the police and demonstrators, between demonstrators

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38. Anis Chérif-Alami, "Twenty Days of Lebanese Protests: Between Continuity, Innovation and Uncertainty", *Arab Reform Initiative*, 6 November 2019.
39. See Chapter 3 (Gender, Peace and Security)

and supporters of President Michel Aoun, between demonstrators and supporters of Hezbollah and its allied group Amal, and between members of these two organisations and the Christian party Lebanese Forces. It should be noted that the Hezbollah leader initially supported the protests, but then rejected the Government's demands for his resignation and blamed the protests on outside interference. The same speech was made by the Iranian authorities after the outbreak of protests in that country and the convergence of intense protests in Lebanon and Iraq during the last quarter of 2019.[39] Anti-government protests forced Hariri to resign at the end of October. The political factions negotiated for weeks until they agreed on the appointment of former education minister Hassan Diab as the new prime minister. Diab took office in mid-December and promised to form a Government of technocrats within six weeks, but protests (including calls for the new prime minister's resignation) continued. Political uncertainty persisted at the close of 2019, in the midst of a severe economic crisis, the worst in the country since the civil war (1975-1990), according to analysts. A number of other significant events during the year should be highlighted. These include two incidents in June: an attack by an alleged "lone wolf" from the armed group ISIS, which left five people dead in Tripoli; and the attack on a minister's convoy outside Beirut by two rival Druze factions, which left two dead and led to several weeks of cabinet paralysis. In this regard, it should be mentioned that UN reports on the situation in Lebanon noted the arrests of dozens of people linked to ISIS and the former al-Nusra Front in 2019 and also stressed that no tangible progress has been observed in dismantling and disarming Lebanese militias, as provided for in the Taif Agreements (1989) and UN Security Council Resolution 1554 (2004).

Mass protests in Iran from November onwards led to a very harsh crackdown by security forces, with more than 300 people killed

The Gulf

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

Summary:
This tension is framed within a political context that is marked by the decades-long polarisation between the conservative and reformist sectors in the country, and by the key role of religious authorities and armed forces – especially the Republican Guard– in Iran's power politics. Internal tensions rose towards the middle of 2009 when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected in elections that

were reported to be fraudulent by the opposition and that fueled the largest popular protests in the country since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The end of Ahmadinejad's two consecutive mandates and the election of the moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani in 2013 seem to have started a new stage in the country, giving rise to expectations regarding a possible decrease in the internal political tension and an eventual change in the relations between Iran and the outer world. However, internal tensions have persisted.

During 2019, **Iran experienced the greatest internal upheaval of the last decade, after mass protests led to a harsh crackdown by the security forces that resulted in more than 300 deaths**. Protests against a rise in fuel prices began in mid-November and by the end of the year there were 304 deaths, according to a report released by Amnesty International in mid-December. On 15 November, the Government announced a surprise 50% increase in the price of fuel, triggering mass demonstrations in various cities in Iran, at which some 200,000 people participated, according to official figures, and which involved road blocks and attacks on shops and banks, among other actions. The regime responded with an almost total blackout of the internet and with a harsh crackdown, which resulted in numerous deaths in a matter of days. The media reported that in one location alone, in Mahshahr (north-west), around 100 people were killed (including many of the area's Arab minority) after security forces fired directly at the demonstrators. **The United Nations denounced violations of human rights and international standards on the use of force, warned of the lack of transparency regarding the victims of the crackdown and expressed concern about the, at least, 7,000 people arrested** in 28 of Iran's 31 provinces since mid-November. Warnings were issued regarding possible physical abuse, violations of due process, forced confessions and the possibility that many of those detained may face charges and penalties punishable by death in Iran. Amnesty International also reported intimidation, threats and even extortion of the victims' families.

Various analysts highlighted the regime's harsh response to the protests, employing greater force than in other recent episodes: some 70 people died during the protests of the so-called Green Movement against the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009 and some two dozen died in the protests against the country's economic situation between December 2017 and January 2018. **The Iranian authorities denounced the recent protests as a result of a conspiracy by foreign enemies**, highlighting the coordination of some of the attacks on key infrastructure (including ports, silos and refineries), considered unusual in the modus operandi of

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39. See the summaries on Iraq and Iran in this chapter.
40. See the summaries on Iran – United States, Israel and Israel–Syria–Lebanon in this chapter and the summary on Yemen (Houthis) in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).

protests in the country. The reaction of the Iranian regime therefore falls within the general climate of geostrategic struggles and international and regional socio-political crises led by Tehran, which have materialised in various indirect clashes.[41] In this sense, the Iranian authorities also underlined the fact that the protests and upheavals coincided with those in Iraq and Lebanon in 2019 (countries where Tehran is gaining increasing prominence), feeding suspicions that this was an orchestrated campaign to destabilise the Iranian area of influence.[42] Some analysts pointed out that while external intervention in the turmoil in Iran cannot be ruled out, there has for years been a sense of frustration over a political system that perceives dissent as treason and widespread social concern over the country's economic situation, which has high inflation and unemployment problems. Economic conditions have deteriorated in the last year, especially since the decision of the United States Government to intensify its policy of sanctions against the Iranian regime. In this context, some analysts have also warned of the consequences of the repressive policies in provinces that are home to minorities such as Arabs and Kurds. Others drew attention to the fact that Iran is in a pre-election phase, with legislative and presidential elections scheduled for February 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Iran (north-west)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups PJAK and KDPI, Komala, KDP, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

Summary:
Despite the heterogeneous and multiethnic 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. In 2011, the PJAK and the Iranian Government reportedly agreed on a ceasefire that would commit the armed group to cease its attacks and the authorities to suspend the execution of Kurdish prisoners, but hostilities and low-level clashes continued.

Reports of the conflict between Iran and Kurdish groups operating in the north-west of the country and in the border area with Iraq pointed to a relative decline in levels of violence compared to the previous year. **While some 60 people were killed in 2018, the figures for 2019 indicate that the various acts of violence have left around 10 to 15 people dead, according to different assessments based on press reports.** It should be noted that the incidents were mainly concentrated in the summer months and that the death tolls were sometimes ambiguous or contradictory. In July, official press reports indicated that Iranian forces had killed two militants in the Chaldoran area (Western Azerbaijan province). Although the group to which they belonged was not identified, incidents involving the Kurdish armed group the PJAK and Iranian forces are common in the area. A week later, an armed attack on a military vehicle had killed three members of the Revolutionary Guard in the town of Piranshahr (Western Azerbaijan province). Days later, in apparent retaliation for this latest ambush, an operation took place in the border area that included the use of rockets, drones and artillery fire. Official Iranian sources reported that a large number of militants had been executed or injured there. In August, the PJAK acknowledged that four of its fighters had died in skirmishes with Iranian forces between 8 and 11 July in Kermanshan province. One Iranian soldier was reportedly killed in these clashes and another was reportedly killed in further hostilities in the area at the end of July. Against this backdrop, the Iranian authorities issued warnings to the Kurdistan Regional Government about the use of its territory by armed groups as a base, training centre and space from which to launch attacks on Iran.

In parallel, according to press reports, during 2019 Kurdish opposition groups and representatives of the Iranian Government are said to have held a series of secret meetings in Oslo in what could be a first step towards identifying terms for negotiations. The liaisons allegedly involved representatives of two branches of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (a third, communist, Komala faction did not take part in the initiative) and two rival factions of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). According to reports, the meetings in Oslo took place in May, June and August as part of an initiative being facilitated by the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF). Some analysts highlighted that Tehran would seek to dissuade Kurdish sectors from an escalation in Iran, within a geopolitical context of growing socio-political crises and in which it is suspected that the Kurdish insurgency is receiving aid from Saudi Arabia and the United States.

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41. See the summaries on Iran – USA, Israel and Israel–Syria–Lebanon in this chapter and the summary on Yemen (Houthis) in Chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts).
42. See summaries on Iraq and Lebanon in this chapter.

Iran (Sistan Balochistan)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran), Jundallah (Soldiers of God / People's Resistance Movement), Harakat Ansar Iran, Jaish al-Adl, Pakistan

Summary:

Sistan-Balochistan is an Iranian province bordering with Afghanistan and Pakistan –the Baloch population lives on both sides of the border– and is of Sunni majority, contrasting with the rest of the country, where the Shiite arm of Islam is predominant. The zone is characterised by high poverty levels and is the scene of smuggling routes and drug trafficking. Since 2005 the group Jundallah (Soldiers of God) has led an insurgence campaign in the region. The organisation, which also calls itself the People's Resistance Movement, was established in 2002 and denounces Tehran's sectarian persecution. Jundallah states that its aim is to defend the rights, culture and religion of the Baloch people and denies having any ties with abroad, as the Iranian Government accuses it of having with the US, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and with the al-Qaeda network. In view of the possibility of destabilization in the region, Tehran has strengthened its control mechanisms and has sentenced dozens of Jundallah militants to death. The actions of the armed group have dropped since 2010 after its leader was captured and executed, but new armed groups with a similar agenda to Jundallah's, including Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice), have continued to operate in the area, with sporadic clashes with the security forces.

Tensions between Iranian security forces and insurgent groups in Sistan and Baluchestan Province continued to cause periodic violence in 2019, with more deaths than in the previous year. **The region was the scene of a particularly bloody episode in February earlier this year, when a suicide attack killed 27 members of the Revolutionary Guard and injured 13 others**. Responsibility for the offensive, the bloodiest in years, was claimed by the armed group Jaish al-Adl or Army of Justice. Previously, in January, another incident involving a bomb disposal squad in the provincial capital, Zahedan, left three military personnel injured (a second device exploded while they were trying to neutralise the first). After the events of February, the Iranian Government threatened revenge, accused the perpetrators of being mercenaries attack and insisted on linking the activities of insurgent groups in the country with support from foreign powers. Iranian officials pointed mainly to the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel and noted that the attack occurred on the same day that the United States Government was holding a conference on the Middle East in Poland involving 60 countries and focusing on discussing ways to intensify pressure on Iran. In the following months and after a period of tensions and mutual accusations

of successive armed attacks in the border area, **Iran and Pakistan announced in April the formation of a joint rapid reaction force to act against insurgent militias operating in the area**. In March, Tehran had called on Islamabad to act decisively to neutralise the activity of insurgent groups responsible for offensives in Iran. According to reports, the Iranian Government identified three Pakistani citizens, including the suicide bomber, among the perpetrators of the February attack. In April, following an attack on a bus that left 14 people dead in Pakistan's Balochistan province by a new armed Baloch group (Balochi Raji Aajori Saangar or BRAS), the Government of Islamabad claimed to have evidence that the organisation had training camps on Iranian territory. In the middle of the year, a new act of violence in the Saravan area left another two military personnel dead, one a member of the Revolutionary Guard and another a member of the Basij militia.

Iran – USA, Israel[43]	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government International
Main parties:	Iran, USA, Israel

Summary:

Since the Islamic revolution in 1979 that overthrew the regime of Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi (an ally of Washington) and proclaimed Ayatollah Khomeini as the country's Supreme leader, relations between the US, Israel and Iran have been tense. The international pressure on Iran became stronger in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when the George W. Bush Administration declared Iran, together with Iraq and North Korea as the "axis of evil" and as an enemy State due to its alleged ties with terrorism. In this context, Iran's nuclear programme has been one of the issues that have generated most concern in the West, which is suspicious of its military purposes. Thus, Iran's nuclear programme has developed alongside the approval of international sanctions and threats of using force, especially by Israel. Iran's approach to the conflict during the two consecutive mandates of the ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) did not contribute to ease tensions. The rise to power of the moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani, in turn, has generated high hopes of a turn in Iran's foreign relations, especially after the signing of an agreement on nuclear issues at the end of 2013. However, the rise to power of moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani has raised expectations about a turning point in Iran's foreign relations, especially after negotiations began on the Iranian nuclear programme in late 2013 and after a related agreement was signed in mid-2015. In recent years, the withdrawal of the United States from the Iran deal in 2018 and the intensification of its sanctions policy, the progressive distancing of Iran from the commitments made in the deal and a chaotic regional backdrop have worsened tensions and made it difficult to find a way out of this dispute.

Following the escalation of tension in 2018 due to the United States' decision to withdraw from the Iranian nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA, signed in 2015), the situation worsened

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

significantly in 2019. **The year saw an extension of the policy of unilateral sanctions against Iran by the United States, a progressive distancing of Tehran from some of the commitments undertaken in the framework of the deal, and a series of incidents in the Middle East that led to a volatile scenario dangerously conducive to military escalation**. During the year the Iranian regime attempted to put pressure on the countries that remain loyal to the deal, known as the P4+1 (France, United Kingdom, China, Russia and Germany) to obtain measures that would allow them to alleviate the economic sanctions imposed by Washington. Tehran issued a 60-day ultimatum in May and threatened to increase uranium enrichment. In July it became known that Iran had exceeded the reserves of enriched uranium allowed by the JCPOA. Tehran issued a new ultimatum, warning of further violations of the deal. These threats became a reality in the following months with the lifting of the restrictions on nuclear research and development and activation of the centrifuges at the Fordow plant (south of Tehran). In this context, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) raised the alarm in November, reporting that the country had accumulated more heavy water than the limit foreseen in the deal. The EU and the European countries involved in the agreement rejected Iran's successive ultimatums and at the end of the year warned of the possibility of activating the dispute resolution mechanism provided for in the JCPOA, which could lead to new sanctions against the Islamic Republic. Iran warned that if this mechanism were to be put into action it would reconsider its commitments to the UN on nuclear issues.[44]

In parallel, throughout 2019 the United States extended sanctions against the Islamic Republic, including against its supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, and in April it designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation. The measure was countered by Tehran, which blacklisted the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) for the Middle East and Central Asia. Discussions and tensions surrounding the implementation of the deal on Iran's nuclear programme were affected by the turbulent regional backdrop and by numerous incidents, particularly in the Gulf sea. In May, four ships were attacked off the coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (two Saudi, one Norwegian and one UAE), for which nobody claimed responsibility, and a drone attack was carried out on Saudi territory against oil facilities for which the Yemeni armed group Houthis claimed responsibility, leading to accusations against Iran. In June, alarms were raised over the attack on two oil tankers (one Japanese and one Norwegian)

During 2019, tensions linked to the Iranian nuclear programme escalated due to the United States sanctions policy against Iran, the progressive distancing of Tehran from commitments made in the deal on its nuclear activities and a series of acts of violence in the Middle East

in the Gulf of Oman and the shooting down of a United States drone, which the United States attributed to Iran. Tehran denied responsibility in the first incident and claimed that the United States aircraft had violated its airspace in the second. **The media then reported that the President of the United States had approved military attacks against Iran in response to the shooting down of the drone, but that he retracted his decision hours later**. Donald Trump later explained his decision by the disproportionate impact the US military strike would have had. In July, another drone was reportedly shot down, this time Iranian, by the United States. **One of the most significant events occurred in September, when the oil facilities operated by the Saudi state company Aramco in Abqaiq and Khurais (Eastern Province) were seriously damaged by a missile and drone attack, temporarily forcing the suspension of 50% of Saudi oil production. Although the Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, the United States, Saudi Arabia and the European E3 countries (Germany, France and the United Kingdom) held Iran responsible for the aggression**. Tehran denied any link to the attacks and threatened mass retaliation in the event of an offensive. In December, a new escalation of violence between Washington and Tehran, which materialised in a series of violent events in Iraq and a United States air strike that resulted in the death of the top Iranian general, Qassem Suleimani, in the first days of January 2020, sounded further alarms about the evolution of this conflict.[45]

It should be noted that throughout 2019 the United States also announced a greater deployment of forces in the Middle East (including air forces, naval forces and anti-missile defence systems) on the grounds of a greater perception of threat by Iran, and also promoted a new maritime security scheme for the area, which was joined by the United Kingdom, Australia and Bahrain. Iran launched its own maritime security initiative for the area in September, promised to strengthen regional ties and held meetings with the UAE on maritime affairs. In this context of growing tensions, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) published a study in which it highlighted that the balance in terms of conventional military forces is favourable to the United States and its allies in the region, but that the effective balance of forces is in favour of Iran due to its capacity to resort to third party non-state armed actors in several countries in the area. The IISS stresses that through this policy Iran has avoided a direct conflict with its adversaries and that its capacity to mobilise different militias would permit it to raise a force of some 200,000 troops.

44. See the summary on Iran (nuclear) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2020: Report on Trends and Scenarios*. Icaria: Barcelona, 2020.
45. See the summary on Iraq in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts)

Map 3.1. **Gender, peace and security**
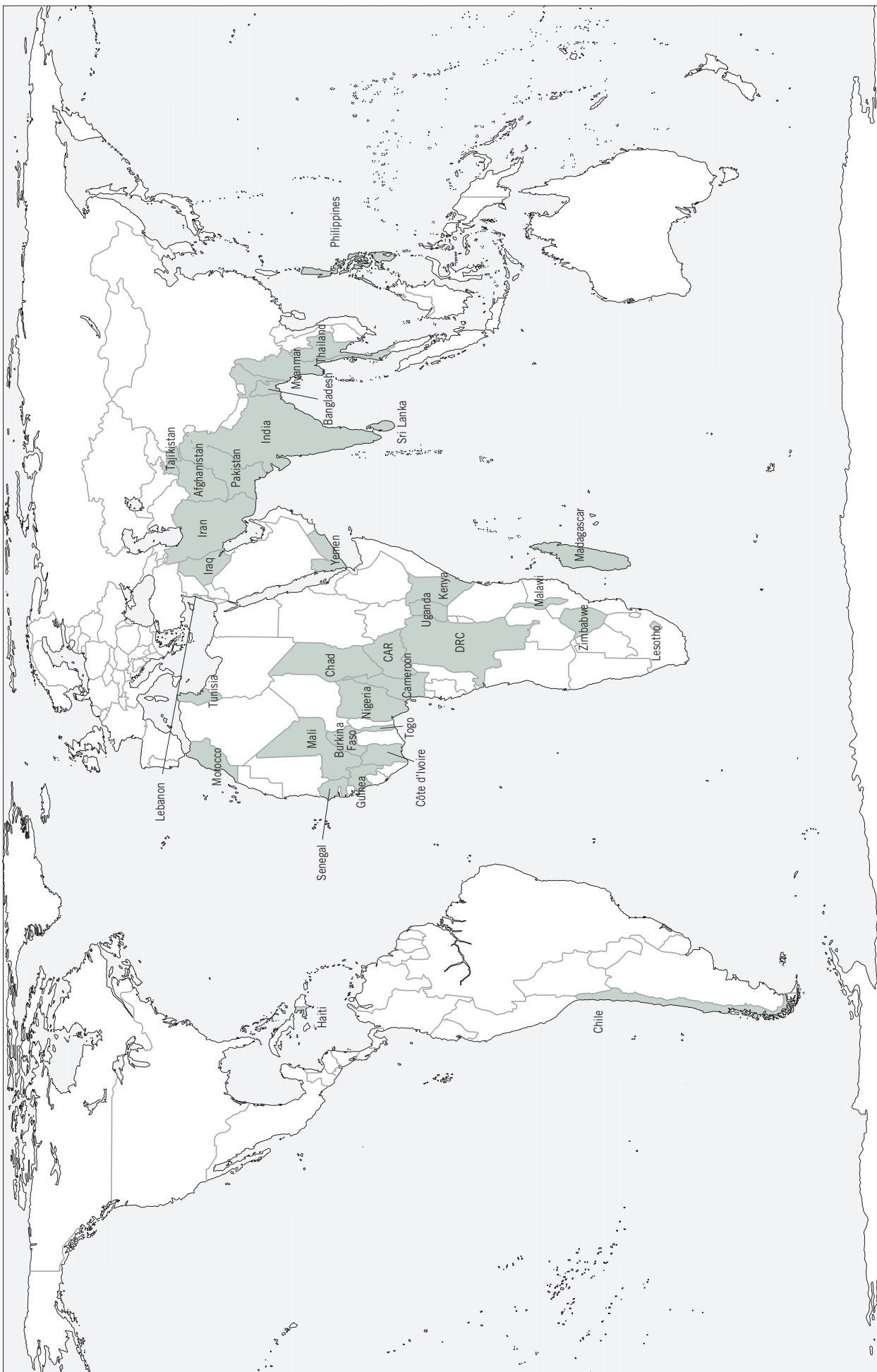
Countries with armed conflict and/or socio-political crises and high or very high levels of gender discrimination 2019

3. Gender, peace and security

- 83 per cent of the armed conflicts for which data on gender equality exist took place in contexts with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination.
- According to the ACLED research centre, during 2018 and 2019 women and girls represented 95 per cent of the victims of sexual violence in conflict zones.
- The UN Security Council passed a new resolution (2467) on sexual violence in armed conflict amidst controversy over the exclusion of the sexual and reproductive rights of the survivors of such violence.
- The UN Security Council recognised the links between forced displacement and sexual violence in conflict. According to the UNHCR, women and girls represent around half the population of internationally displaced persons.
- The gender impacts of conflict on men included, among others, the Chechen authorities' campaign of persecution against gay men or the forced conscription of Crimean men by the Russian Armed Forces.
- Women actively participated in the mass protests that took place in countries such as Lebanon, Algeria or Sudan.

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, a follow–up is made of the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. 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 also analyses the consequences of conflicts on lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual and intersexual (LGTBI) population and their participation in peacebuilding initiatives. 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. 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.

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.

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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 discrimination[3]

	Medium levels of discrimination	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination	Sin datos
Armed conflict[4]	Burkina Faso[5] DRC (3) India (2) Thailand	RCA Chad[6] Mali Myanmar Nigeria[7]	Afghanistan Cameroon[6] Iraq Pakistan (2) Philippines (2) Yemen (2)	Argelia Burundi Egypt Israel[9] Libya Níger[10] Palestine[11] Somalia Sudan (2) South Sudan Syria
Socio-political crises	Chile DRC (4)[12] Haiti India (5)[13] Kenya Senegal Thailand Tajikistan Zimbabwe	Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia Malawi Madagascar Nigeria (2) Philippines Sri Lanka Togo Tunisia Uganda (2)[14]	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Iraq (2) Lebanon (2)[15] Morocco Pakistan (2)	Angola Argelia Bahrein China (5) Congo, Rep. Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Gambia Guinea Bissau Israel (2) Kosovo Palestine[16] Saudi Arabia Somalia South Sudan Sudan (2) Syria Taiwan Uzbekistan Venezuela

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 comparing the data from this indicator with that of the countries that are affected by situations of armed conflict reveals that **14 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2019 occurred in countries where serious gender inequalities exist, with high or very high levels of discrimination; 6 in countries with medium levels of discrimination; and that 10 armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data in this regard –Algeria,**

20 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place in 2019 were in countries with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger Palestine,[17] Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan. Thus, 58 per cent of the armed conflicts for which gender equality data is available took place in contexts with high or very high levels of discrimination. This figure rises to 83 per cent if countries with medium levels of discrimination are included. Similarly, in 4 other countries where there were one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with low levels (Mozambique, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low levels (Colombia) of discrimination, according to the SIGI. As regards socio-political crises, **at least 42 of the 94 active**

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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 crises in that country appear between brackets.
5. Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali are engaged in a single armed conflict, called the Western Sahel Region.
6. Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are involved in a single armed conflict, called the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram).
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. Cameroon is also the scene of another armed conflict called Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West).
9. Israel and Palestine are involved in a single conflict.
10. See Note 6.
11. The SIGI labels Palestine as Gaza and the West Bank.
12. In the case of DRC, one of the crises is the international crisis called Central Africa (LRA), which involves both the Congolese Armed Forces and the self-defence militias of the DRC. See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
13. One of the crises in which India is involved is related to the crisis with Pakistan.
14. One of the crises in Uganda concerns the so-called Central Africa (LRA) crisis. See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
15. One of the crises in Lebanon relates to the crisis with Israel and Syria.
16. See Note 11.
17. Ibid.

cases of socio-political crisis during 2018 took place in countries where there are severe gender inequalities (medium, high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 57 per cent of the cases of socio-political crisis for which data were available. 21 socio-political crises took place in countries for which no data are available (Angola, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Burundi, China, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Gaza and the West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Uzbekistan and Venezuela).

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 2019 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts.[18] 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 2018 and analysed the situation in 19 countries, 13 of which experienced armed conflict: Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, 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.

It should be highlighted that, as was the case in 2018, nine of the 19 armed conflicts[19] 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. Six of these also saw an escalation of violence during 2019 compared to the previous year –Mali, Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (east), Colombia and Afghanistan. Most of the armed actors identified by the Secretary-General as responsible for sexual violence in armed conflict were non-state actors, some of whom had been included on UN terrorist lists.

The ACLED research centre also published a toll on the impact of sexual violence in conflict, noting that between the beginning of 2018 and June 2019, 400 incidents of sexual violence in conflict zones had been recorded globally, of which 140 took place in 2019.[20] Sexual violence accounted for more than a quarter of the political violence targeted specifically against women. According to ACLED, women and girls represented 95 per cent of the victims of sexual violence in conflict zones. As regards conflict zones, during 2018 the most affected countries were: DRC, South Sudan, Burundi, India and Sudan; and during the first months of 2019: DRC, India, South Sudan, Burundi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Throughout 2019, various reports established and expanded the evidence on the phenomenon of sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict in **Syria**. The investigations made public during this period documented, in particular, the abuses committed by the forces of the Syrian regime. A report by the Syrian Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) focusing on the experiences of former prisoners, analysed the experiences of more than 300 survivors since 2012, 91 of whom provided evidence of sexual and gender-based violence. The report, published in January, noted a range of crimes, including rape, threats of sexual violence, genital torture and restrictions on access to reproductive health care, against both men and women. Another study by Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (LDHR), released in March, focused on

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18. 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.
19. 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: CAR; DRC (East); DRC (East-ADF); DRC (Kasai); 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).
20. ACLED, *Fact Sheet: Sexual Violence in Conflict*, 19 June 2019.

The UN Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflicts, published in March 2019, 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.[22]

	STATE ACTORS	NON-STATE ACTORS
Iraq		ISIS
Mali		MNLA, part of Coordination des mouvements de Azawad; Ansar Eddine, part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin; Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest whose former members joined Islamic State in the Greater Sahara; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin; Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés, part of Platform coalition of armed groups/Plateforme des mouvements du 14 juin 2014 d'Alger.
Myanmar	Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw Kyi)	
CAR		Lord's Resistance Army; Ex-Séléka factions: Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Cen-trafrique, Front populaire pour la renaissance dela Centraf-rique – Gula faction, Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique – Abdoulaye Hussein faction, Rassemble-ment patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique; Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain – Abdoulaye Miskine; Révolution et justice; Retour, réclamation et réha-bilitation – Abbas Sidiki; Anti-balaka associated militia.
DRC	Forces armées de la République démocrati-que du Congo; Police nationale congolaise.	Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain-Janvier; Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et sou-verain-Rénové led by "General" Mapenzi Bulere Likuwe; Allied Democratic Forces; Forces pour la défense du Congo; Bana Mura militias; Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda; Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri; Kamuina Nsapu; Lord's Resistance Army; Nduma défence du Congo; Mai-Mai Kifuafua; All Mai-Mai Simba factions; Nyatura; Nduma défence du Congo-Rénové led by "General" Guidon Shimiray Mwissa; Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki; All Twa mili-tia.
Somalia	Somali National Army; Somali Police Force (and allied militia); Puntland forces.	Al-Shabaab
Sudan	Sudanese Armed Forc-es; Rapid Support Forc-es.	Justice and Equality Movement; Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid faction.
South Sudan	South Sudan People's Defence Forces; South Sudan National Police Service	Lord's Resistance Army; Justice and Equality Movement; pro-Riek Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army in Oppo-sition; Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition forces aligned with First Vice-President Taban Deng.
Syria	Syrian Arab Armed Forces; Intelligence services.	ISIS; Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (Levant Liberation Organization); Army of Islam; Ahrar al-Sham; Pro-Government forces, including the National Defence Forc-es militia.
Other cases		Boko Haram

the use of sexual violence against men. The document warns of its use to humiliate and silence prisoners in regime-controlled detention centres, with practices that allegedly include rape, forced sterilisation and genital burning and mutilation as a way of forcing confessions or obtaining submission. Of the 138 people interviewed by LDHR, more than 40 per cent admitted to having suffered some form of sexual assault and 90 per cent to having been forcibly undressed in front of their guards. Another report by UNFPA, published in May and based on testimonies collected in 2018, confirmed that violence and sexual harassment, domestic violence and early marriage continued to harm the lives of women and girls. The research highlighted the fact that fear of sexual violence had led to greater restrictions on women

and girls' mobility in some areas, against the backdrop of patriarchal customs and traditions. These restrictions were identified as the main obstacle to accessing assistance services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on **Myanmar**, set up by the UN Human Rights Council, published its specific report on the impact of sexual violence in the armed conflict.[23] The report notes that despite the fact that the Mission had verified cases of various forms of sexual violence being used on women, men and girls –rape, gang rape, sexual torture, sexual slavery– in the context of the military operations in

21. 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.
22. UN Security Council, *Sexual violence related to conflicts. Report of the Secretary–General,* S/2019/280, 29 March 2019.
23. Human Rights Council, *Sexual and gender-based violence in Myanmar and the gendered impact of its ethnic conflicts*, A/HRC/42/CRP.4, 22 August 2019.

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Kachin and Shan states, and particularly during the military operations in Rakhine state in 2017, resulting in the genocide of the Rohingya population, the Burmese government has not carried out any investigation or sought accountability, and the military authorities responsible for the operations continue to hold their positions of command. As a result, the independent fact-finding mission decided to publish this specific report, expanding the scope of its investigations and gathering new evidence on the perpetrators of sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict in the country.[24] In its first report in 2018, the Mission had already concluded that acts of sexual and gender-based violence constituted international crimes of torture and war crimes, as well as constituting crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. In the 2019 report, the Mission noted that sexual violence underlines the genocidal intent of the Myanmar Armed Forces to destroy the Rohingya population, with the killing of women and the infliction of severe physical and mental harm on Rohingya women and their living conditions, with the purpose of annihilating the Rohingya population. The report documents the widespread and systematic killing of women and girls, the systematic targeting of women and girls of reproductive age for rape, attacks on pregnant women and babies, mutilation and other injuries to their reproductive organs, physical marks on their bodies and injuries so severe that they are unable to have sex or conceive again. The International Mission noted that the Government of Myanmar completely evaded its responsibility to protect the population and to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for such serious human rights violations.

In early 2019, LGBTI activists and human rights organisations denounced a new campaign of persecution by the **Chechen** authorities against gay and bisexual men, and those perceived to be so. The Russian platform LGBTI Network filed a complaint with the Russian authorities at the end of January concerning the detention of at least 14 people in the Chechen capital city of Grozny, as well as acts of torture and at least one murder, which were motivated by the victim's sexual orientation. According to information obtained by the network, the detainees were beaten, sexually assaulted and tortured with electric currents, as well as forced to sign empty forms. In subsequent reports, the network reported that between late December 2018 and January 2019, 40 people had been arrested by the police in Chechnya due to their homosexuality. Of these figures, 14 people were held in facilities of the security forces. The organisation also estimated that 150 LGBTI people have been evacuated from Chechnya by the platform since April

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar reported that the Burmese Government had not conducted any investigation into sexual violence in the armed conflict, despite reports of rape, sexual torture and sexual slavery

2017. International organisations also echoed the reports of increased persecution of LGBTI people in Chechnya. In January, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) disseminated the Russian network's allegations. In April, Amnesty International reported that two years after the widespread persecution of gay men in Chechnya in 2017 –kidnapping, torture and murder– there had still been no accountability for these crimes. HRW published a report in May documenting and denouncing human rights violations against gay men, including illegal arrests, beatings and at least one rape at a compound of the Chechen regime's Department of Internal Affairs, located in the capital, Grozny. The report also denounced the impunity of the persecution suffered in 2017.

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.

In relation to the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel serving under his command, the strategy promoted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres continued to be implemented, although allegations continued to be received. According to the Secretary-General's 2019 report, progress[25] has been made in reinforcing the victim-centred approach, with new tools to prevent the recruitment of personnel with a history of sexual exploitation or abuse; increased collaboration with civil society and external experts, including the launch in 2019 of a Civil Society Advisory Board, which has a mandate to make proposals to intensify the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. However, many obstacles remained, such as difficulties for Member States to follow up on complaints from non-United Nations forces. **In his report, the Secretary-General identified the progress made and the commitments in the peacekeeping and humanitarian sectors, while urging greater efforts in development programmes**.

In relation to the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by military and civilian personnel deployed on peacekeeping and special political missions, **the report noted a decrease in the number of complaints in 2018 compared to 2017**. According to the report, there were 54 complaints (56 according to the United Nations'

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24. The mission had already submitted an initial report in 2018 on all the human rights violations committed in the context of the military operations in the country. For more information, see the chapter Gender, peace and security in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2019! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Icaria editorial, 2019.

25. UN Secretary-General, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*, A/73/744, 14 February 2019.

Conduct in UN Field Missions online database), compared to 62 in 2017 and 104 in 2016. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) received a further 33 complaints not included in the report for various reasons, including overlap with previous complaints and a lack of sufficient information to open an investigation, among others. 83 per cent of the 94 victims affected by the complaints were adults, and the remaining 17 per cent were minors. 34 of the 54 complaints (63 per cent) involved sexual exploitation of adults and the remaining 20 complaints (37 per cent) involved sexual abuse. 64 of the persons reported as perpetrators of sexual violence were military personnel, 14 were police officers and 14 were civilians. At the mission level, 74 per cent of the allegations involved the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The remaining 26 per cent involved the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). In addition, according to the UN online database, **80 complaints were received in 2019, 56 of which were related to sexual exploitation, 19 to abuse and 5 to both forms**. **The complaints affected 71 adult victims and 20 minors**.

In 2019, only 37 States granted refugee status to applicants who were persecuted on the basis of their gender orientation, identity or expression, despite the disproportionate levels of violence faced by the LGBTI population and their particular vulnerability

In addition, 94 complaints were filed against United Nations personnel working in bodies other than peacekeeping bodies. In the case of the World Food Programme (WFP), 19 complaints were received in 2018, 11 of them against WFP staff and 8 against external partners involved in the implementation of its programmes or projects. The total number of complaints in the previous 12 years was 26. The United Nations noted the difficulty of determining whether the sharp increase was due to a greater number of incidents or to a greater willingness to report them in a context of increased awareness. For the UNHCR, there was also a significant increase, with 34 complaints against agency staff in 2018 (compared to 19 in 2017), and 83 against external partners (compared to 20 in 2017). The United Nations also reported an increase in the number of complaints against non-United Nations personnel collaborating with the United Nations in the implementation of programmes or projects, with 109 complaints filed in 2018 (compared to 25 in 2017). In the case of UNICEF, the number of complaints rose from 8 in 2017 to 15 in 2018.

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. Impunity for human rights violations continued to be a recurring theme. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights, published in July 2019, examined the **continued impunity for human rights violations committed against human rights defenders**, including female human rights defenders and defenders of the rights of the LGBTI population.[26] It examined the main obstacles, compiled a list of best practices and proposed guidelines and recommendations. At the intersectional level, the report highlights the specific risks of violence faced by individuals, groups or movements depending on the type of rights they defend and also the economic or political interests they challenge. The Rapporteur warned of the risks faced by people defending gender equality, sexual diversity, the environment and land, among others. Among the obstacles that limit access to justice and create impunity for human rights violations, the report noted –among others– the lack of a differentiated and intersectional approach. In this regard, the Rapporteur noted the additional obstacles related to gender discrimination faced by female human rights defenders, including their stigmatisation. Specific obstacles also include the difficulty of assuming the costs associated with filing complaints and following up on cases in which they are responsible for family care, as well as the lack of protection mechanisms for family members and the physical and emotional costs of dealing with a system that reinforces gender stereotypes. The Rapporteur also highlighted the obstacles for LGBTI people to access justice, as well as indigenous peoples and people of African descent. To bring about change in this situation, the report raises the importance of a differential and intersectional approach.

In relation to violence against the **LGBTI population at global level**, the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, made an **appeal in July to States and other actors involved in the protection of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees to recognise their particularly vulnerable status and special requirements, and identified access to asylum as a basic element of protection** against the disproportionate levels of arbitrary detention, police abuse, violence and extrajudicial killings by state and non-state actors to which the LGBTI population is

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26. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation, A774/159, 15 July 2019.

Map 3.2. **Countries in armed conflict and with discriminatory legislation against the LGBTI population**
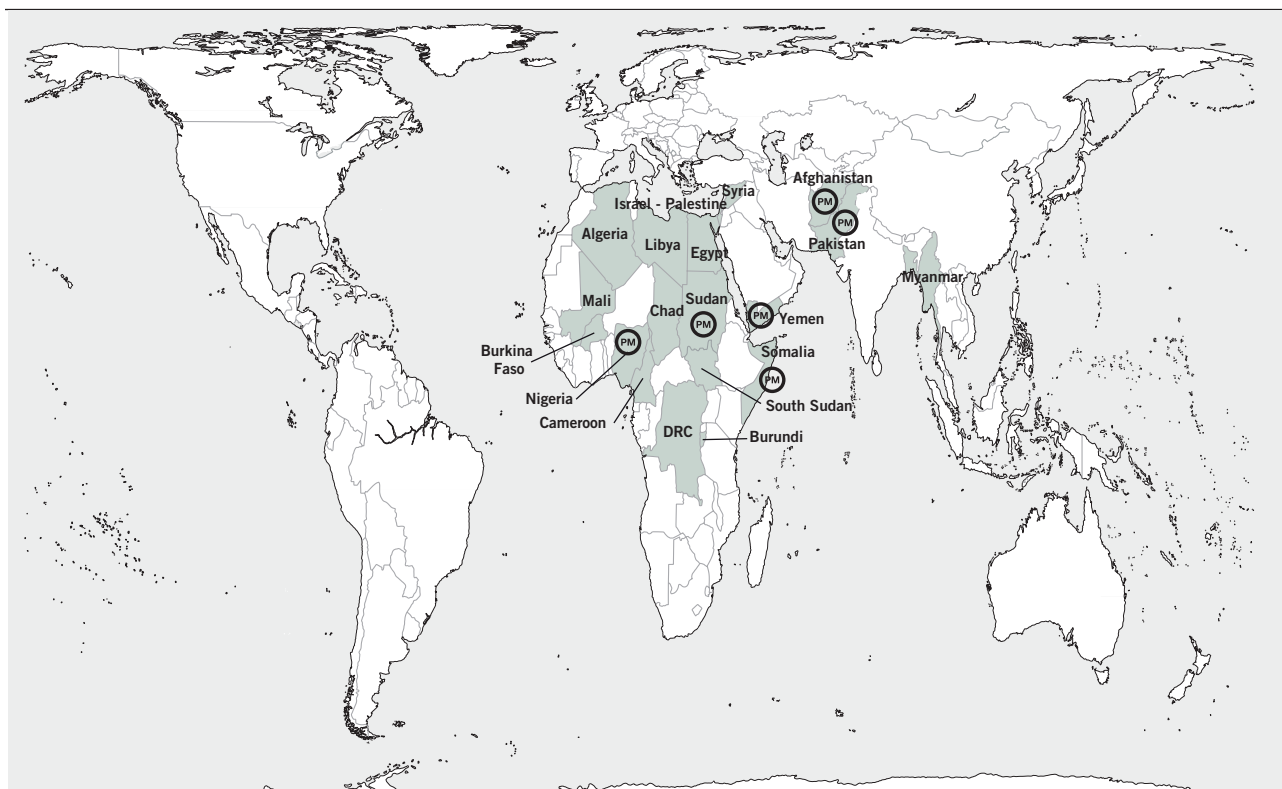
Countries in armed conflict in 2019 with discriminatory legislation against LGBTI population (this includes criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts, legal barriers to freedom of expression on sexual orientation issues and barriers to the establishment of NGOs).

Countries in armed conflict in 2019 where death penalty for LGTBI population is codified.

Source: Prepared by the authors, with data from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2019. Report on conlflicts, 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 3.3. **Armed conflicts in 2019 in countries with discriminatory legislation against the LGBTI population[27]**

AFRICA	ASIA	MIDDLE EAST
Algeria Burundi Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) DRC (east) DRC (east-ADF) DRC (Kasai) Lake Chad region (Boko Haram) Libya Mali Somalia Sudan (Darfur) Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) South Sudan Western Sahel Region	Afghanistan Myanmar Pakistan Pakistan (Baluchistan)	Egypt (Sinai) Israel - Palestine Syria Yemen (al-houtists) Yemen (AQAP)

Source: Prepared internally with data from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alerta 2020! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020. ILGA World: Lucas Ramón Mendos, *Homofobia de Estado 2019: Actualización del Panorama Global de la Legislación (State Homophobia 2019: Global Legislation Overview Update)*. Geneva, ILGA, December 2019.

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27. This list includes those countries included in the ILGA's report in the categories of Criminalisation (Consensual sexual acts between adults of the same sex and Consensual sexual acts between adults of the same sex) and Restriction (Restrictions on freedom of expression in issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics and Restrictions on the registration or running of civil society organisations). ILGA World: Lucas Ramón Mendos, *Homofobia de Estado 2019: Actualización del Panorama Global de la Legislación (State Homophobia 2019: Global Legislation Overview Update)*. Geneva; ILGA, December 2019.

subject in the countries from which they are forced to flee. They also face rights violations in the form of forced sterilisations, so-called "conversion therapies" and restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association. The independent expert therefore urged the States to ensure that well-founded fears of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual characteristics are accepted as grounds for the recognition of refugee status. According to their data, only 37 States granted asylum on such grounds.

Furthermore, in July the Independent Expert published his report on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, which addressed the discrimination suffered by LGBTI people worldwide in areas such as education, health care, housing and employment, among others, as well as the dynamics of inclusion for protection against violence.[28] The report specifically addressed the situation of LGBTI asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons. The report highlighted that the LGBTI community's structural vulnerability could be exacerbated due to the particular risk they face from violence, abuse and exploitation at all stages of their journey and at the hands of officials, traffickers and smugglers. The expert noted that LGBTI people often hid their identity as a means of survival, to avoid harassment and abuse and also to be able to access food and shelter. The report highlighted the importance of providing adequate housing and sanitation facilities, as well as access to permanent housing. **Stigma and discrimination had a particularly uncommon impact on migrants, displaced persons and refugees, as they specifically discouraged them from expressing their identity, which in turn led to obstacles to the filing of asylum claims linked to persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation.** LGBTI migrants living in an irregular legal situation can be at greater risk of violence, harassment and exploitation. Similarly, LGBTI migrants detained for illegal entry and stay could be subject to social isolation and physical and sexual violence, which is exacerbated in the case of transgender people. The report also warned of threats to the physical safety of unaccompanied LGBTI minors, including their difficulties in accessing services, safe accommodation, and having their specific psychosocial needs met.

The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, presented its annual report, which notes the **international situation in the area of forced displacements** and examines the global figures for 2018. A record 70.8 million people were displaced worldwide this year, 25.9 million of whom were refugees. With regard to the analysis of these data from a gender perspective, the sex-disaggregated figures available to UNHCR for the population of concern to

this agency indicated that 25.7 million were women and girls and 25.4 million were men and boys. It should be noted that 131 countries provided the UNHCR with sex-disaggregated figures, which is lower than the figure for 2017, when 147 countries provided such data. Figures referring specifically to the refugee population indicated that women and girls represented 48 per cent of this population, although in the specific case of Africa, for example, women constituted 52 per cent of the refugee population. It should be noted that resolution 2467 on women, peace and security adopted by the Security Council in 2019 identified the link between forced displacement and sexual violence in the context of armed conflict, noting that such violence can constitute a form of gender-based persecution, leading to eligibility for the recognition of asylum or refugee status. **In his 2019 report on women, peace and security, the UN Secretary-General noted that one in five refugee women in complex humanitarian situations had experienced sexual violence.**[29] Organisations such as Oxfam, noted that in situations of forced displacement linked to the global climate emergency, women were more vulnerable to violence and abuse, and gender inequalities made it more difficult to improve their living conditions.[30] UN Women also drew attention to the situation of displaced and refugee women. In a report on the living conditions of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon, it noted that gender inequalities and discrimination increase the risk of women and girls suffering physical and sexual violence and exploitation in the public and private spheres.[31] Syrian women represent just over half of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon and about 80 per cent of those interviewed by UN Women said they could not meet their basic needs and had great difficulty accessing humanitarian aid.

In the context of the armed conflict in **Ukraine**, its gendered impacts, including the impacts of militarisation on men, were once again highlighted. Thus, men living in the Crimea were affected by the roll-out of the ninth campaign of compulsory recruitment into the Russian Armed Forces. **In the spring months and up to June 2019, 3,300 men were conscripted in the Crimea, the largest number in any single campaign since the forced recruitment process began in 2015**. HRW reported that international humanitarian law explicitly prohibits Russia, as an occupying power, from forcing Crimean residents to enlist in its armed forces. HRW also denounced the filing of criminal charges against Crimean men who refused to be conscripted. Since 2015, Russia has forcibly conscripted between 18,000 and 18,900 men living on the peninsula.

The UN, NGOs and research centres warned of the situation of women and minors linked to the armed group Islamic State (ISIS) who are held in detention

28. Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity*, 17 July 2019, A/74/181.
29. UN Secretary-General, *Report on Women, Peace and Security*. S/2019/800. October 2019.
30. Oxfam, *Forced From Home: Climate-fuelled displacement*, 2019.
31. IPSOS Group SA, *Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon*, UN Women, 2018.

centres in north-east Syria, mostly controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) –a coalition dominated by the Kurdish group YPG. Of particular concern were the humanitarian conditions in the al-Hol refugee camp –also referred to as al-Hawi– in Hasakah province, which went from housing some 10,000 people in December 2018 to over 70,000 in April 2019, coinciding with the armed campaign that ended with the expulsion of ISIS from Baghouz, the group's last stronghold in the area. According to UN data, 94 per cent of the inhabitants of al-Hol were women or minors. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch warned of the serious problems faced above all by the 11,000 foreign women and children –from around 50 different nationalities– living in facilities attached to al-Hol. Around 7,000 are under 12. Following a field visit, HRW denounced the poor hygiene conditions, the proliferation of skin diseases, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, hepatitis, malnutrition, as well as the complications faced by pregnant women before, during and after childbirth. HRW and the think tank International Crisis Group (ICG) highlighted the legal ambiguity in which people held at al-Hol find themselves. Formally, they are not prisoners, but nor are they recognised as internally displaced persons, which makes their access to humanitarian aid difficult. The Kurdish forces believe that these people have been transferred to al-Hol to be repatriated to their respective countries. However, as the ICG points out, the various countries holding their nationals at al-Hol have adopted very different strategies: some had begun repatriations –including Russia, Malaysia, Uzbekistan or Kosovo– and others –such as Morocco or Tunisia– had no particular interest in their return, while Western countries –from the EU, Canada and Australia– had repatriated less than 200 people by October 2019.

It should be noted that a diverse range of women lived together at al-Hol, with very varied links to ISIS. Some of them are active militants of the organisation, but others established relations with the group on a circumstantial basis or in contexts of coercion –including some who were forcibly married to ISIS combatants. Against this backdrop, al-Hol is the scene of continuous disputes and acts of violence. ISIS militant women, followers of the extreme version of Islam promoted by the armed group, control the rest of the women and their clothing, throw stones, insult or threaten to burn down the shops of women and minors they consider to be infidels, among other practices. ICG noted that in late September, in just one week, two women were shot dead by guards in the building attached to al-Hol and the bodies of two others were found in the facility after they had been executed, allegedly after an ISIS activist had sentenced them to death. At the same time, the high vulnerability of the children living in this area has been highlighted, many of whom are unaccompanied minors with problems proving their nationality. According to some reports, some women are hiding orphaned children or pretending they are their own children for ideological reasons or because they believe this will increase their repatriation options. The very serious humanitarian situation in these centres was also affected by the violent dynamics of the armed conflict. The intensification of Turkish incursions into north-eastern Syria from October onwards raised alarms regarding volatility in the region and the fate of people held in these detention centres.

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.[32] 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.

In October, the **annual debate on women, peace and security was held at the UN Security Council** to coincide with the presentation of the UN Secretary-General's assessment report on the implementation of the agenda relating to this matter.[33] The Secretary-General's report collected the results of the independent assessment promoted by UN Women regarding the fulfilment of the commitments acquired in 2015 by the United Nations during the high-level review of the women, peace and security agenda; of the peacekeeping operations; and of the structure for peace consolidation. The independent assessment of the implementation of the commitments to the women, peace and security agenda noted that 50 per cent had been achieved or were on track to be achieved, 40 per cent were being implemented unevenly and 10 per cent had suffered setbacks or had made no progress at all.[34] It should be noted that among the commitments and recommendations established in 2015 that have not moved forward in recent years is that of including the gender perspective in peace agreements. In both 2017 and 2018 there was a decline in the number of

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32. See section 4.2.1. of this chapter.
33. Women, peace and security. UN Secretary-General, S/2019/800, UN Security Council, 9 October 2019.
34. Allen, L., *Mapping of the Gender Recommendations in the Three 2015 Peace and Security Reviews*, 2019.

agreements that included clauses concerning gender in their texts. Compared to 39 per cent of the 2015 agreements, only 27 per cent of the 2017 agreements and 7.7 per cent of the 2018 agreements had clauses on gender issues. Recommendations not to resort to formulas such as the creation of advisory councils or observer status to promote the inclusion of women, but rather to promote meaningful participation with advocacy powers, are also not being taken into account.

Among the highlights of the year is the **approval of Resolution 2467**, promoted by the German Government and passed by a majority on the UN Security Council with the abstentions of China and Russia. The Resolution was adopted amidst high tensions between Governments on the Security Council and was the subject of significant criticism by many civil society organisations. At different times during the drafting process of the Resolution, the United States, Russia and China threatened to veto it. The text of the Resolution, concerning sexual violence in armed conflicts, underwent important changes in order to gain approval, since the inclusion of the issue of sexual and reproductive rights for the victims of sexual violence in conflicts led to its rejection by the US government, which refused to approve it if this formula was not excluded, despite the fact that the previous Resolution 2106 of 2013 already referred to this issue and Resolution 2467 mentions it in one of the preamble paragraphs. Other issues that also had to be excluded from the text in order for the Resolution to be approved were the adoption of a formal mechanism within the Security Council regarding sexual violence in armed conflict (for example, a working group), the inclusion of references to the referral of cases to the International Criminal Court or the recognition of the LGBTI population's vulnerability to this violence.[35] Civil society, for its part, once again insisted that it was not necessary to add new resolutions to the agenda, but rather that the priority should be the effective implementation of the commitments made by governments over the last two decades, while it also expressed its serious concern for all the aspects that should have been excluded, such as sexual and reproductive rights or the link to the International Criminal Court. In any case, certain positive aspects of this Resolution were highlighted, such as the adoption of a survivor-centred approach in the design of responses to this violence, as well as greater attention to the continuum of violence that precedes the use of sexual violence in armed conflict. The resolution addressed the issue of children born as a result of rape, identifying the need to provide more and better support to these

In 2019, only 34 per cent of the national action plans relating to Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security had a specific budget devoted to the issue and only 30 per cent contained references to the issue of disarmament

children. There was also more explicit recognition of the links between sexual violence and forced displacement, as well as greater consideration of male and child victims of sexual violence. Civil society organisations pointed out that some of the issues that had not been addressed strongly enough in the Resolution were, for example, the accountability of peacekeepers or the situation of female human rights defenders.[36] In October, coinciding with the open debate on the Security Council, another new resolution, Resolution 2493, was adopted, which for the first time mentioned the need for context-specific analyses in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and also the importance of regional organisations.

With regard to the national action plans regarding Resolution 1325, **during 2019 four countries adopted new plans: Bangladesh, Namibia, Lebanon and Armenia**. Therefore, a total of 83 countries had a plan in place by the end of 2019, representing 43 per cent of UN member countries. According to the analysis of these plans carried out by the international organisation WILPF, of the 83 existing plans, only 34 per cent of them had a specific budget allocated to the implementation of the plan and only 30 per cent of the plans in force included references to the issue of disarmament. During 2019, nine countries committed to developing their first national action plan with an eye on the 2020 review: Uruguay, Cyprus, Malta, Egypt, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

In October, the third joint mission of the United Nations and the African Union (AU) on the women, peace and security agenda was conducted, including a visit to the Horn of Africa region led by the AU Special Envoy for this agenda, Bineta Diop, and the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed. During the regional visit, they travelled to Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea, where they met with both government representatives and civil society organisations. In the case of Ethiopia, the meetings with various female government ministers and discussions on the country's regional leadership in the area of women's political participation are worthy of note. In Somalia, the focus of the visit was women's participation in the elections and their role in preventing violent extremism. In Djibouti, the focus was on women's participation in governance, and in Eritrea it was strongly economic in nature, with meetings focusing on the economic empowerment of women. The delegation also included representatives from UN Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

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35. Davis, Sara E. and True, J., *Pitfalls, Policy, and Promise of the UN's approach to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the New Resolution 2467*, PRIO, 2019.
36. Madeleine Rees, *Madeleine Rees on UN Security Council Resolution 2476*, WILPF, 2019.

3.3.2. Gender issues in peace negotiations[37]

Several peace processes were relevant from a gender point of view during the year 2019. 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.

Colombia

In Colombia, challenges continued to be faced in the application of the gender perspective in the peace agreement reached by the Government and the FARC in 2016, which is currently being implemented. Various agencies published reports on the implementation of the gender perspective. The organisation Instancia Especial de Mujeres para el Enfoque de Género en la Paz (*Women's Special Body for the Gender Perspective in Peace*) published its three-year assessment report on the implementation of the gender perspective. In this assessment, female civil society representatives pointed out that some of the structural causes of inequality and violence that have a particular impact on women and rural, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Palenquero and Raizal communities in the country, as well as on the LGTBI population, remain unaddressed. They criticised the blurring of gender as a central pillar of implementation, since the Framework Implementation Plan limits its cross-cutting nature. However, the report highlighted the Government's decision to establish the governmental department known as the Alta Instancia de Género (*High Authority on Gender*). Furthermore, they pointed out the high level of ignorance that exists within institutions in the country's various territories, both regarding the peace agreement itself and the gender perspective and other differentiated perspectives. The Kroc Institute also presented its monitoring report on the gender perspective, which noted the difficulties and delays in implementing this perspective.[38] Compared to 27 per cent of the overall commitments of the agreement whose implementation had not been commenced by August 2019, 42 per cent of the commitments with regard to the gender perspective had not been commenced. In addition, only 8 per cent of the gender perspective commitments had been completed, compared to 25 per cent for the agreement as a whole. Kroc noted that the greatest progress was made on the issue of victims' rights.

> *In Colombia, challenges continued to be faced in the application of the gender perspective in the peace agreement*

On the other hand, in its report on the human rights situation in Colombia during 2019, the OHCHR acknowledged that some efforts had been made, such as the recognition as victims by the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición (*Commission for Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition*) of female human rights defenders, women and the LGBTI community who have been victims of sexual violence. However, the High Commissioner urged the Government to make progress in implementing the provisions of the agreement relating to the ethnic and gender perspective, taking into account some of the challenges that both women and the LGBTI community face in the country. Thus, high rates of sexual violence were recorded in the country, the highest in the last 10 years, with 52.3 victims per 100,000 inhabitants. Women and, above all, the LGBTI population experienced enormous difficulties in participating in the electoral processes in the country. Women accounted for 37 per cent, and openly LGBTI persons for 0.06 per cent, of the candidates who competed in the various electoral processes.

Georgia

In Georgia, meetings continued to take place during the year between government representatives involved in the peace process and Georgian civilians affected by the conflict, including women's organisations. This is a practice initiated by UN Women in 2013 and subsequently organised by the government, with support from the United Nations, and is reflected in Georgia's national action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The meetings addressed both issues dealt with at the highest level of the peace process –the so-called Geneva International Discussions– and those addressed in the incident prevention mechanisms (IPRMs). At the various meetings, the participating women's organisations shared priorities, such as the need to address the security situation around the border line and barriers in the border area and to have greater access to information regarding the system of direct communication between the parties in conflict in order to conduct incident management. Furthermore, they urged the resumption of the IPRM specific to the conflict region of Abkhazia. They also noted the need to promote human rights instruments, especially for women and girls, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. They also emphasised the problems of freedom of movement and economic difficulties in the border areas in conflict as a factor leading to the exodus of the population, especially young people, from these areas. They also called for improvements in road infrastructure,

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37. For more exhaustive information on the inclusion of the gender perspective in the currently active peace processes, please consult the yearbook of Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Trends and Scenarios.* Icaria: Barcelona, 2020.
38. Kroc Institute, UN Women, FDIM and Sweden, *Towards a sustainable peace through gender equality. Second monitoring report on the gender perspective in the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia*, December 2019

telephone and internet coverage, irrigation systems and health services, among others.

Yemen and Syria

During 2019, women's organisations, activists and feminists in the Middle East continued to demand greater protagonism and material presence in public and political life, including in the negotiation processes to define the future of their countries. In Yemen and Syria, through different initiatives and forums, women demanded a minimum presence of 30 per cent. In this regard, as far as Yemen is concerned, the negotiations promoted by the UN that led to the so-called Stockholm Agreement in December 2018 included only one woman in the negotiating delegations. In the case of Syria, the establishment at the end of 2019 of a constitutional committee within the framework of the Geneva peace process, also sponsored by the United Nations, was welcomed as a positive development, among other things, due to the almost 30 per cent representation of Syrian women. In both contexts, *ad-hoc* women's formations also continued to be active, with the intention of advising the respective UN special envoys (the Syrian Women's Advisory Board in the case of Syria, and the Technical Advisory Group in the case of Yemen). At the same time, both in more formal settings and in civil society organisations, emphasis was placed on identifying priorities which, from the point of view of women, are crucial for the transformation of armed conflicts. In the case of Yemen, emphasis was placed on the need to urgently address the humanitarian requirements of the population, curb the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence, address the issue of detained and missing persons, halt the use of child soldiers and take measures to prevent the proliferation of weapons. In Syria, a number of women's organisations made proposals to address issues such the inclusion of a feminist outlook in a new Constitution, the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees from the conflict, and a post-war reconstruction that takes into account women's needs and abilities.

South Sudan

In April, women's organisations in South Sudan called on the transitional government to implement the peace agreement, which calls for 35 per cent of ministries to be led by women. According to a study published by Oxfam, women have actively participated in the various peace processes that have taken place in South Sudan in various forums and levels, although they have generally been excluded from decision-making and the exercise of power.[39] However, civil society organisations have repeatedly demanded greater participation and inclusion, as well as demanding that women's rights and gender-based violence be considered essential aspects of the various peace agreements that have been

signed since 2005. Obstacles that have prevented them from participating in a more significant way include the violence, threats and intimidation they have suffered, as well as the lack of access to necessary resources. Although the various agreements have established participation quotas to ensure the inclusion of women, they have not been respected, which prevents women from being able to exercise their rights to political participation without discrimination. Women's organisations have mobilised in recent years to demand the implementation of the various peace agreements that have been reached.

Women Mediation Networks

In September, the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks was launched, an initiative that aims to improve coordination in the work of the regional networks that comprise it: Mediterranean Women Mediation Network, Nordic Women Mediation Network, Arab Women Mediation Network, FEMWISE Africa and Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth. The objectives of this global alliance are to share information, create synergies and avoid duplication; to create a platform for mutual support between networks; to perform joint advocacy and outreach where relevant; to develop joint actions to improve women's participation and influence in peace processes at all levels: local, national, regional and international, and at all stages; implement joint actions to ensure better gender outcomes in peace agreements and implementation frameworks; work and establish contacts with international mediators to ensure that women's participation in peace processes is prioritised, proposing names for high-level mediation positions, connecting first, second and third track diplomacy initiatives. The presentation of the Global Alliance took place during the 74th session of the UN General Assembly and brought together representatives from all the regional networks.

OSCE

In December 2019, the OSCE launched a document with tools for women's participation and effective peace processes, in order to respond to the need for measures to ensure the participation of women in peace negotiations in the OSCE area in which inter-governmental organisation plays a facilitating and mediating role. The guide contains practical proposals for OSCE mediators, rotating presidencies, member states as well as the executive structures of the organisation. According to data from *Alert 2020*, in 2019 there were no forums for direct participation in formal negotiations in peace processes under OSCE mediation, and only in the case of Georgia were there institutionalised mechanisms for indirect participation. The document itself points out that throughout its history the OSCE has barely assigned any mediation, facilitation or moderation roles to women in the four formal peace processes in Ukraine, Georgia

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39. Soma, Esther, *Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan's National Peace Processes*, 2005–2018, Oxfam, January 2020.

(Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh).[40] Of 52 special and personal representatives/envoys, working group coordinators and co-chairs, only one has been a woman, and served as a special representative of the rotating presidency in Ukraine and of the Trilateral Contact Group. Also according to the OSCE, a woman represented the OSCE as a co-mediator in the working group on humanitarian affairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID, the name given to Georgia's peace process). If the focus is extended to inter-governmental co-mediating organisations, one woman has served as UN co-chair in the GID and another as EU co-mediator in the GID's humanitarian affairs working group. Furthermore, only one of the 14 managerial positions of the OSCE's Mission to Moldova (involved in the peace process concerning the status of Transdniestria) has been held by a woman.

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.

During 2019 several countries in Africa and the Middle East were once again the scene of massive popular protests against their respective rulers and political regimes. In countries such as **Lebanon** and **Algeria**, women played a particularly prominent role in the protests and drew attention to demands linked to the patriarchal system, gender inequalities and women's rights. There was a strong presence by Lebanese women on social networks, used during the protests as a means to voice their grievances and demands. Women were also at the front line of the barricades and formed human barriers between the security forces and the protesters as a way to avoid an escalation of tensions and preserve the peaceful nature of the protests. The perspective of Lebanese women allowed for the amplification of the complaints way beyond mere criticisms aimed at the political class, poor governance, the inefficiency of public services and problems resulting from an economy in crisis. Thus, intersectional issues and structural challenges facing women were given greater visibility, including legal discrimination in citizenship matters –which, among other things, does not allow Lebanese women to pass on their nationality to their children–; personal status laws –which regulate family issues such as marriage, divorce, custody or inheritance from religious jurisdictions rather than civil courts and which also include multiple discriminatory provisions– and deficits in regulations aimed at combating gender-based violence –which, for example, do not punish marital rape. In this sense, Lebanese women denounced the multiple oppressive practices arising from the patriarchal society and the political-confessional regime

in force in the country. It should be noted that many Lebanese women's organisations have for years been promoting greater representation in political decision-making, and in particular a 30 per cent quota, which has not been adopted. Indeed, in Lebanon the presence of women in Parliament continues to be low, among the lowest in North African and Middle Eastern countries. As regards Algeria, various media outlets highlighted the massive presence and leadership of women (in figures considered to be unprecedented) in the protests against the political powers that have been taking place in the country since February with the intention of putting an end to the regime of Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Some analysts highlighted the demand for the acceptance of women in public spaces and the citizenship rights of Algerian women, and linked the eminently peaceful nature of the protests to their mass participation. Participation in the protests by an iconic figure of the Algerian war of liberation such as Djamila Bouhired (83) was interpreted as a reminder that, despite the participation of many women in the war of independence, the current unequal system requires an active response from women to ensure equal rights.

In **Sudan**, the military leadership of President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in April, and the fall of the military was marked by mass protests by civil society groups and, in particular, by Sudanese women's organisations. After the fall of the regime, dozens of feminist organisations in the country continued to demand structural changes in relation to women's rights, asking for greater participation in the executive and legislative bodies, as well as a greater presence at the peace negotiation tables. Months after the mass social protests, various sources had drawn attention to the fact that women were still absent from the new regime. For three decades, the al-Bashir regime had developed repressive legislation to subjugate women, with the aim of satisfying the ultraconservative Islamic forces backing the regime. Despite having led the fall of the regime, various sources indicated that civil society groups and the army had begun to negotiate the country's political future, and women were once again being sidelined, as highlighted, among others, by Sara Abdelgalil, one of the few female representatives in the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), one of the main groups organising the protests.[41] In this sense, the activists stressed that the absence of women leaders in the new regime was an equality matter and, moreover, affected the quality of the transition and, ultimately, the success of the revolution. Of the dozens of civilians who participated in the negotiations, only one was a woman, Mervat Hamadelneel, unknown in activist circles. These organisations raised criticism of the leadership shown by the civil society groups that have been negotiating the political transition, the FFCs, which have been more open to reaching a compromise with the military junta than with the population they were supposed to represent.

40. OSCE, *Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes: A Toolkit*, OSCE, 2019.
41. Justin Lynch, *Women fueled Sudan's revolution, but then they were pushed aside*, Independent, 4 August 2019.

Women from **Ukrainian** civil society groups created the Civil Society Network for the Implementation of the CEDAW and Women, Peace and Security Resolutions. The initiative was established in February 2019, within the framework of a seminar organised by the Democracy Development Centre (DDC) and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The network aims to coordinate the preparation of CEDAW shadow reports by civil society groups, as well as to facilitate the exchange of information between organisations. At the launch, the participants highlighted the lack of women's participation and representation in the peace process, as well as denouncing the impacts of the conflict, including an increased prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, disproportionate impacts of the economic and political instability on women, including rural women, Roma women and other minorities.

Women's civil society organisations continued to advocate for a negotiated solution to the conflict between **North and South Korea** and carried out various initiatives. The Korea Peace Now platform, composed of several women's organisations (Women Cross DMZ, Nobel Women's Initiative, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Korean Women's Movement for Peace) published a report on the gender and humanitarian impact of the sanctions imposed on North Korea by the international community.[42] The report, prepared by a group of independent experts, concludes that sanctions are hampering humanitarian access to the country's most vulnerable population, even affecting some of the country's main humanitarian challenges such as chronic food insecurity, lack of access to basic health services, deterioration of the WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) environment, as well as high vulnerability to natural disasters. The report also highlighted the impact of the sanctions on the country's economic network –in economic sectors with a significant presence of women– as well as on society as a whole, exacerbating the rates of domestic violence, sexual violence and trafficking and prostitution of women, as well as the burdens of care that fall primarily to women,

with a significant impact on the living conditions of Korean women.

More than 50 women's organisations in **Cameroon** supported the memorandum "Voices of Cameroonian Women in the National Dialogue Process", presented in September 2019 in Yaounde and prepared by the Women's Consultation Platform for National Dialogue. The Platform is a forum that brings together women from various backgrounds in Cameroon and its diaspora, with the aim of promoting sustainable peacebuilding in the country, which has been gripped by an armed conflict between the State and guerrillas in the English-speaking regions. The document underlines the need for women's voices to be included in the forums with equal participatory strength in order to make a material and constructive contribution to the National Dialogue that took place between 30 September and 4 October. The memorandum is the result of five direct consultation forums held since July with members of the Consultation Platform, an online data collection mechanism, as well as the incorporation of the preliminary results of a participatory gender analysis study on the conflict. The memorandum contains general recommendations for the National Dialogue, including strengthening the participation and inclusiveness of the National Dialogue, involving women, young people and the elderly, and creating a climate that facilitates freedom of expression without fear of reprisals, among others, as well as recommendations on issues specifically affecting women. These include: the establishment of measures to reduce the impunity of perpetrators of gender-based violence; the institutionalisation of peace education; simplified mechanisms for access to birth and identity certificates destroyed in the conflict; the implementation of laws and policies on decentralisation; women's representation and the inclusion of the gender perspective in all the commissions to be created in the framework of the national dialogue; a bilateral ceasefire, holistic programmes that respond to the needs of women, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, children, young adults, the elderly, among others, as well as the establishment of specialised trauma structures to address issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, among other recommendations.
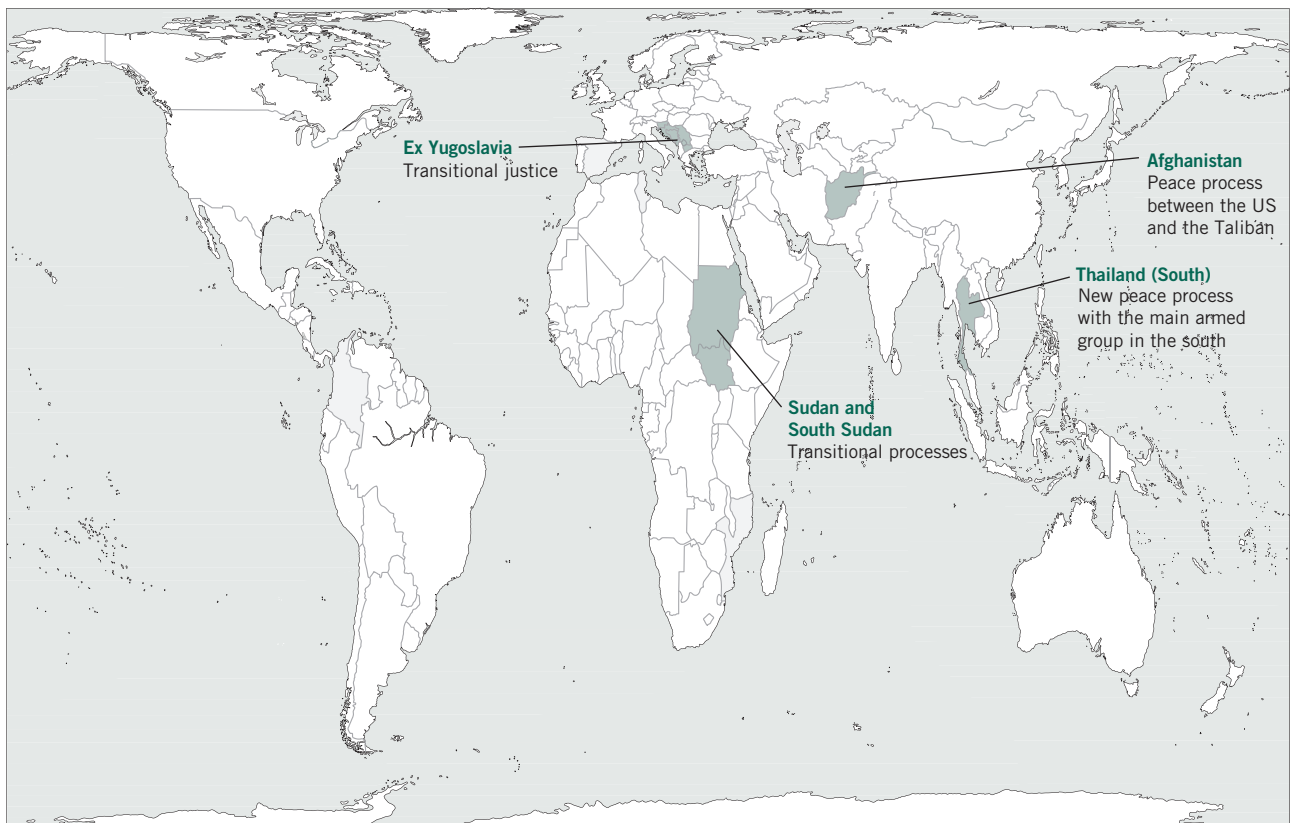
42. Féron, H., Eriksson Fortier, E., Gray, K., Kim, S., O'Reilly, M., Park, K. B., Yoon, J., *The Human Costs and Gendered Impact of Sanctions on North Korea*, Korea Peace Now, 2019.

4. Opportunities for peace in 2020

After analysing the year 2019 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 2020. They are contexts where there is, or has been, an armed conflict or socio-political crisis in the past where a series of factors converge that could lead to a positive turn in the situation and/or issues of the international agenda that may, in the short to mid-term, contribute to building peace. The opportunities identified for 2020 refer to the negotiations between the Taliban and the United States in the case of Afghanistan; the prospects for transition in Sudan and South Sudan; the new negotiation process between the Thai Government and the BRN, the main armed group in the south of the country; and the civil society's drive for transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia against political blockades through a regional registry of victims.

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 2020**

Ex Yugoslavia
Transitional justice

Afghanistan
Peace process
between the US
and the Taliban

Thailand (South)
New peace process
with the main armed
group in the south

Sudan and
South Sudan
Transitional processes

4.1. Taliban-US negotiations, an opportunity for peace in Afghanistan?

The armed conflict in Afghanistan is undoubtedly one of the most serious war scenarios in recent times. Decades of war have left a devastating legacy in terms of deaths, wounded populations, destroyed basic infrastructure, humanitarian emergencies, serious human rights violations and profound gender inequalities, among many other aspects. Since the United Nations mission in the country, UNAMA, began collecting data on civilian deaths in 2009, over 35,000 civilians have died as a direct consequence of armed violence and a considerably higher number have been injured. To this figure are added the tens of thousands of deaths of insurgents and Afghan and foreign soldiers deployed in the country. The rights of women and girls have been seriously violated at all stages of the armed conflict, alongside multiple human rights violations against the entire civilian population, including war crimes. Amidst the intensification of violence, in January 2019 the Taliban and the US government announced the start of a negotiating process based on a framework agreement that should have been detailed throughout the negotiations, by which the US promised to withdraw its troops deployed in the country and the Taliban pledged to guarantee that Afghanistan would not be used by terrorist groups to carry out attacks again. After several months of direct negotiations between a Taliban delegation led by Mullah Baradar Akhund and a US delegation led by Afghan diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad, the planned signing of an agreement was announced in August in the US, but US President Donald Trump surprisingly called it off. However, the negotiations subsequently continued, making the signing of an agreement likely in 2020.

Since the US invasion of the country in 2001, there have been many unsuccessful attempts to conduct peace negotiations to end the conflict. These negotiations have always had a double dimension. On the one hand, the Afghan government had tried to lead a peace process with all the Afghan actors involved in the armed conflict, generally known as an intra-Afghan dialogue or process. For example, the High Peace Council was created in 2010 under the government of Hamid Karzai, whose first president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated in an attack in 2011. However, the Taliban always refused to conduct direct negotiations with the Afghan government and demanded direct talks with the US government on the grounds that the Afghan government was still a US "puppet". Regional actors such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Russia and others have also played an important role at different times, either by promoting rapprochement between actors, hindering

An agreement between the Taliban insurgency and the United States could allow for a considerable reduction in violence in the country and open the door to broader and possibly more inclusive negotiations

dialogue or transferring geopolitical interests to the negotiating arena.

However, the negotiating process reached a turning point in 2019. An agreement between the Taliban insurgency and the United States could allow for a considerable reduction in violence in the country and open the door to broader and possibly more inclusive negotiations. The talks between the US and the Taliban are a process involving elites and are totally exclusive to Afghan society and closely linked to the US government's political need to reduce its presence or withdraw its troops from the country. Therefore, they are not a process aimed at building a sustainable and transformative peace in the country that considers the very serious impacts that violence has had on the population or the human rights violations that have been committed in recent decades. However, this agreement could produce a way out of the impasse, opening opportunities for both high-level processes between the Taliban and the Afghan government and broader ones of national dialogue that are more inclusive of civil society and crucial actors such as women's organisations. Thus, the challenge is to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by a possible reduction in armed confrontations to undertake deeper transformations and give impetus to transformative peace initiatives that do include inclusivity and human rights as central aspects of the agenda. Under the leadership of the United Nations, the international community can play an important role in supporting a process that must obey local dynamics and logic and not external impositions that distort it. Furthermore, the Afghan government must be able to cope with inevitable challenges such as the significant participation of Afghan women in the process and accountability for the serious human rights violations that the different actors involved in the armed conflict have committed and continue to commit in the country. These are basic and concrete demands of important parts of Afghan civil society.

A future scenario for building peace in the country will face significant obstacles, since a potential peace agreement between the United States and the Taliban will not mean the full end of the armed conflict in the country, although it will undoubtedly mean reducing the main focus of violence. Thus, the question remains as to what the relationship between the Taliban and Afghan security forces will be and what will happen to other armed actors, mainly ISIS, since it is not clear if the Taliban can control their actions. Furthermore, as part of a process with the Afghan government,

the political fit of the Taliban and their acceptance or rejection of the current Afghan constitutional and institutional framework will have to be addressed. Thus, there is the possibility of a transitional process that strengthens the situation of impunity and power of armed actors, with exclusive institutions or, on the contrary, a transitional process that presents an opportunity to consolidate a human rights agenda and opens broader spaces for social participation. This opportunity should not be a parenthesis in a conflict that has left such a deep legacy of destruction in Afghan society, but should serve to initiate a truly sustainable and inclusive peace process in which to tackle the challenges and pending reforms to achieve substantial improvement in the living conditions of the Afghan population.

4.2. Prospects for transition in Sudan and South Sudan

After years of instability and armed conflict in Sudan and South Sudan, both countries experienced various political scenarios in 2019 that have opened the door to two transitional processes that can achieve peace and stability. If the transitions are successful, the next step will be to hold elections so that the citizens of each country can once again choose their respective governments, thereby turning the page on the previous regimes. Each country faces a complex process with difficulties and challenges that will have to be addressed in each context, but this is also the best possible scenario after years of instability that have pummelled the populations of both neighbouring states.

In Sudan, 2019 was a year of change after the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir and the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) after 30 years in power under an autocratic regime erected from the militarisation of the state. The last wave of popular protests that started in December 2018, but went back to 2012, led to the fall of the government in April and the creation of a Transitional Military Council (TMC) that announced that it would be in power for two years. After months of major tension in the country due to the military's refusal to hand over power to civilians and following significant internal and international pressure, especially from the African Union, a hybrid transitional government was formed. This new government was made up of civilians and the military and was ratified in mid-August, chaired by economist Abdalla Hamdok as prime minister and by Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the chief general of the TMC, as president of the Sovereign Council. The established agreements stipulated that a transitional process would begin that would last 39 months before holding elections and returning power to the people, during which time the transitional government would work on legal and economic reforms and outlining a balanced foreign policy.

The new Sudanese government has been taking different measures aimed at a new process of democratic openness. These include the implementation of legal reforms to increase the protection of civil liberties and the initiation of judicial processes on crimes and human rights violations produced in the country to try to end impunity. Pressured by the demands of Sudanese civil society, it has also taken steps against the old regime, dissolving the old ruling party (NCP). The Sudanese women's movement, which played a key role in the popular protests that led to al-Bashir's ouster, remains very active in the country. For example, it demands that

The formation of transitional unity governments in Sudan and South Sudan opens a new scenario for achieving peace and stability in the region

the new transitional government adhere to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which had not been ratified by the country due to the previous government's refusal. Another scenario that the new government is influencing is related to the de-escalation of violence in the war-torn regions of Darfur and South Kordofan and Blue Nile (the last two of which are also called "the Two Areas"), resuming the peace talks currently taking place in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.[1] Resolving these armed conflicts is a priority on the government's new agenda, having established a period of six months since its creation to bring peace to the war-torn regions through the signing of a road map for peace on 11 September called the Juba Declaration of Confidence-Building Measures and the Preparation for Negotiation. In this regard, some positive steps have been taken to reduce armed violence in Darfur and the Two Areas through different measures, such as ceasefire decrees, releases of political prisoners, facilitation of the arrival of humanitarian aid, etc. Although the Juba peace negotiations have not been able to achieve the objective of reaching a peace agreement in the territories within the six months stipulated, they remain open with positive prospects for producing a stable agreement.

In South Sudan violence fell significantly in 2019, in a context characterised by the parties' ratification in 2018 of the peace agreement signed in 2015, under the new Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). This scenario has led to the signing of the longest-running ceasefire between the two main groups that started the armed conflict in December 2013. The reduction in military hostilities has improved the security situation, facilitated the free movement of people and helped to provide humanitarian aid. This last aspect is essential in a country that reported around 4.3 million people forcibly displaced by violence in late 2019, according to UNHCR data. These figures ranked South Sudan as the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the third largest in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan.[2] Similarly, as part of the R-ARCSS, the parties agreed to establish an eight-month pre-transition period, at which time a transitional coalition government was to be set up. Although the anticipated initial deadlines were not met, the formation of the long-awaited unity government in early 2020 opened a new scenario of transition and hope in the country. It is still too early to judge the parties' ability to maintain unity in the country, as there are different challenges to resolve (territorial decentralisation, reform of the security

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1. See the summary on Sudan in chapter 1 (Peace negotiations in Africa) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus: Report on Trends and Scenarios.* Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.
2. UNHCR, "South Sudan Refugee Crisis", viewed on 14 January 2020.

system, etc.), but the formation of the new government is undoubtedly an important step in de-escalating the conflict at the national level and provides an opportunity to establish peace.

To this new scenario of opportunity in both countries, we must also add the important diplomatic progress made between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan in 2019. These improved relations can be observed in the signing of a historic border delimitation agreement between both governments and in each country's greater commitment to resolving its neighbour's armed conflicts. In the first case, the two countries have reopened border crossings to improve bilateral trade and freedom of movement, signing an agreement delimiting the shared border in August 2019, leaving only five areas subject to new negotiations: Dabba al-Fukhar, Jabal al-Muqainis, Kaka, Kefi Kenji and Hofrat Al-Nehass. In the second case, the government of South Sudan has offered to mediate in peace talks between the government of Sudan and the rebel forces of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, which are taking place in Juba, the South Sudanese capital. Similarly, the Sudanese government has done the same in relation to the armed conflict in South Sudan,

influencing Salva Kiir's government and the main opposition group, the SPLA-IO, led by Riek Machar.

The main challenges facing the transitional processes in both countries include the governments' ability to maintain unity, introduce measures that curb the havoc that the socioeconomic crisis is producing among the most vulnerable populations, resolve tensions and put an end to ongoing scenarios of violence. Indeed, episodes of violence continue in both countries due to the existence of armed groups that have not signed the corresponding peace agreements, such as the Darfuri SLA rebel forces led by Abdel Wahid (SLA-AW) in Sudan and the different armed groups still active in South Sudan, like the National Salvation Front (NAS) led by Thomas Cirillo in the state Central Equatoria. Therefore, the ability to include these forces in peace negotiations to achieve a total commitment to end the violence will be decisive.

In both transitional scenarios, organised civil society in both countries and the international community, especially the African Union and regional organisations, are expected to continue to apply pressure to try to guarantee that the path towards peace, stability and democracy becomes irreversible.

4.3. The new negotiating process between the Thai government and the BRN, the main armed group in the south of the country

Alongside the collapse of the peace process initiated in 2015 by the government of Thailand and MARA Patani, an umbrella organisation representing various armed groups, several exploratory contacts took place in 2019 between the new government and the main armed group active in the southern part of the country, the BRN. In January 2020, the government and the BRN formalised the start of a new peace process at a joint press conference in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in which they acknowledged having carried out the first round of negotiations, set a date for an upcoming meeting in March and expressed their intention to negotiate bilaterally before including other insurgent groups in the process. Despite the high levels of violence on the ground, resistance from parts of the government and the insurgency to resolve the conflict through dialogue, the state's reservations about any decentralisation or regional autonomy and the difficulties observed in the previous negotiating processes, there are some factors supporting optimism for resolving one of the deadliest armed conflicts in Southeast Asia in recent years.

First, direct peace talks with the BRN, which it is agreed is the group with the greatest operational capacity in the south of the country, should be able to overcome one of the main weaknesses and sources of frustration of the previous peace: Bangkok's misgivings about the relationship between the BRN and MARA Patani and about the latter's real influence and control over combatants on the ground and levels of violence in southern Thailand. Although there were formally three BRN representatives participating in MARA Patani, on several occasions the BRN expressed scepticism and distanced itself from the peace process. Given the lack of substantive progress in the negotiations between the government and MARA Patani and the discovery that MARA Patani did not exercise direct control over the operational armed cells in the three provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, the government tried to establish contact with the BRN in 2017.[3] Bangkok's desire to engage in direct talks with the BRN was made much more explicit after the talks with MARA Patani collapsed in February 2019 and after the elections in March, the first since the 2014 coup, and the formation of the new government in June. In August, in fact, the BRN acknowledged having had contacts with the government both within and outside the country and even declared that it had raised its conditions for dialogue. At the end of the year, the government's new chief negotiator since October, General Wanlop Rugsanoah, openly

Following the paralysis of the peace process with MARA Patani, the Thai government began direct peace talks with the most active armed group in the southern part of the country

acknowledged his intention to start direct bilateral talks with the BRN. A few days later, a meeting in Berlin between both parties came to light, although without the participation of Malaysia, which has facilitated the talks in recent years.

Even though the process was still in a very early stage of development in late 2019 and early 2020, some analysts have indicated that both parties seem to have shown a greater commitment to the negotiating process. For example, the government stated that it allows people who are experts in peace processes to observe the negotiations (individually, and not on behalf of any organisation), which could be interpreted as a gesture towards the BRN and an indirect response to its demand to expand and internationalise intermediation efforts. In addition to the demands raised by the BRN in August 2019, such as the release of all those accused of having links to the insurgent movement and the opening of an investigation into alleged human rights violations by state security forces and agencies, in April 2017 the group had issued a statement expressing its conditions for any dialogue with the state: the international community's participation as an observer, an impartial third party's mediation of the process and an agreement between the negotiating parties on how to design it. Similarly, the fact that the meeting that took place in Berlin in late 2019 was sponsored by an international organisation, coupled with the fact that Malaysia claimed that it did not know what transpired there, seems to point in the same direction. However, the fact that in October 2019 the Thai government appointed General Wanlop, who had been Secretary-General of the National Security Council, could indicate the government's intention to attract the most reluctant parts of the state security apparatus towards a strategic commitment to resolve the conflict through negotiation. According to the International Crisis Group research centre,[4] the fact that a Secretariat for the Peace Dialogue was established within the National Security Council in December 2018 could be welcomed by the insurgency in the south of the country. Until then, the Internal Security Operations Command had been responsible for overseeing the process, a unit within the Thai Armed Forces that had played an important role in suppressing internal dissent in previous decade.

Media outlets reported that the BRN's decision to start bilateral talks with the government had been

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3. For an analysis of the peace process between the Thai government and MARA Patani, see International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Dialogue in Doubt,* Asia Report no. 270, 8 July 2015 and *Southern Thailand's Peace Dialogue: No Traction,* no. 148, 21 September 2016. For a study of the previous stages of the peace process, see Duncan McCargo, *Southern Thailand: From conflict to negotiations ?,* Lowy Institute for International Policy, April 2014.
4. International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand's Peace Dialogue: Giving Substance to Form*, Asia Report no. 304, 21 January 2020.

taken at the group's highest decision-making body, the Dewan Pimpinam Parti. In the previous negotiations, the BRN had questioned whether its representatives in MARA Patani had any kind of authority or position within the armed organisation. The BRN's decision to start talks with the state may have even more strategic importance because it came after the BRN replaced its leader Abdullah Wan Mat Noor, also known as Dulloh Waemanor[5], with Kho Zari in early 2019, who according to some media reports represents parts of the group that are most sceptical with dialogue with the state. Be that as it may, during its first meeting in January 2020, the government recognised the authority and representativeness within the BRN of the chief negotiator appointed by the group, Anas Abdulrahman, something that had not happened in the previous process with MARA Patani.

Another aspect that may be relevant to the new negotiating process is that it will take place in a formal democratic setting and not under the supervision of the military junta (formally the National Council for Peace and Order, NCPO) that governed the country from the coup in May 2014 to the March 2019 elections. While these elections, which had been postponed several times in recent years, did not signal a major break with the military junta (in fact, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha is the leader of the NCPO)[6] they did suggest the possibility that the concepts of administrative decentralisation, or regional autonomy, be raised and discussed more openly and freely. According to various analysts, since the option of independence for southern Thailand is not feasible and has not even been openly raised in the negotiations, one of the fundamental aspects of a possible resolution of the conflict involves the government's willingness to explore some formula of territorial organisation that can accommodate the aspirations to self-government of most of the population of the Muslim-majority southern provinces. Historically, the government has never shown any public willingness to even discuss the issue, but in early 2019, the government's chief negotiator at the

time, General Udomchai Thammasarorat, declared for the first time that he was studying formulas such as a special administrative zone or others compatible with the Constitution. In the elections last March, half of the 13 seats chosen in the provinces affected by the armed conflict were won by Prachachart, a party that openly calls for a negotiated end to the conflict and a political decentralisation model for the southern provinces bordering Malaysia. In the same vein, Abhisit Vejjajiva, the former Prime Minister and leader of the Democratic Party (the historically dominant party in southern Thailand and one of the most important in the country's recent history), also openly advocated decentralisation of power as a mechanism for conflict resolution.

Although levels of violence have gradually dropped over the past three years to reach record lows since the armed conflict resumed in 2004, on several occasions the government has publicly acknowledged that the military counterinsurgency strategy is insufficient to resolve the armed conflict. In fact, the insurgency in southern Thailand has shown that it has significant operational capacity on the ground, as evidenced by the attack that it carried out in November 2019 in which 15 people died. In addition, some have warned that the chronic nature of the armed conflict could lead to the eruption of jihadist organisations with objectives distant from the political agenda of the insurgent organisations in southern Thailand. Meanwhile, the insurgency has verified how high levels of violence in the south of the country have not only not led to any significant political concessions from the government, but have also given way to an unprecedented militarisation of the area and the imposition of an emergency decree since 2005 that some have compared to martial law and that has been widely criticised for sponsoring the impunity with which the state's security forces and bodies operate in the region. Thus, the start of a negotiating process between the government and the largest armed group in southern Thailand amidst increasing democratic normalisation of the country seems to be a step in the right direction towards resolving the conflict.

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5. Dulloh Waemanor had replaced Sapaeng Basor after his death in Malaysia in early 2017.
6. According to the Constitution approved by the military junta in 2017, the prime minister is elected in a joint session between the House of Representatives and the Senate, whose 250 members are appointed entirely by the NCPO.

4.4. Civil society's drive for transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia in the face of political deadlock: towards a regional registry of victims

The wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia resulted in serious impacts on the civilian population in all the affected territories, including in terms of people killed, wounded, disappeared and forcibly displaced, as well as victims of sexual violence and torture. In the decade since, various international and local transitional justice processes and initiatives have addressed issues related to serious human rights violations committed during these conflicts. These include the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), established in 1993 and dissolved in 2017, and the Specialist Chambers and the Specialised Prosecutor's Office, a court established in 2017 and based in The Hague with international judges, but integrated into the Kosovo judicial system with a mandate and jurisdiction related to alleged serious violations of international law by members of the Kosovar Albanian armed group ELK, as documented in a 2011 Council of Europe report. Transitional justice efforts have run up against multiple obstacles largely linked to regional authorities' lack of political will to promote effective transitional justice processes. Nevertheless, regional civil society actors continue to promote new transitional justice initiatives. These initiatives include the civil society network of the former Yugoslavia known as the Coalition for a Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia (RECOM), which in 2019 announced its commitment to create a complete regional list of victims of the wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia.

The Coalition for RECOM, which currently brings together over 2,000 civil society organisations from the former Yugoslavia and represents all the ethnic communities in the region, was created in 2008 to promote the establishment of an official regional commission by successor governments of the former Yugoslavia that was independent of the founding governments and assumed the mandate to establish the facts related to war crimes and human rights violations, establish a registry of all victims of wars, collect data on places of detention and victims of torture and mistreatment in the context of conflicts and data on missing persons and hold public hearings of victims' testimonies. The creation of RECOM was seen by civil society activists as a way to move forward on reparations and reconciliation, as well as to avoid the respective elites' political manipulation and exploitation of the impacts of armed conflicts, including the death toll. In 2014, progress was made on a RECOM statute that included government proposals such as clarifications that RECOM would not be a judicial body or that it would be funded with state budgets. The involvement of the envoys of the region's presidents at that time showed some degree of political commitment.

However, in recent years the governments' refusal to make the regional commission a reality has become clear. New efforts by the Coalition for RECOM in 2017 (the year the ICTY came to an end), including new collections of signatures, proved unsuccessful. The 2018 Western Balkans Summit, which had generated hopes for a possible impetus for the creation of RECOM as a signed declaration of its establishment, revealed the lack of political will, as it did not come to pass. Finally, in late 2019, the RECOM Coalition, once again confirming the lack of political will of the respective governments, agreed to withdraw the RECOM statute and assume the challenge of drawing up a regional list of victims as a civil society initiative.

The decision of the more than 2,000 organisations of the Coalition for RECOM to go ahead and try to complete a list of victims presents an opportunity for building regional memory

Although the governments' abandonment of RECOM is an institutional failure, the decision of the more than 2,000 organisations of the Coalition for RECOM to go ahead and try to complete a list of victims presents an opportunity for building regional memory and thereby making headway on reparations and reconciliation. It also demonstrates that the social fabric is key for peacebuilding and essential for moving ahead in the face of institutional and political resistance, despite the limited resources and scope. As part of its endeavour, in 2019 the civil society coalition presented a map documenting 130,000 deceased or missing victims that it will continue to expand. As part of this, it plans to intensify the process to document war crimes, increasing the number of investigators in the coalition analysis teams and involving academic centres. The coalition also plans to strengthen the transitional justice and reconciliation network in the region between 2020 and 2023 and provide expert support to youth groups in their work to report attempts at politically misrepresenting facts clarified by international courts.

Organised civil society in the former Yugoslavia faces obstacles to its transitional justice efforts, including the prevalence of political and social narratives that have tended to minimise or shirk the responsibilities of the political and military predecessors of the respective territories and communities for serious human rights violations during the conflicts, the limited political desire to cooperate effectively with international and hybrid transitional justice processes, the limited

resources allocated to local judicial processes and the continuation of difficulties therein, such as insufficient witness protection, and attacks and abuses against human rights advocates in the region. However, the opportunity is also supported by factors such as civil society's accumulated documenting and reporting experience, its structure in a regional network and its many varied actors (human rights organisations, youth organisations, victims' associations, research centres). It must also receive decisive support from stakeholders in the international community at multiple levels, including political support for civil society transitional justice efforts as part of bilateral and multilateral dialogues between international actors and governments in the region and international financial support for local civil society actors.

5. Risk scenarios for 2020

Drawing on the analysis of the contexts of armed conflict and socio-political crisis in 2019, in this chapter the School for a Culture of Peace identifies four scenarios that, due to their conditions and dynamics, may worsen and become a focus of greater instability and violence during 2020. The risk scenarios for 2020 refer to the challenges of the Ethiopian transition in a year that is expected to be in turmoil; the increase of the violence in Mozambique and the risks for the new peace agreement; the future scenarios in Yemen after five years of escalating violence and in a context of fragile peace initiatives; and the specific risks for LGTBI population in a global context of forced displacement.

Map 5.1. **Risk scenarios for 2020**

Forced displacement and LGBTI population.

Yemen
Violence and humanitarian crisis

Ethiopia
Risks in the transition

Mozambique
Rising instability in central and northern Mozambique
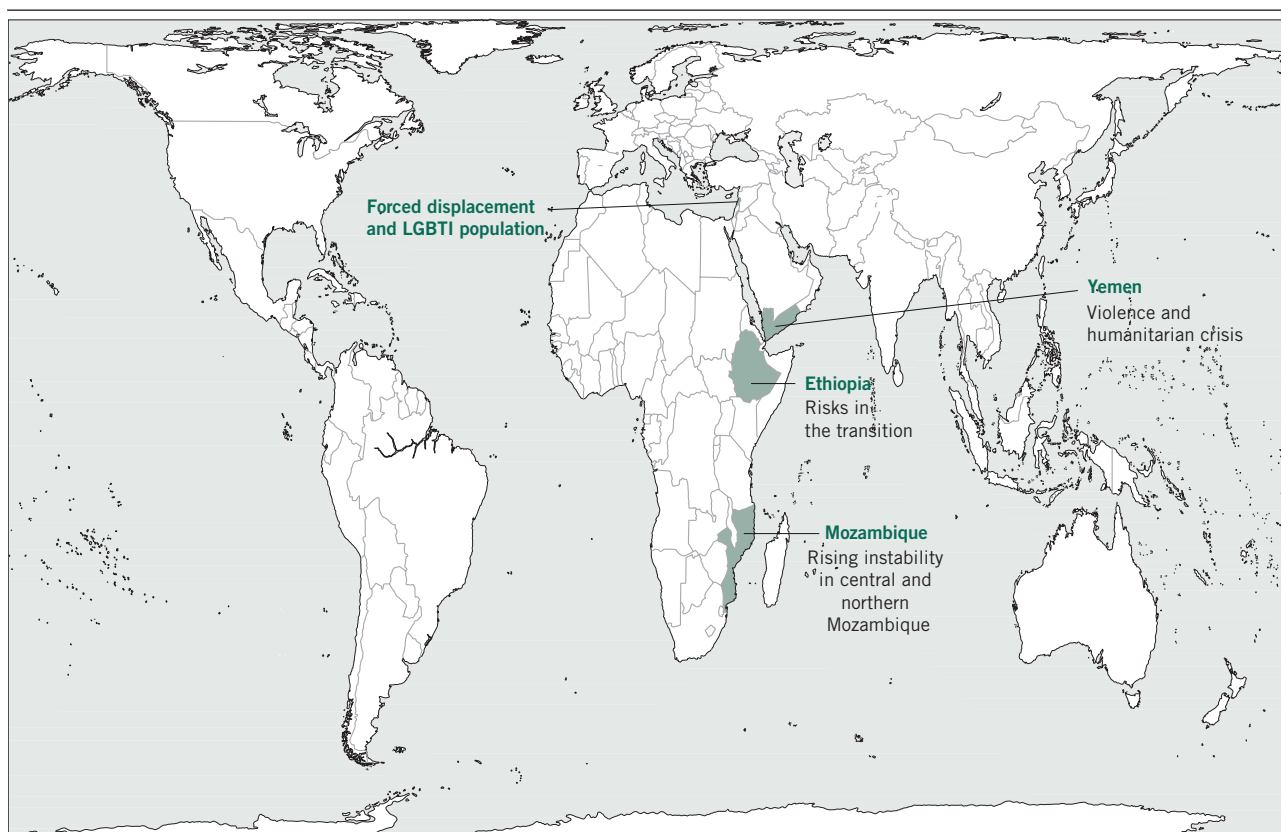
5.1 Challenges and risks in the Ethiopian transition facing a turbulent 2020

The appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in early 2018 led to important and positive changes domestically and regionally in Ethiopia. The historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia in September 2018, the result of many displays of camaraderie on both sides of the Red Sea creating momentum for peace in the Horn of Africa, would not have been possible without Abiy Ahmed's vision and political determination.[1] Domestically, in line with some of the policies initiated by former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desaleng, in a few months Abiy lifted the state of emergency in the country, ordered the release of thousands of prisoners and allowed dissidents to return to Ethiopia and promoted greater freedom of expression by facilitating the creation of new parties and by lifting bans on hundreds of websites and television channels. He reached peace agreements with the historical insurgencies in Oromia (the OLF) and Ogaden (the ONLF). He initiated reforms by appointing former human rights activists to strengthen institutions such as the electoral board and accelerated economic reform due to the indebtedness of the state. His actions earned him both national and foreign praise, culminating in the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, Abiy's moves to dismantle the old order have led to a weakening of the Ethiopian state. They have given new impetus to ethnic-based nationalist movements that resurfaced during the Oromo community's massive protests that began in 2015 and finally brought him to power. This situation is triggering an escalation of political violence that could even affect the development of the elections scheduled for 2020. When the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition established the ethnic federalism system after coming to power in 1991, it sought to balance the demands of more than 90 ethnic groups, many of which were organised into armed nationalist movements. Ethnic federalism, which divided Ethiopia into nine semi-autonomous states (and two multi-ethnic cities), gave larger ethnic groups a greater degree of self-government and provided recognition and lower levels of autonomy to many smaller groups. However, over two decades later, the system that was once designed to unite a multi-ethnic nation is now fuelling its implosion, as highlighted by various analysts. It has sown political dysfunction, as ordinary government tasks have become spaces of competition and ethnic conflict. The delimitation of administrative boundaries, the allocation of state resources, the organisation of a twice-postponed census and plans to hold elections in 2020 are causing increasing tension.[2] These ethnic tensions have escalated under Abiy Ahmed's liberalising reforms. As the EPRDF has slackened its tight control, new opportunities, grievances and discourses have emerged from regional leaders and civil society actors. In November, the UN warned that two million people had been displaced as a result of the climate of inter-community violence that is shaking the country.[3]

Ethiopia's system of ethnic federalism, which was once designed to bring together a multi-ethnic nation, is now fuelling its implosion, according to various analysts

The parts of the country most affected by inter-community violence were the northwest (Amhara region), the northeast and the south-centre (Oromia). The most prominent episodes included the deaths of 200 members of the Gumuz community in the Agi Agew (Amhara) area in early May 2019 in retaliation for previous attacks in the Benishangul-Gumuz region and assassinations of high-ranking government officials in the Amhara region in June 2019, which were described as an attempted coup there, in which the federal government intervened to control the situation, carrying out repressive actions against the Amhara political opposition. Other notable events included the deaths of 86 people during demonstrations that took place in Addis Ababa and other parts of the state of Oromia in October in protest of the prosecution of an activist, Jawar Mohammed, who had been one of the architects of the protests that helped to bring Abiy to power in 2018 and now accused him of repeating the same mistakes as his predecessors.

As highlighted by International Crisis Group (ICG), there are four main lines of division and conflict.[4] The first of these affects the Oromia region, Abiy's home state, where his rivals, and even some former allies, believe that he should do more to promote the interests of the region. The second fault line pits Oromo community leaders against those of the state of Amhara, the second most populous in Ethiopia, whose leaders question Oromia's growing influence over the government and the multi-ethnic capital, Addis Ababa, which in turn it is surrounded by the Oromia region. The third line pits the Tigray and Amhara communities against each other, along with their respective states, over two territories (Gichew and Gobe) that the state of Amhara claims that Tigray annexed in the early 1990s. The fourth line involves the leaders of the Tigray community (and its respective state) on one hand and Abiy's federal government on the other. The Tigray community perceives a loss of power and privileges in the breakdown of the political system that both built in 1991. The Tigray community party, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), resists the loss of power resulting from their refusal to participate in the new party forged

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1. See the summary on Eritrea-Ethiopia in chapter 1 (Peace negotiations in Africa) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus: Report on Trends and Scenarios.* Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.
2. See Woldemikael, Olivia, "Ethiopia: Beyond ethnic federalism", *African Arguments*, 9 December 2019.
3. See the summary on Ethiopia in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
4. See International Crisis Group, *Keeping Ethiopia's Transition on the Rails,* no. 283/Africa, 16 December 2019.

from the ashes of the EPRDF coalition, the Prosperity Party (PP). This party brings together representatives of the other three parties (the Amhara ADP, the Oromo ODP and the multi-ethnic SEPDM) of the old coalition except for the TPLF, which did not want to join the PP because that would involve diluting its power in a new party, in addition to other parties from other regions. The aim to create the party also reflects an attempt to reduce the tension and ethnic divisions that have helped to define the country, seeking to promote national unity and the integration of ethnic groups in a common project.

Furthermore, the increase in attacks on churches and mosques in various parts of the country in 2019 suggests that the growing inter-religious tensions could add another level of complexity to the situation. In this sense, the influential Orthodox Church criticised the prime minister's response to the clashes, stating that he had failed to protect the members of this congregation, because the Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which is linked to the Amhara community, suffered various attacks. Another issue to consider is the exclusion of large swathes of the population from the alleged Ethiopian economic miracle, which helps to exacerbate the situation.

A final problem is the stagnation of the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia during 2019, with many fronts still open.[5] The border remains one of the most militarised areas in the world with hundreds of thousands of soldiers from both countries and an undetermined number of antipersonnel mines. Rapid regional and international supervision of the demilitarisation of the border is essential to prevent the process from regressing. As a border state in which some decisions regarding the peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia have to be implemented, Tigray has aggravated this situation by blocking federal government decisions.

Added to the tensions is another increasingly prominent debate between supporters and opponents of the country's ethnic federalist system, possibly Ethiopia's main political battleground today, as highlighted by the ICG. Introduced in 1991 after the revolutionary government led by Tigray took power, the system delegates authority to ethnolinguistically defined regions, while dividing central power between the ruling parties in those regions. While support for and opposition to the system is defined in part by who can win or lose from dismantling it, both sides put together strong arguments connected with important academic debates on the issue. Proponents point to the bloody pre-1991 history of the coercive central government and argue that the system protects the rights of different ethnolinguistic communities in a diverse country formed through conquest and assimilation. Detractors argue that because the system structures the state along ethnic lines, it undermines national unity, fuels ethnic conflict and leaves minorities vulnerable in regions dominated by major ethnic groups. This debate was revealed in the referendum held by the Sidama community. On 20 November 2019, a referendum was held in the region to decide if it would become a semi-autonomous federal state. The electoral commission declared that 98.5% of the people who participated in the referendum voted in favour of the creation of the new state in a process that took place in a climate of freedom and democratic normality. The Sidama community represents 4% of the country's population, as it is the fifth largest national community and the main one in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPS), from which it will be separated. Historically, parts of the Sidama community have claimed to have their own state. This has caused tension in the SNNPS region, which is home to 56 ethnic groups. Various analysts pointed out that this step, which will make the Sidama region the tenth state, may stimulate other communities (Wolayta, Hadiya, Gurage, Keffa, among others) to claim to have their own state in ethnic terms.

A national dialogue is essential whose main conditions include the participation of all political and social actors, the absence of violence in the defence of different political options and the eradication of hate speech

The electoral cycle that will take place in 2020 can help to strengthen the transition or exacerbate division and conflict, so if the climate of inter-community violence continues to escalate, it may be necessary to postpone the elections. Regardless of the final result, this process must assist the implementation of a national dialogue whose main conditions are the participation of all political and social actors, the absence of violence in defence of different political options and the eradication of hate speech to prevent the polarisation of divergent options. The reforms undertaken by Abiy's government are being threatened by all these issues, which could ultimately derail the transition underway in a country that also plays a determining role regionally and across Africa.

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5. See the summary on Eritrea-Ethiopia in chapter 1 Peace negotiations in Africa) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus: Report on Trends and Scenarios.* Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

5.2. Rising violence in Mozambique and the risks for the new peace agreement

During 2019, Mozambique once again suffered an increase in violence and instability in different provinces that threaten peacebuilding efforts. Although a historic peace agreement was signed in August 2019 between the Mozambican government and the main opposition group, RENAMO, internal divisions and power struggles within the opposition movement seriously threaten the peacebuilding achieved. More disturbing than this, however, is the increase in violence in the northern province of Cabo Delgado caused by insurgent activity, coupled with the appearance of private security contractors, which could produce a domino effect in the area.

Although the Maputo Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed between the ruling party (FRELIMO) and the main opposition group (RENAMO) in August 2019 has put an end to the historical struggle between them, it has also come under serious threat by internal fractures within RENAMO. These fractures have emerged as a result of the struggles for leadership of the organisation that occurred after the death of the historical leader of RENAMO, Afonso Dhlakama, in May 2018. After an internal process rife with tension and confrontation, in January 2019 Ossufo Momade was elected president of RENAMO with around 60% of the votes, though part of the movement refused to recognise him. Just six months after his appointment, Momade signed an initial demilitarisation agreement with President Filipe Nyusi that prompted misgivings and tension among some armed members of the movement, who demanded his resignation, accusing him of betraying the group. Later, these tensions and disagreements focused on the signing of the peace agreement between RENAMO and the government, which was also not recognised by the dissident sector of the group, the self-styled RENAMO Military Junta chaired by Mariano Nhongo. Later, as a consequence of RENAMO's significant defeat in the presidential, provincial and legislative elections in October, in which it obtained only 22% of the vote compared to 73% for the ruling party, the tensions within the organisation's membership increased, further challenging Momade's leadership. FRELIMO not only expanded its votes and support nationwide, but it also prevailed in all the provincial assemblies of the country, including those located in the historical strongholds of support for RENAMO. The dissident RENAMO Military Junta did not recognise the results of the elections and claimed responsibility for various armed attacks in the centre of the country, mainly in the province of Sofala. Since then, armed clashes and attacks on civilians have intensified and the internal dissidents have refused to participate in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of

The deterioration of the open crises in Mozambique with the RENAMO dissidents in the heart of the country and jihadist armed groups in Cabo Delgado threatens peacebuilding efforts

fighters (DDR) stipulated in the peace agreement. The RENAMO Military Junta has threatened to intensify the war if Nyusi's government refuses to agree to negotiate better conditions for the reintegration of its combatants than those agreed in the August 2019 peace agreement.

On the other open front in the country, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, there was a significant rise in violence in 2019. Since the violence began in 2017, when 119 killings were reported, the deaths caused by the conflict between the government forces and the jihadist insurgency have risen to around 700 and have displaced around 115,000 people. Attacks against civilians, government troops, natural gas infrastructure and mining companies have also increased. Similarly, violence has shifted from concentrating in rural areas to spreading to urban centres in early 2020 with incidents also reported on the Tanzanian side of the border. The wave of violence is allegedly orchestrated by armed jihadist groups linked to the Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) organisation. Since June 2019, however, Islamic State (ISIS) has also publicly announced its presence in the area, claiming responsibility since then for different attacks in the province. Although ISIS' presence is doubted by various analysts, as well as by the Mozambican security forces, which have systematically denied any evidence of its activity in the region,[6] attacks are constantly conducted in its name.

The increase in instability in Cabo Delgado province, an area of special strategic importance due to its significant gas and ruby reserves that are exploited by national and foreign extractive industries, has led the Mozambican government to militarise to defend its economic interests. As part of this strategy, during 2019 President Felipe Nyusi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin signed an energy and security agreement that included deploying Russian private security contractors to the area. According to different media reports, this included around 200 Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group, who had joined the Mozambican security forces to fight the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. The presence of Russian mercenaries is not new in Africa, as there are also indications of their participation in the armed conflicts in Libya, the Central African Republic and Sudan. Although the Russian government has denied the presence of these private actors, there have been different reports about their participation in armed actions in Cabo Delgado since August. However, in early 2020, according to media reports, the Wagner Group had withdrawn from the country due to its shortcomings in fighting the insurgency and was replaced by a Zimbabwe-based private contracting company called the Dyck Advisory

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6. ISS, "Is Islamic State taking charge of Mozambique's jihadist insurgency?", 10 January 2020.

Group.[7] These and other steps taken by the government of Mozambique in Cabo Delgado to reduce the insurgents, which it classifies as criminals, have increased violence and produced a knock-on effect in the area to combat foreign forces.

The establishment of the long-awaited peace in the country, which has gone through different scenarios of instability since the end of the civil war in 1992, has been put in doubt with the rising tension and violence in the central and northern regions. The government of Mozambique and the countries of the region connected to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) face the challenge of seeking peacebuilding measures that might end the instability that threatens to provoke a domino effect in the area. Furthermore, the international community faces the challenge of supporting local civil society actors working to build peace in the country.

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7.   Daily Maverick, "SA private military contractors' and Mozambican airforce conduct major air attacks on Islamist extremists", 9 April 2020.

5.3. Yemen in the abyss: five years of escalating violence and fragile peace initiatives

In recent years, analysts have repeatedly warned of the worrying development of the Yemeni armed conflict. A scenario of various pockets of conflict in the recent past (an armed rebellion since 2004 led by the insurgent group known as the Houthis in the north, the persistent activity of an al-Qaeda branch, a growing secessionist movement in the south and defiance of Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime amidst the Arab revolts in 2011), violence in the country has intensified, especially since 2015. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia decided to intervene militarily in support of the government of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, deposed months earlier by the Houthis, who Riyadh considers "proxies" of Iran, taking advantage of the uncertain transition in the country after Saleh's departure. Since then, the armed conflict has become more complex due to the involvement of many actors and the projection of regional and international interests there. Additionally, the violence of the conflict has led the country to the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, according to the UN. The negative trend of the conflict has been determined by various factors that could lead Yemen to an even deeper crisis if they continue.

First, the conflict has been characterised by intense violence that has resulted in high levels of lethality and a very high number of civilian victims. Since 2015, the Yemeni armed conflict has been identified as one of the most serious worldwide. According to ACLED data, in the last five years, the hostilities have killed some 100,000 people, including 12,000 civilians.[8] Between March 2015 and June 2019, the UN Human Rights Office had documented a lower, but still high, civilian body count: 7,292 fatalities as a direct consequence of acts of violence. This dramatic toll is the result of continuous indiscriminate and/or deliberate attacks against the population and civilian targets (markets, mosques, schools, weddings, funerals and other civilian targets) by the different actors involved in the war. Various sources have denounced the special responsibility of the Saudi-led military coalition, whose air strikes have caused most of the civilian deaths (67% of all victims reported between 2015 and 2019, according to ACLED) and most children's deaths in the conflict between 2015 and 2018, according to data from the UN Group of Experts on Yemen.[9] Despite the warnings about war crimes committed due to a failure to respect basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), such

The armed conflict in Yemen has been aggravated and complicated by the projection of regional and international interests there and has plunged it into the worst humanitarian crisis in the world

as the distinction between civilians and combatants, these practices have persisted in an atmosphere of impunity.

Second, the necessary measures have not been taken to prevent the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country in recent years, which has worsened enormously. On the contrary, the conflict has included repeated attacks on health infrastructure, sieges and blockades to the access of humanitarian aid. This has seriously affected the population, favouring the spread of diseases such as cholera and raising levels of malnutrition in a country highly dependent on food imports that was already the poorest in the Arab world before the escalation of violence in 2015. It is estimated that 80% of the country's population (30 million inhabitants) are in need of some form of humanitarian aid. A study by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures predicted that there would be around 102,000 fatalities from direct violence by the end of 2019 (an estimate coinciding with ACLED's) and that another 131,000 could lose their lives due to other impacts from the conflict, such as a lack of food or access to health services.[10] At the same time, abuse, corruption and discretionary distributions linked to the delivery of humanitarian aid have been reported as part of the war economy.

A third factor that explains the persistence of the dynamics of violence in Yemen is the continuous flow of arms and military logistical support to the contending parties. The provision of stockpiles has continued despite multiple indications that they violate human rights and IHL and break national and regional regulations and the International Arms Trade Treaty (2014), which requires states to guarantee that their exports will not be used to perpetrate human rights abuses, violate IHL or commit acts of terrorism, among other actions. Thus, the UN Group of Experts on Yemen has explicitly warned countries such as Iran, denounced for providing weapons to the Houthis, the US (the main supplier of arms to Saudi Arabia) and other European countries such as the United Kingdom and France (which also supply weapons to Riyadh and other countries of the coalition) that they risk being considered complicit in committing abuse. Spain has also continued to export weapons to Saudi Arabia, a as it has become one of the main clients of the Spanish military industry and

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8. ACLED, *Press release: over 100,000 reported killed in Yemen war*, ACLED, 31 October 2019.
9. Human Rights Council, *Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014*, Report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts as submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/42/17, 9 August 2019.
10. Jonathan D. Moyer et al. *Assessing the impact of war on development in Yemen,* UNDP – Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, April 2019.

the world's largest buyer of weapons in recent years. Although various countries have approved some restrictions on arms sales, especially after the scandal over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi embassy in Istanbul in 2018, which exposed Riyadh's abusive practices internationally, they are still far from a total embargo on all parties, as some demand. In a context in which geopolitical interests and regional power struggles are at stake, weapons have continued to circulate, thereby encouraging Yemeni armed actors to continue their commitment to resolving the conflict by violent means.

Finally, the fourth factor that has shaped the development of the Yemeni conflict in the last five years has been the fragility of the peace initiatives. After years of impasse and disagreements in negotiating attempts, the signing of the Stockholm Agreement between the Houthis and the Hadi government at the urging of the UN in late 2018 encouraged certain positive expectations. However, the difficulties in implementing the agreement were evident throughout 2019. Considered a first step between the parties, the agreement has the potential to open negotiations on substantive aspects of the conflict in the future and focuses on three very specific issues: the creation of a committee to de-escalate tension in the city of Taiz, the implementation of prisoner exchanges and action to guarantee the ceasefire in the port of Al Hudaydah, which is key for the entry of supplies into the country. During 2019 there was no progress in the first, only limited progress in the second and many obstacles to establish the truce in Al Hudaydah, partly due to differences in interpretation that some analysts blamed on the vague wording of the agreement. Also in 2019, the Yemeni conflict was affected by divisions within the anti-Houthi camp, which led to open fighting in Aden between Hadi government forces and southern secessionist groups supported by the United Arab Emirates, which is part of the Saudi-led coalition but has its own agenda of interests in Yemen. Although Saudi Arabia managed to get the parties to sign a pact to prevent a new war within the Yemeni armed conflict, by late 2019 the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement was uncertain due to the tightness of its schedule and the persistence of the fighting. Meanwhile, Oman attempted to facilitate informal contacts between Riyadh and the Houthis as analysts highlighted Saudi Arabia's interest in ending its costly military incursion into Yemen.

A change of trend in the armed conflict in Yemen therefore requires reversing the dynamics outlined above (stopping violence, addressing the humanitarian crisis, halting arms supplies and reinforcing peace initiatives) and a greater commitment from the international community to promote a solution to the conflict and attend to the urgent needs of the population. Paving the way to peace in Yemen also involves acknowledging the complexity of the situation there and accommodating the many voices that have been demanding that civil society, and especially women's organisations, play a substantive role in defining the future of the country.

5.4. Forced displacement in the global context: specific risks for the LGBTI population

Violence, persecution, conflict and human rights violations continue to forcibly displace civilian populations at levels unprecedented since the Second World War. According to data published by the UNHCR in 2019, by the end of 2018, the world's forcibly displaced population amounted to 70.8 million people, including 25.9 million refugees, 41.3 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million asylum seekers. A sector of the population specifically vulnerable to human rights violations, both in the countries of origin –forcing them to displace– as well as during transit and in the host countries, are lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual and intersex (LGBTI) people, who are exposed to violence on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sexual characteristics. Despite some strengthening of the international regulatory framework and the mobilisation of civil society and human rights organisations, more action is required by a greater number of actors to avoid the perpetuation of violence against LGBTI people in situations of forced displacement.

Traditionally, most States have not recognised forms of persecution that are not explicitly set out in the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). This Convention includes some of the forms of persecution that constitute grounds for asylum applications –such as persecution on ethnic, religious, political or nationality grounds– and more generally refers to any persons belonging to a certain social group. The Yogyakarta Principles (2007, extended in 2017) clarify that States are obliged to ensure through legislation that a person's fear of persecution on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics are accepted as grounds for granting refugee status.[11] However, in 2019, both the UNHCR and the Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity warned that only some 37 States grant asylum on such grounds and that the majority of States providing asylum do not recognise such persecution as a basis for recognition of refugee status. Despite the existence of the international regulatory framework, therefore, there is a clear risk that

persons persecuted on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity may not be able to exercise their right to asylum. And even when they do, they continue to be exposed to specific risks of violence and discrimination.

LGBTI activists and organisations, as well as human rights groups and bodies, point out that the LGBTI population is exposed to disproportionate levels of human rights violations around the world, which can include acts of violence such as murder, beatings, kidnapping, sexual assault, threats, coercion, arbitrary detention, "conversion therapies" and forced sterilisations, among others. Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics intersect with multiple issues that shape the features of a country's population (age, class, ethnicity, religion, place of residence, body, among others). Inequalities along these lines can result in very specific degrees of violence and discrimination which lead to further exacerbation. Internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, migrants and refugees may be more vulnerable and face specific risks of violence, exploitation and discrimination from multiple actors at all stages of their journey, including host societies, officials, armed actors and criminal groups and other refugees, among others.[12] The risk of violence and extortion can lead them to conceal their gender identity and sexual orientation. In the absence of accommodation and other facilities (sanitation, service provision) to adequately guarantee the protection of LGBTI people, they may suffer harassment and violence and their specific needs may be neglected. Among them, access to health and reproductive rights services that are sensitive to sexual and gender diversity can be particularly difficult.[13] When crossing borders, LGBTI people may be subjected to invasive physical examinations.

There are various contexts in which violence, abuse and exploitation against displaced LGBTI people, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants have been reported. Among these, in Lebanon it has been reported that LGBTI people who are also refugees in the country face a specific risk of detention, alongside Lebanese trans women and Lebanese gay, bisexual

> *Internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, migrants and refugees may be more vulnerable and face specific risks of violence, exploitation and discrimination from multiple actors at all stages of their journey*

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11. The so-called Yogyakarta Principles (YP) are a compendium of principles that reflect the current state of international human rights law as it relates to sexual orientation and gender identity. They draw on existing international legislation from international treaties, the case-law of human rights treaty organisations, specialist courts and commissions, as well as interpretations by authority figures such as UN special rapporteurs and working groups, expert opinions and country practices. They were drafted in 2006 (published in 2007), and revised and expanded in 2017 (YP+10), as a result of an international process in which the International Commission of Jurists and the International Service for Human Rights, on behalf of a coalition of human rights organisations, took on the drafting of these principles, in order to provide greater clarity on the obligations of States in this area.

12. Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.* A/74/181, 17 July 2019.

13. Ibid.

and queer men of low income.[14] In several cases, LGBTI migrants held in detention facilities have been identified as being at risk of social isolation and violence, including sexual violence.[15] Civil society organisations providing support to LGBTI refugees in the UK, such as UKLGIG, have also reported inappropriate treatment by Home Office officials. Against the backdrop of the Central American migrant caravans who travelled to the USA in 2018 to seek asylum, dozens of LGBTI people formed their own group, complaining of verbal abuse and other specific difficulties along the way. In Kenya, LGBTI refugees from Uganda, DRC, Ethiopia and Burundi have been repeatedly attacked by local people and other refugees.

The allegations of violence against displaced LGBTI people in various settings around the world, which have resurfaced in recent years due to the greater visibility and mobilisation of LGBTI organisations, highlights the need for greater efforts to include an intersectional approach in conflict prevention and transformation and in global and State responses to internal and external forced displacement. States are under obligation to enforce international human rights law, including with respect to their LGBTI population. Members of civil society, especially in transit and host countries, have an opportunity to contribute to demanding accountability from their home States, including through international mechanisms and multiple avenues of social participation and protest.

14. OutRight Action International y Arab Foundation for Freedom & Equality, *Activism and Resilience: LGBTQ progress in the Middle East and North Africa. Case studies from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia*. 2018.
15. Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, op. cit.; UNHCR, *Protecting Persons with Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities: A Global Report on UNHCR's Efforts to Protect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Asylum-Seekers and Refugees*, 2015.

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 Patriotes 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 Ivorien (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

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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
WPNLC: West Papua National Coalition for Liberation
WTO: World Trade Organisation
YPG: People's Protection Units
ZANU-PF: Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZUF: Zeliangrong United Front

Escola de Cultura de Pau

The Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace, hereinafter ECP) is an academic peace research institution located at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The 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.
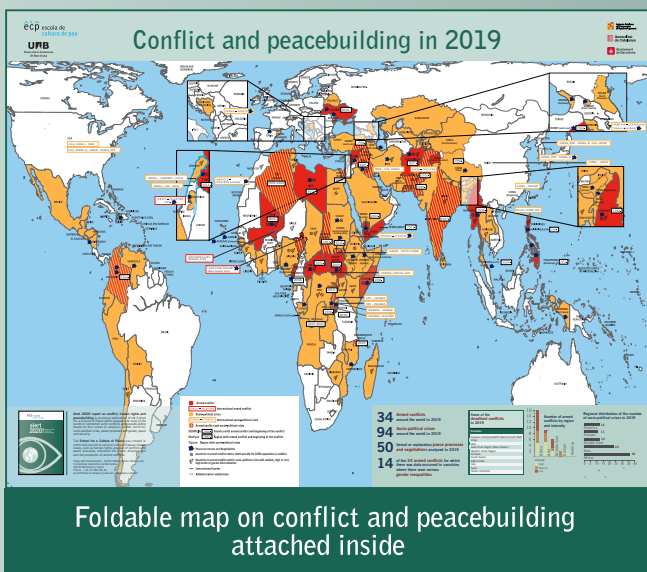
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Alert 2020! Report on conflicts, human rights and peace-building is a yearbook providing an analysis of the state of the world in terms of conflict and peacebuilding from three perspectives: armed conflicts, socio-political crises and gender, peace and security. The analysis of the most important events in 2019 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.

Conflict and peacebuilding in 2019

Foldable map on conflict and peacebuilding
attached inside

Agència Catalana
de Cooperació
al Desenvolupament

Generaïtat
de Catalunya

Ajuntament
de Barcelona

"For those of us who work in the field of peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict, Escola de Cultura de Pau's Alert reports are an essential point of reference. Their thoroughness and impartiality in the treatment and systematic monitoring of such complex and sensitive issues as the conflicts ravaging many corners of the planet are especially valuable in that they give us a reliable picture of what is taking place around us. The accumulated experience of the authors over many years also provides us with useful material that not only allows us to know what is taking place in each of the areas of conflict analysed, but also to understand their evolution over time; all without overlooking the increasingly appropriate and necessary input from the gender and human rights perspective on issues of peace and security".

Jesús A. Núñez Villaverde
Co-director of the Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action (IECAH).

The Alert! Yearbook of the Escola de Cultura de Pau provides in-depth analysis of the most important trends in the field of peace and security, human rights and conflict. Supported by an impressive number of numbers and figures, it is a directly relevant resource to people working in this field. What I like in particular, is that it not only offers good insights into the drivers of conflict, but that it offers a dedicated section with a perspective on opportunities for peace. This way of looking at the world provides the reader with a most comprehensive view of and latest insights into the dynamics of peace and conflict.

Gabriëlla Vogelaar,
Academy Fellow at the Clingendael Institute

Peace is a building process that knows how to understand the new features and challenges of the complex and unjust reality and its violences. For this reason, beyond the serene diagnosis, Peace is a process that knows how to recognize and strengthen its actors, supporting their maturation and articulation. Without actors who promote it, there can be no Peace. Thus, by involving the actors who can build it, Peace is a strategic channel through which the various actors and diverse visions of causes, changes, pain, effects, rights, proposals or victims can respect and walk in dialogue. Faced with all this, I continue to thank and value the yearbook "Alert! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding", because with its rigorous, deep, methodological and strategic perspective, it continues to become a light for the new challenges, actors and national and local tasks of Peace.

Miguel Álvarez Gandara,
Vice-Chair of the Board of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and President of SERAPAZ