alert 2022!

Report on conflicts,
human rights
and peacebuilding

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Executive Summary

Alert 2022! 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 2021 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 2022!* report are listed below:

■ 32 armed conflicts were reported in 2021, a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Most of the conflicts occurred in Africa (15), followed by Asia (nine), the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and America (one).

■ For the first time in a decade, high-intensity armed conflicts accounted for more than half (53%) of all cases worldwide.

■ The 17 cases of serious armed conflict in 2021 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Mozambique (north), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the CAR, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

■ Almost half the armed conflicts in 2021 took place in Africa, with a total of 15 (47%).

■ In the second year of the pandemic, characterised by the gradual easing of mobility restrictions, it became clear that little attention had been paid to the UN Secretary-General's call in March 2020 to establish a global ceasefire to concentrate efforts to respond to the coronavirus.

■ During the year, the impacts of clashes between armed actors and the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against civilians were amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the confluence with other crises, such as the climate emergency, which further aggravated the precariousness and lack of protection of many populations affected by armed conflicts.

■ There was a significant number of civilian victims in 2021, which increased in many armed conflicts. Attacks and threats against medical staff continued in 2021, as well as attacks against hospital infrastructure, practices that are considered to violate international humanitarian law.

■ The use of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians by state and non-state armed actors, and especially against women and girls, continued to be reported in 2021.

■ According to UNHCR data, by the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than double the number a decade ago.

■ During 2021, 98 socio-political crises were identified around the world, three more than in 2020, confirming the upward trend in the number of socio-political crises that has been recorded in recent years.

■ Africa was once again the region with the greatest number of socio-political crises (40), followed by Asia (24), the Americas (12) and Europe and the Middle East (11 each).

■ In 2021, the socio-political crises of high intensity were Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), Sudan, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela, India-China, India-Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon.

■ 72% of the socio-political crises were linked to opposition to the internal or international policies or certain governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State as a whole; 41% to demands for self-government and/or identity; and 31% to disputes for control of territories and/or resources.

■ 18 of the 32 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2021 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities, with medium, high or very high levels of discrimination.

■ Seventy-two million children living in situations of conflict faced a serious risk of sexual violence, according to Save the Children.

■ In 2021, the number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peace

operations and special political missions increased.

- In 2021, 20 countries that were involved in peace negotiations and peace processes had a National Action Plan on women, peace and security, which was supposed to promote women's participation in these processes.

- *Alert 2022!* identifies five opportunities for peace in Chad, between India and Pakistan, in Venezuela, between Turkey and Armenia, and regarding the the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

- The report highlights six risk scenarios regarding several coups d' etat in Africa, as well as in relation to DRC-Ugada, Myanmar, Indonesia (Sulawesi), Bosnia and Herzegovina and Palestine.

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 socio-political crisis. The third chapter looks at the gender impacts in conflicts and tensions, as well as the initiatives being carried out within the United Nations and other local and international organizations and movements with regards to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. Chapter four identifies peace opportunities, scenarios where there is a context that is favourable to resolution of conflicts or to progress towards or consolidate peace initiatives. The final chapter studies risk scenarios in the future. Besides these five chapters, the report also includes a foldable map identifying the scenarios of armed conflict and social-political 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 2021 are analyzed, as well as the impacts of such conflicts on the civilian population.

In 2021 there was a slight decrease in the number of armed conflicts compared to previous years. In total 32 conflicts were reported, compared to the 34 identified in 2020, 2019 and 2018. The main change compared to the previous period is that the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh was no longer considered an armed conflict. After the

32 armed conflicts were reported in 2021

intense six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and its severe impacts, with more than 5,000 people killed and tens of thousands forcibly displaced by violence, the situation became one of militarised tension in 2021, amid a fragile ceasefire with many persisting humanitarian challenges, as well as problems related to negotiations. This edition of the report also analyses the armed conflicts in Yemen (Houthis) and Yemen (AQAP) together due to the gradual interrelation of the dynamics of armed conflict in the country. By the end of the year, the 32 armed conflicts identified in 2021 remained active.

The trend of previous periods was upheld in the geographical distribution of the armed conflicts. The vast majority continued to be concentrated in Africa (15) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and the Americas (one). Therefore, almost half the cases (47%) took place in Africa.

Regarding the relationship of the actors involved in the conflicts and the scene of the hostilities, armed conflicts were identified as internal, international and, for the most part, internalised internal. In keeping with the trend of previous years, three of the 32 cases in 2021 (9%) were internal armed conflicts and all of them took place in Asia. These are the conflicts in the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). Two other cases, which account for 6% of the total, were international in nature: the conflict in the western African region of the Sahel and the Palestinian-Israeli dispute in the Middle East. The remaining 27 cases, which account for 85%, were internalised internal. These cases are characterised by the fact that one of the disputing parties is foreign, the armed actors in the conflict have bases or launch attacks from abroad and/or the dispute spills over into neighbouring countries. In many conflicts this factor of internationalisation took the form of the involvement of third-party actors as disputing parties, including international missions, ad-hoc regional and international military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders, among others.

Following the trend in previous years, most of the main motivations behind the armed conflicts in 2021 had to do with the domestic or international policies of the respective governments or the political, economic, social or ideological system of a certain state, which led to struggles to gain or chip away at power. One or both of these causes were found in 72% of the cases,

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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 2021*

AFRICA (15)	ASIA (9)	MIDDLE EAST (5)
Burundi -2015- Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) -2018- CAR -2006- DRC (east) -1998- DRC (east-ADF) -2014- Ethiopia (Tigray) -2020- Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011- Libya -2011- Mali -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 -2001- Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005- Philippines (NPA) -1969- Philippines (Mindanao) -1991- Thailand (south) -2004-	Egypt (Sinai) -2014- Iraq -2003- Israel-Palestine -2000- Syria -2011- Yemen -2004- **EUROPE (2)** Turkey (south-east) -1984- Ukraine (east) -2014- **AMERICAS (1)** Colombia -1964-

*The start date of the armed conflict is shown between hyphens

meaning in 23 of the 32 armed conflicts reported in 2021. In 17 of these conflicts, there were armed actors that aspired to transform the system. Most were jihadist groups with an agenda based on their particular interpretation of Islamic precepts. Afghanistan was a prominent case in 2021, as the Taliban managed to seize power in Afghanistan militarily 20 years after their defeat and after two decades of foreign occupation, following the withdrawal of US military forces in the middle of the year.

Other notable motivations behind the armed conflicts were disputes around demands for identity and self-government, as one or both were seen in 20 or the 32 cases (63%). Examples of these kind of conflicts include the one between the government of Cameroon and political-military secessionist movements in the two English-speaking regions in the western part of the country (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), the one affecting the Ethiopian region of Tigray, the one in Mindanao in the Philippines, the one in Jammu and Kashmir in India, the one in Balochistan in Pakistan, the one in southern Thailand and the Kurdish issue in Turkey, to mention just a few. Lastly, there were also armed conflicts mainly caused by struggles to control territory and/or resources. These amounted to 34% of the total number of conflicts (11 of 32). The armed conflicts that involved disputes over resources were mainly concentrated in Africa, though they were also indirectly present conflicts in other regions, perpetuating violence through economies of war. The DRC (east) continued to be an emblematic case of armed conflicts with an important background linked to the control of resources, with much fighting related to the extraction of gold, coltan and other minerals.

In keeping with the trend of previous years, the vast majority (84%) of the armed conflicts in 2021 were internationalised internal in nature

In terms of trends, most of the armed conflicts in 2021 (13 of the 32, equivalent to 41%) showed an increase in the levels of violence compared to the previous year. Conflicts in all regions observed a deterioration in the situation: Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Ethiopia (Tigray), the Western Sahel Region, the CAR, the DRC (east-ADF), Sudan (Darfur), Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), Ukraine (east), and Israel-Palestine. Another 12 armed conflicts (accounting for 37% of all cases) observed levels of violence and fighting similar to those reported in 2020. Only in seven armed conflicts (22% of all worldwide) did the levels of violence and its impacts decrease: Libya, Mozambique (north), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Jammu and Kashmir), India (CPI-M) and Egypt (Sinai).

Regarding the intensity of conflict, in 2021 high-intensity armed conflicts accounted for 53% of all

Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2021
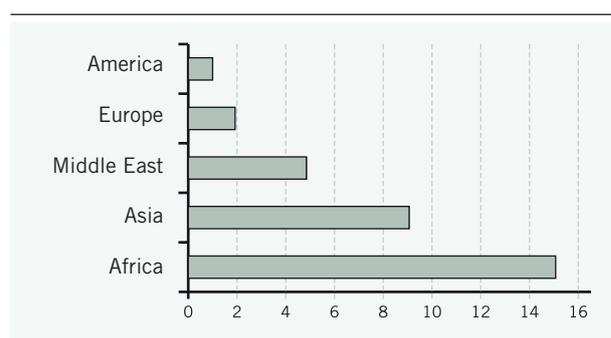
conflicts, exceeding half of all cases for the first time in the last decade. Africa registered 12 of the 17 high-intensity armed conflicts identified around the world, or 71% of all cases. In many of the high-intensity armed conflicts, the hostilities and multiple dynamics of violence claimed well over 1,000 lives per year. In Afghanistan alone, which had the highest death toll in 2021, over 40,000 people lost their lives due to the armed conflict. In 2021, the second bloodiest armed conflict was in Yemen, where more than 22,000 people died. On the other hand, 28% of armed conflicts in 2021 were considered low-intensity and 19% were of medium intensity.

Following the trend of previous years, civilians continued to suffer very serious consequences stemming from armed conflicts in 2021, as the United Nations and international and local organisations have regularly denounced. During the year, the impacts of clashes between armed actors and the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against civilians were amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the confluence with other crises, such as the climate emergency, which further aggravated the precariousness and lack of protection of many populations affected by armed conflicts. There was a significant number of civilian victims in 2021, which increased in many armed conflicts, such as in Mali, Western Sahel Region, RDC (east), Afghanistan and Yemen. Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or worsen humanitarian crisis situations, which were aggravated by other conditions such as the pandemic, the economic crisis and the climate emergency. OCHA highlighted that armed conflicts continued to be the main cause of humanitarian needs around the world and warned in particular of the unprecedented increase in food insecurity.

Armed conflicts also continued to have specific impacts on some population groups. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict documented almost 26,500 serious violations against children in 21 contexts (of which around 24,000 took place in 2020 and another 2,500 had been previously committed, but could only be documented in 2020). Special concern was caused by the significant increase in the kidnapping of minors, which increased by 90%, and sexual violence, which rose by 70%. Sexual violence mainly affected girls, who accounted for 98% of the victims of sexual violence against minors. Forced recruitment, on the other hand, particularly affected boys, accounting for 85% of the minors affected.

The use of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians by state and non-state armed actors, and especially against women and girls, continued to be reported in 2021. The UN Secretary-General's annual report provided verified information on the use of sexual violence in 18 contexts, involving 52 armed actors, mostly non-state groups, although as in previous years, military and security forces were also involved in various conflicts. In 2021, new episodes of

New internal forced displacements by conflict and violence in 2020
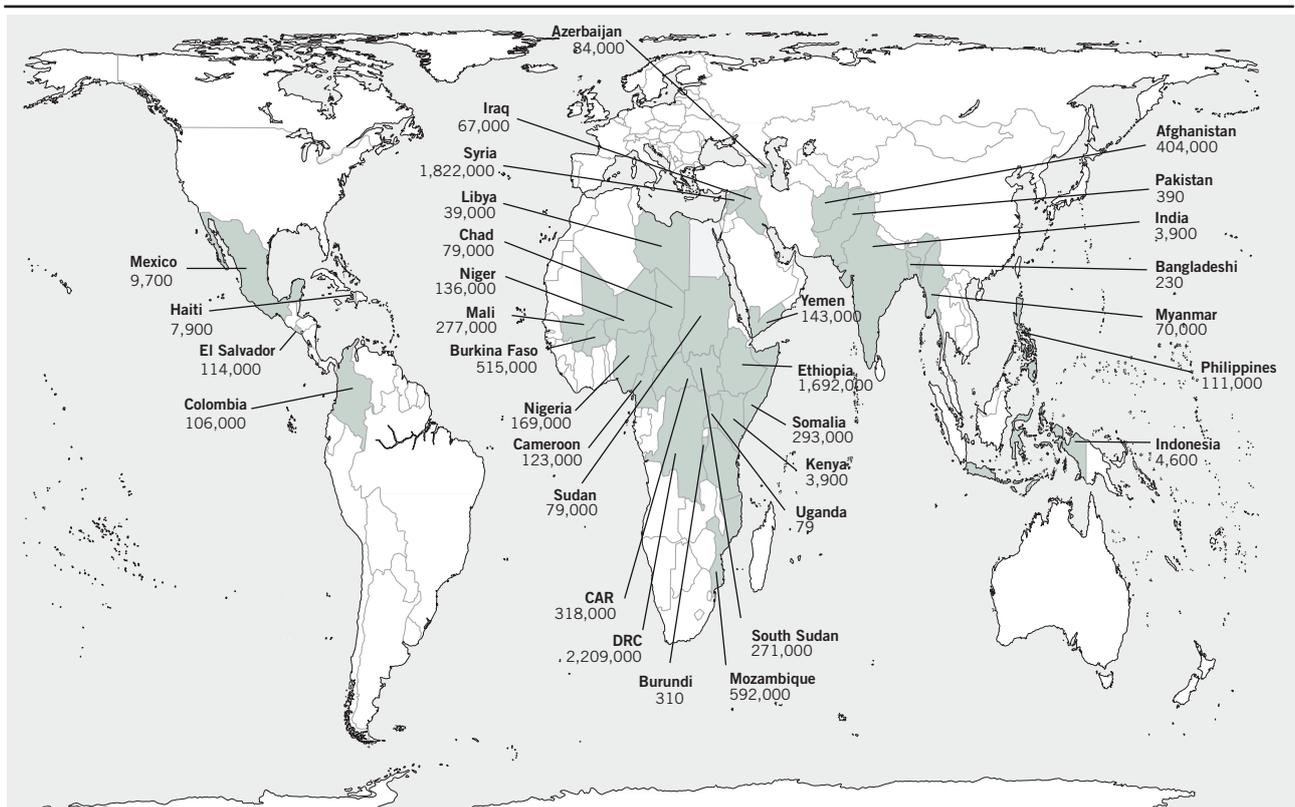
Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the data provided in *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021*, GRID, May 2021.

sexual violence were reported in Ethiopia (Tigray), the CAR, the DRC (east), Libya, Syria and Yemen.

The repercussions of the armed conflicts also include forced displacement. According to UNHCR data, this continued to intensify and break record figures. By the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than double the number a decade ago. The figures for forced displacement dipped temporarily due to the pandemic and the mobility restrictions aimed at containing the virus, but by the end of 2020, the previous trend had already recovered. According to UNHCR, 82% of the people who crossed borders to flee situations of conflict, violence or persecution came from just 10 countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, the DRC, Sudan, Somalia, the CAR and Eritrea.

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 and regional trends. During 2021, 98 socio-political crises were identified around the world, three more than in 2020, confirming the upward trend in the number of socio-political crises that has been recorded in recent years. Africa was once again the region with the greatest number of socio-political crises (40), followed by Asia (24), the Americas (12) and Europe and the Middle East (11 each). Nine new cases were analysed in 2021 and another six stopped being classified as socio-political crises. Six of these nine cases were concentrated in Africa: Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia-Sudan, Niger and Nigeria (Biafra). In Latin America, the cases of Cuba and Colombia were included due to the notable increase in protests in both countries. Finally, the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh was also classified as a socio-political crisis, which was considered an armed conflict in 2020.

Half the socio-political crises were of low intensity, 31% were of medium intensity and 19% were of high intensity. In 2021, three more high-intensity cases were identified than in 2020, for a total of 19: Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), Sudan, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela, India-China, India-Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon. More than half of the most serious socio-political crises

Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2021
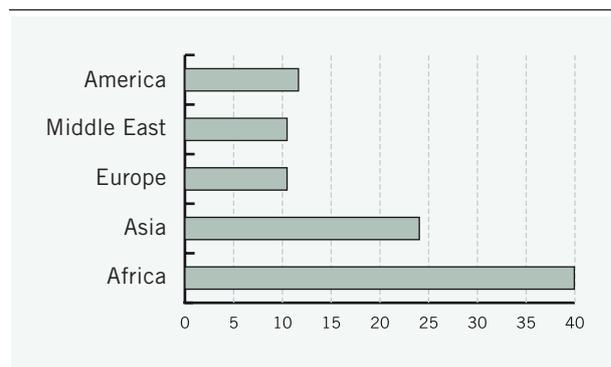
were concentrated in Africa. Regarding the trend of the socio-political crises, 38% worsened during the year, 40% showed no significant change compared to 2020 and 21% improved somewhat. Therefore, the number of cases in which conditions worsened in 2021 was practically double the number in which they improved. The areas with the greatest number of escalated socio-political crises were Africa (50%) and Asia (42%).

72% of the socio-political crises were linked to opposition to the internal or international policies or certain governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State as a whole; 41% to demands for self-government and/or identity; and 31% to disputes for control of territories and/or resources. More specifically, opposition to internal or international government policies was a causal factor in 64% of the 98 socio-political crises, although in some regions this factor was present in a higher proportion, such as in Latin America (100%) and Africa (73%). Opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the state as a whole was found in 22% of the cases. Identity-related aspirations were present in 38% of the socio-political crises analysed in this publication. Demands for self-determination and self-government were a determining factor in almost one quarter of the crises worldwide. Control of resources was a relevant factor in 22% of the cases, while control of territory was an important cause of 14%, although in Asia this percentage was more than double (29%). In line with the trend observed in recent years, approximately half the socio-political crises around the world were internal in nature (51%), a figure similar to that of 2020 (53%). More than one quarter of the socio-political crises were internationalised internal (27%). One fifth of the socio-political crises (22%) were international, and some were among the highest in the world, such as India-China, India-Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon.

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.

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.[4] 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 13 of the 32 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2020 occurred in countries where serious gender inequalities exist, with high or very high levels of discrimination; 5 in countries with medium levels of discrimination; and that 9 armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data in this regard –Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan. Similarly, in four other countries where there were one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with low levels (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low levels (Colombia) of discrimination, according to the SIGI. As regards socio-political crises, at least 43 of the 98 active cases of socio-political crisis during 2021 took place in countries where there are severe gender inequalities (medium, high or very high levels according to the SIGI). 30 socio-political crises took place in countries for which no data are available (Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam,

18 of the 32 armed conflicts that took place in 2021 were in countries with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

Burundi, China, DPR Korea, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gambia, Gaza and the West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Kosovo, Western Sahara, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Taiwan, Uzbekistan and Venezuela).

As in previous years, during 2021 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. Twelve of the 18 settings that were analysed in the UN Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence were countries with high intensity armed conflicts –Mali, CRA, DRC (East), DRC (East-ADF), the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen– topping 1,000 fatalities during the year and producing serious impacts on people and the territory, including conflict-related sexual violence. 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. A study was published by Save the Children that revealed that at least 72 million of the 426 million children living in areas of armed conflict in the world reside less than 50 kilometres from areas where armed groups and government armed forces have committed sexual violence against minors. The countries with the highest proportion of children living in conflict zones in which this kind of violence has been reported by armed actors are Colombia (where 24% of children in the country are at risk), Iraq (49%), Somalia (56%), South Sudan (19%), Syria (48%) and Yemen (83%).

In 2021, 20 countries that were involved in peace negotiations and peace processes had an National Action Plan on women, peace and security, which was supposed to promote women's participation in these processes. The 21 negotiations and peace processes took place in Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Spain (Basque Country), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria), Serbia-Kosovo, Ukraine (east), Israel-Palestine, Palestine and Yemen. However, even if they had this tool, most peace

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Countries in armed conflict and/or socio-political crisis with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

	Medium levels of discrimination	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination	No data
Armed conflict	Burkina Faso India (2) Thailand DRC (2)	Chad Mali (2) Myanmar Nigeria CAR	Afghanistan Philippines (2) Cameroon (2) Iraq Pakistan (2) Yemen	Burundi Egypt Israel Libya Niger Palestine Syria Somalia Sudan (2) South Sudan
Socio-political crises	Benin Burkina Faso Chile Haiti India (6) Kenia DRC (4) Senegal Thailand Tajikistan Zimbabwe	Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia (2) Mali Nigeria (3) CAR Tanzania Tunisia Uganda (4)	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Iraq Lebanon (2) Morocco Pakistan (2)	Saudi Arabia Algeria Bahrein Brunei Darussalam Burundi China (7) Korea,DPR (2) Cuba Djibouti Egypt (2) Eritrea (2) Eswatini Gambia Guinea Bissau Equatorial Guinea Israel (2) Kosovo Niger Malaysia Palestine Syria Somalia Sudan (5) South Sudan (2) Taiwan Uzbekistan Venezuela Western Sahara

* 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 (2021), and on Escola de Cultura de Pau's classifications for armed conflicts and socio-political crises. The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

negotiations continued to exclude women and did not include the gender perspective into their dynamics, calling into question the effectiveness of action plans as inclusive peacebuilding tools.

Opportunities for Peace and Risk Scenarios for 2022

Chapter four of the report (Opportunities for Peace in 2022) identifies and analyzes five scenarios that are favourable for positive steps to be taken in terms of peacebuilding for the future. The opportunities identified in 2021 refer to different regions and topics:

■ **Chad:** The country faces a broad, complex and interrelated range of challenges, along with elements of fragility and instability that have become compounded in recent decades. This climate of instability was exacerbated further by the death of President Idriss Déby in April 2021 and the subsequent military coup, which appeared to place the country on the brink. However, the transitional authorities pledged to return power to civilian rule within 18 months and to hold a national dialogue that may help lay the groundwork for the beginning of a new phase to end the spiral of instability and violence of recent years.

■ **India-Pakistan:** In February, the governments of India and Pakistan agreed to renew their commitment to the ceasefire along the Line of Control, first agreed in 2003. This new development came about amid a trend of steady and increasing ceasefire violations in recent years by the security forces of both countries. Moreover, the renewal of the commitment paved the way for indirect contacts between the two governments, which took place in the United Arab Emirates. Although these contacts were later interrupted, the commitment to the cessation of violence along the border was consolidated.

Opportunities for peace in 2022
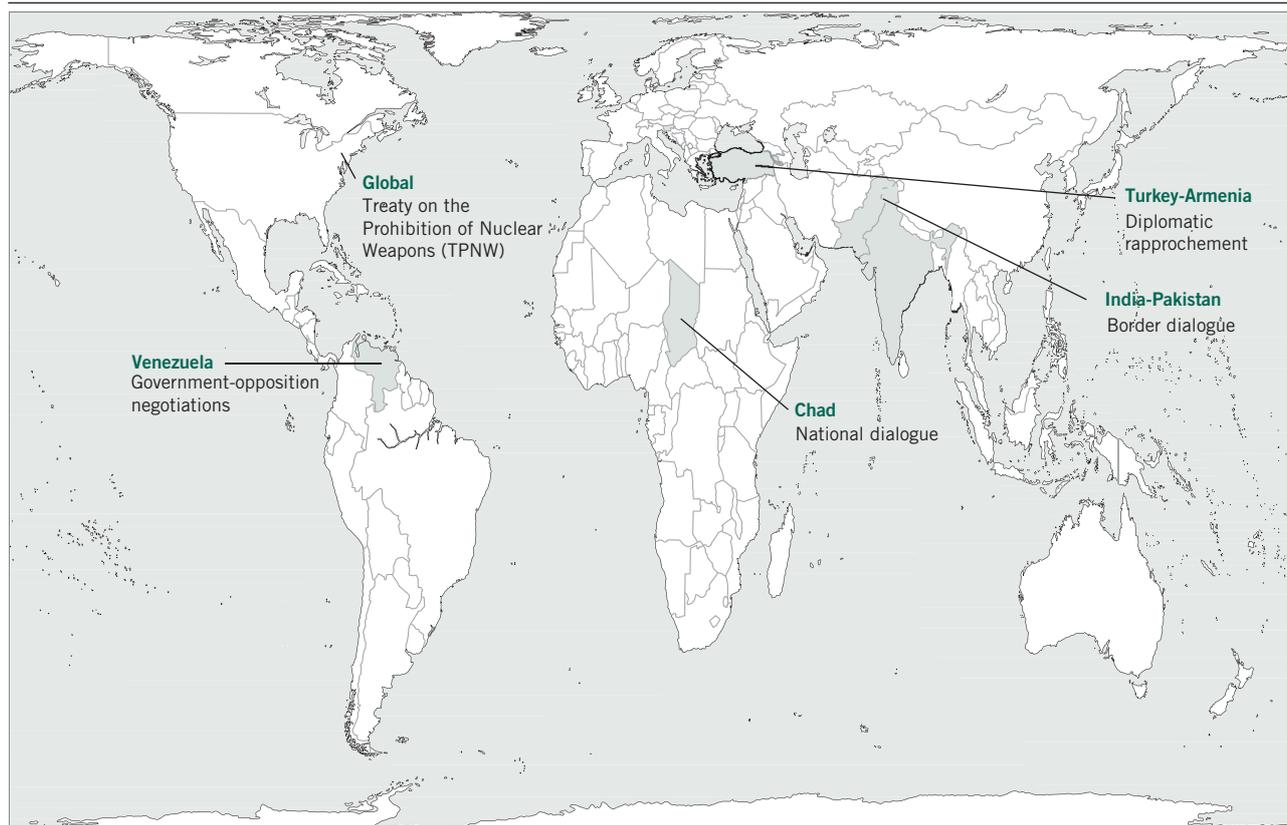
■ **Venezuela:** Although there have been several failed dialogue initiatives in the past, a new negotiation process between Nicolás Maduro's government and most of the opposition got underway in the middle of the year in Mexico. This process, facilitated by Norway and accompanied by Russia and the Netherlands, received significant backing from the international community, generating a certain amount of expectation due to the apparent greater willingness of both parties to reach agreements.

■ **Turkey-Armenia:** A diplomatic opening between the two countries took place with a series of announcements and measures aimed at normalizing relations that have been marked by the historical wound of the Armenian genocide and Turkey's support of Azerbaijan in its dispute with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the rapprochement has thus far failed to include dimensions such as social dialogue.

■ **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons:** The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons came into force in January following its ratification by 58 states. This coming into force marks a major step forwards in disarmament, although some organizations have warned that the trend of a reduction in the global arsenal, which had been steady since the end of the Cold War, appeared

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

to be slowing down. It should be noted that some openings have appeared that may aid the denuclearization process, such as a decrease in investments in the nuclear weapons industry or the fact that two NATO members, Norway and Germany, will participate as observers at the first conference of states parties. The unprecedented escalation of tension between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic countries makes progress towards nuclear disarmament more necessary than ever.

Chapter five of the report (Risk Scenarios for 2022), identifies and analyzes six scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen and become sources of more severe instability and violence in 2022.

■ **Africa:** The four successful African coups in 2021, in Chad (April), Mali (May), Guinea (September) and Sudan (October), represent the highest number of coups on the continent in the same calendar year since 1999. The contagion effect, generated by the combined impact of the deteriorating security situation, political instability and the disparate responses by African organizations and the international community to unconstitutional changes of government, jeopardizes the progress made in democratic governance by African societies, posing a threat to the peace, security and stability of the continent.
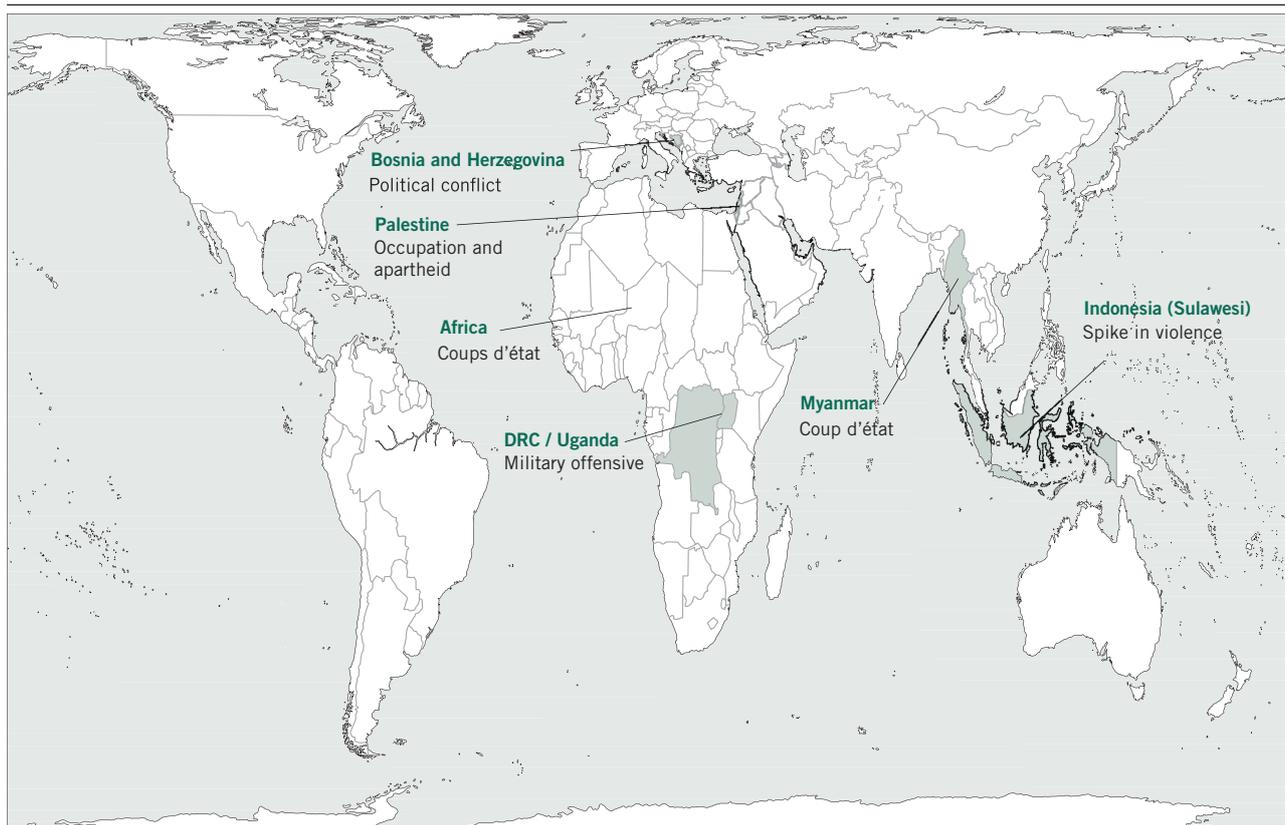
■ **DRC/Uganda:** Uganda intervened in Congolese territory in pursuit of the armed group ADF after it perpetrated several bombings in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. The attacks constituted a geographical shift and qualitative leap in the group's actions and triggered an armed response by Uganda in Congolese territory, which may entail an escalation in the evolution and severity of this conflict with potentially dire consequences, reopening one of the worst episodes that the African continent has experienced in recent decades: the Ugandan intervention in the Second Congo War (1998-2003).

■ **Myanmar:** The coup d'état perpetrated by Myanmar's armed forces in February ended the transition to democracy in the country, preventing the formation of the new parliament after the November 2020 election in which Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD had scored an overwhelming victory. The escalation in repression by Myanmar's security forces led to an intensified response by the opposition, shifting from the nonviolent resistance of the early post-coup days to the creation of armed defence groups.

■ **Indonesia (Sulawesi):** The recent escalation in attacks by the armed group MIT raises concerns about its connections to ISIS and jihadist-inspired groups in Southeast Asia, especially given the fact

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

that the region in which the group operates (the province of Central Sulawesi) witnessed spiralling sectarian and community violence between 1998 and 2001, along with numerous terrorist attacks and episodes of violence since that period.

■ **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Heightened tensions in 2021, generated by the Bosnian Serb boycott of the state's central authorities and the decision of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska to pull out of various state institutions, along with disagreements over electoral reform, mean that the situation in the country is at risk of deteriorating further.

■ **Palestine:** The commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Madrid-Oslo process offered an opportunity to reflect on the dynamics which have been in place ever since, which have in practice favoured the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the consolidation of the fragmentation and dispossession of the Palestinians. An analysis of the harmful consequences of the peace process, the serious violations and discrimination suffered by the Palestinian population and the current status of the conflict (which in 2021 saw an intensification of direct violence) highlights the cost of continuing to ignore the Palestinian issue and the urgency of adopting new approaches.

Conflict overview 2021

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	**Medium**	**Low**	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	
Africa	*Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West)* CAR *DR Congo (east)* DR Congo (east-ADF) Ethiopia (Tigray) Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) *Mali* Mozambique (north) *Somalia* South Sudan Sudan (Darfur) West Sahel Region	*Libya*	*Burundi* Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)	Chad Ethiopia Ethiopia (Oromia) Guinea Kenya Mali *Morocco-Western Sahara* Nigeria Nigeria (Biafra) *Sudan*	Algeria Burkina Faso Côte d'Ivoire Djibouti *DRC* Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan Ethiopia-Sudan Guinea-Bissau Rwanda Rwanda-Burundi Rwanda-Uganda Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland) Tanzania Tunisia Uganda	Benin Central Africa (LRA) DRC-Rwanda DRC-Uganda Equatorial Guinea Eritrea **Eritrea-Ethiopia** Eswatini Gambia *Mozambique* Niger Nigeria (Delta Niger) Senegal (Casamance) *Sudan-South Sudan* Zimbabwe	
SUBTOTAL	**12**	**1**	**2**	**10**	**15**	**15**	**55**
America		*Colombia*		Colombia Haiti Mexico *Venezuela*	Peru	Bolivia Chile Cuba El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Nicaragua	
SUBTOTAL		**1**		**4**	**1**	**7**	**13**
Asia and Pacific	*Afghanistan* *Myanmar*	Pakistan	India (CPI-M) India (Jammu and Kashmir) Pakistan (Baluchistan) Philippines (Mindanao) *Philippines (NPA)* *Thailand (south)*	India-China India-Pakistan	Indonesia (West Papua) *Korea, DPR-USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea* *Korea, DPR-Rep. of Korea* Kyrgyzstan Pakistan Tajikistan Thailand	Bangladesh China (Hong Kong) China (Tibet) China-Japan China-Taiwan China (Xinjiang) India *India (Assam)* India (Manipur) *India (Nagaland)* Indonesia (Sulawesi) Kazakhstan Lao, DPR South China Sea Uzbekistan	
SUBTOTAL	**2**	**1**	**6**	**2**	**7**	**15**	**33**
Europe		Turkey (southeast) *Ukraine (east)*		*Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)*	Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina Turkey Turkey–Greece, Cyprus	*Georgia (Abkhasia)* *Georgia (South Ossetia)* *Moldova, Rep. of (Transdniestria)* Russia (North Caucasus) *Serbia-Kosovo* Spain (Catalonia)	
SUBTOTAL		**2**		**1**	**4**	**6**	**13**
Middle East	Iraq *Syria* *Yemen*	*Israel-Palestine*	Egypt (Sinai)	*Iran-USA, Israel* Israel-Syria-Lebanon	Egypt Iran Lebanon	Bahrein Iran (northeast) Iran (Sistan Balochistan) Iraq (Kurdistan) Palestine Saudi Arabia	
SUBTOTAL	**3**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**16**
TOTAL	**17**	**6**	**9**	**19**	**30**	**49**	**130**

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics.

Map 1.1. **Armed conflicts**
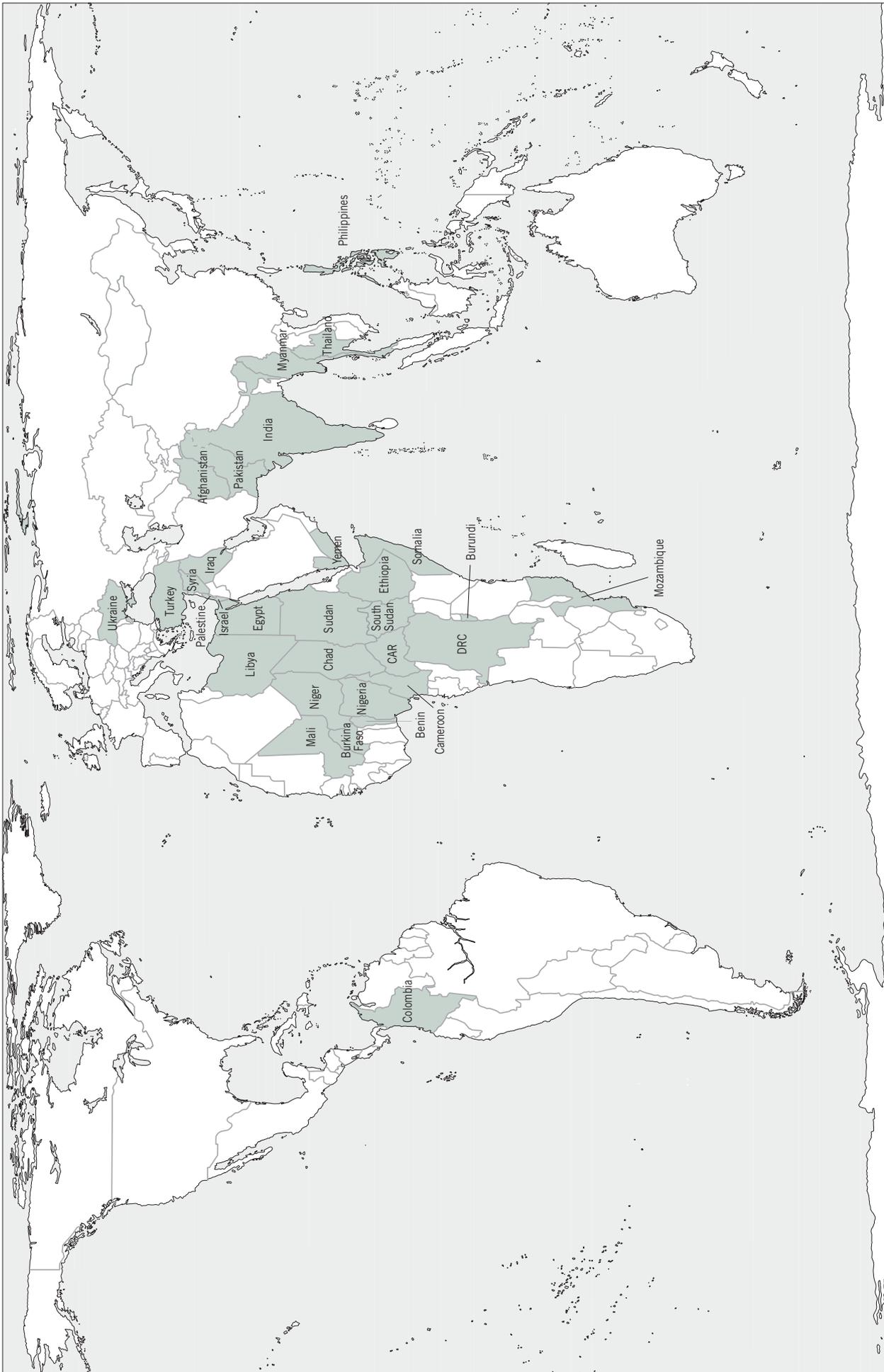
Countries with armed conflicts

1. Armed conflicts

- 32 armed conflicts were reported in 2021, a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Most of the conflicts occurred in Africa (15), followed by Asia (nine), the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and America (one).

- For the first time in a decade, high-intensity armed conflicts accounted for more than half (53%) of all cases worldwide.

- In November, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) carried out several attacks in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, reflecting a geographical and qualitative leap in the group's actions and triggering Uganda's military deployment in the DRC.

- The escalation of the conflict continued in the Ethiopian region of Tigray in which all parties committed atrocities, including massacres of civilians, sexual violence and the use of hunger as a weapon of war.

- The SADC regional mission was deployed with Rwandan troops in the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique to help the Mozambican government to contain the violence.

- The signing of a military agreement between Mali and Russia threatens to transform international military coalitions in the Sahel.

- The Taliban took power in Afghanistan after an intensification of their offensive and the withdrawal of US and international troops.

- A military coup d'état overthrew the government of Aung San Suu Kyi and led to an escalation of violence in Myanmar.

- Militarisation around the conflict in Ukraine increased, with the massive deployment of Russian troops along the border and warnings of a possible military invasion by Russia.

- Direct violence associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory increased and caused the worst death toll in seven years.

- The armed conflict in Yemen remained one of the most serious in the world, with more than 20,000 deaths in 2021, and attempts to impose a ceasefire throughout the country failed.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2021. 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 2021, 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 2021.

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 2021

Conflict[1] -beginning-	Type[2]	Main parties[3]	Intensity[4] / Trend[5]
AFRICA			
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, Government of Nigeria, political-military secessionist movement including the opposition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako, to which belong the armed groups Lebialem Red Dragons and SOCADEF) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku, whose armed wing is the Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF), multiple militias and smaller armed groups	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups that are members of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC, made up of anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, 3R, FPRC, MPC and UPC), other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia (Wagner Group)	3
	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, Government of Rwanda, MONUSCO	3
	Government, Identity, Resources		=
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government of DRC, Government of Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	3
	System, Resources		↑
Ethiopia (Tigray) -2020-	Internationalised internal	Government of Ethiopia, Government of Eritrea, Tigray State Regional Government, security forces and militias of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), security forces of the Amhara and Afar regions, Fano Amharic militia	3
	Government, Self-government, Identity		↑
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, Civilian Joint Task Force pro-government milita, Boko Haram factions (ISWAP, JAS-Abubakar Shekau, Ansaru, Bakura), civilian militias, Multinational Joint Task Force MNJTF (Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)	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, also called Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF), militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Bengasi Defence Brigades (BDB), ISIS, AQIM, mercenaries; USA, France, UK, Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Russia, among other countries	2
	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.
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 2021 with those that of 2020. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2021 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 -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 West Africa Province (ISWAP) –also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)-, Katiba Macina, MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Holland, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom), Russia	3	
	System, Self-government, Identity			=
Mozambique (North) -2019-	Internationalised internal	Government, Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) -formerly Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)-, al-Qaeda, South African private security company DAG (Dyck Advisory Group), Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, Mission in Mozambique of the Southern African Development Community (SAMIM)	3	
	System, Identity			↓
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal Government of Somalia, 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), South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) – which includes the rebel organizations NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC), 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, UNITAMS	3	
	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, Ivory Coast, 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), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom), Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in the Province of West Africa (ISWAP) - also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)-, Macina Liberation Front (FML), Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups and community militias, Russia	3	
	System, Resources, Identity			↑
AMERICA				
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, ELN, FARC (dissidents), EPL, paramilitary groups	2	
	System			↑
ASIA				
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban, warlords, ISIS (ISIS-K), National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF)	3	
	System			↑
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1	
	System			↓
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Government, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, United Jihad Council, The Resistance Front (TRF)	1	
	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) PDF	3	
	Self-government, Identity			↑
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, foreign militias, USA	2	
	System			↑

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
ASIA			
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura), ISIS	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Philippines (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlay Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, Toraife group, factions of MILF and MNLF	1
	Self-government, System, Identity		↓
Philippines (NPA) -1969--	Internal	Government, NPA	1
	System		=
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, BRN and other 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	1
	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[6]	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups	2
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↑
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the 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	3
	System, Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Yemen[7] -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, separatist groups under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), AQAP, ISIS, 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

6. Despite the fact that "Palestine" (whose Palestinian National Authority is a political entity linked to a specific population and territory) is not an internationally recognised state, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is considered "international" and not "internal" because it is an illegally occupied territory with Israel's alleged claim to the territory not being recognised by international law or by any United Nations resolution.
7. In previous editions of the report *Alert!*, the armed conflict led by the Houthis and the AQAP were addressed separately. This year they are analysed jointly due to the convergence in the dynamics of conflict.

1.2. Armed conflicts: analysis of trends in 2021

This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2021. 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

In 2021 there was a slight decrease in the number of armed conflicts compared to previous years. In total 32 conflicts were reported, compared to the 34 identified in 2020, 2019 and 2018. The main change compared to the previous period is that the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh was no longer considered an armed conflict. After the intense six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and its severe impacts, with more than 5,000 people killed and tens of thousands forcibly displaced by violence, the situation became one of militarised tension in 2021, amid a fragile ceasefire with many persisting humanitarian challenges,[8] as well as problems related to negotiations. This edition of the report also analyses the armed conflicts in Yemen (Houthis) and Yemen (AQAP) together due to the gradual interrelation of the dynamics of armed conflict in the country.[9] By the end of the year, the 32 armed conflicts identified in 2021 remained active.

Almost half the armed conflicts in 2021 took place in Africa, with a total of 15 (47%), followed by Asia (nine), the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and the Americas (one)

The trend of previous periods was upheld in the geographical distribution of the armed conflicts. The vast majority continued to be concentrated in Africa (15) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and the Americas (one). Therefore, almost half the cases (47%) took place in Africa.

Regarding the relationship of the actors involved in the conflicts and the scene of the hostilities, armed conflicts were identified as internal, international and, for the most part, internationalised internal. In keeping with the trend of previous years, three of the 32 cases in 2021 (9%) were internal armed conflicts and all of them took place in Asia. These are the conflicts in the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). Two other cases, which account for 6% of the total, were international in nature: the conflict in the western African region of the Sahel and the Palestinian-Israeli dispute in the Middle East. The remaining 27 cases, which account for 85%, were internationalised internal. %). These cases are characterised by the fact that one of the disputing parties is foreign, the armed actors in the conflict have bases or launch attacks from abroad and/or the dispute spills over into neighbouring countries. In many conflicts this factor of internationalisation took the form of the involvement of third-party actors as disputing parties, including international missions, ad-hoc regional and international military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders –such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram or others.

As in previous years, United Nations international missions were maintained in 2021, especially in the context of armed conflicts in Africa. Throughout the year, the UN continued to operate in the CAR (MINUSCA), the DRC (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA), South Sudan (UNMISS) and Sudan (Darfur). In Sudan, the hybrid UN and AU mission (UNAMID) definitively withdrew from the area on 31 December 2020 after over a decade of activity (it had been operating since 2007), giving way to a UN mission to assist the transition in Sudan (UNITAMS). Regional organisations also continued to be involved in numerous armed conflicts in the form of military missions or operations, as in the case of the African Union (AU) –with the AMISOM mission in Somalia– or the European Union (EU) –EUFOR in CAR, EUNAVFOR in Somalia. Hybrid missions, involving regional organisations and states, also continued to operate, such as the maritime military operation in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean –known as Ocean Shield–, led by the US but also involving the EU, NATO

Graph 1.1. **Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2021**

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8.   See the summary on Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno Karabakh) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
9.   In previous editions of the report *Alert!* the armed conflicts in Yemen (Houthis) and Yemen (AQAP) were analysed separately.

and countries such as Japan, India and Russia. The international coalition against the armed group ISIS, formed in September 2014 under the leadership of the US, which has since deployed actions in Iraq and Syria, is similar in nature. The coalition has 84 members, including states and organisations, including the Arab League and the EU.[10]

Regarding third-country involvement, the US withdrew from several emblematic armed conflicts in 2021. The most outstanding of these was undoubtedly Afghanistan. After the Biden administration announced that US troops would permanently leave the country on 11 September, two decades after the attacks on Washington DC and New York that prompted the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the violence intensified in the country and the Taliban seized power by force of arms. In this context, NATO's Resolute Support mission also withdrew its forces from the country between May and September 2021. In early January 2021, the US also ended its military presence in Somalia, with the withdrawal of nearly 800 special forces troops that it maintained there. At the end of the year, it was also announced that the US would withdraw the troops it was keeping on a combat mission in Iraq and the soldiers that would remain in the country would limit their activities to training and assistance tasks. However, diplomatic and security sources thought that the change in their role would not be significant due to US troops' low levels of participation in combat activities in Iraq in recent years. Meanwhile, some Iraqi actors, including militias close to Iran, continued to demand the complete withdrawal of US forces.

Furthermore, Russia increased its military activity in different places in 2021. In some conflicts, Moscow continued to be directly involved, holding sway over local armed groups, such as in Syria, where it continued to be a leading actor and key supporter of Bashar Assad's regime. Russia also deployed tens of thousands of soldiers and military equipment near the border with Ukraine in 2021 as part of its dispute with the Ukrainian government and its growing tensions with NATO, the US and the EU. At the end of the year, alarms about the risk of a possible Russian military invasion of Ukraine intensified. In various contexts, a growing Russian presence through the private security company Wagner Group was also observed. Thus, for example, the deployment of Wagner Group mercenaries caused great strain between the Malian government and its Western partners in 2021, particularly France. Meanwhile, the Wagner Group deployed some forces in the CAR and its presence in Libya has also been reported in recent years. In this context, at the end of the year the EU passed a series of restrictions against the Wagner Group,

In keeping with the trend of previous years, the vast majority (84%) of the armed conflicts in 2021 were internationalised internal in nature

which it accused of recruiting, training and sending private military forces to conflict zones, favouring the dynamics of violence, the plundering of resources and the intimidation of civilians. In December 2021, the European Council accused some individuals linked to the group of torture, arbitrary and extrajudicial killing and destabilising activities, particularly in Libya, Syria, Ukraine (Donbas), the CAR and the Sahel region.[11]

The dynamics of internationalisation were also observed in other contexts, such as the conflict in Turkey (southeast), where the Turkish Army launched several military operations against Kurdish forces located in northern Iraq. Turkey also continued to play a leading role in the war in neighbouring Syria. Iran also maintained its involvement in the armed conflict in Syria and continued to play a key role in the dynamics of the armed conflict in Iraq due to its influence over many Shia militias. Likewise, Tehran seemed increasingly involved in Yemen due to its proximity to the Houthis and its interest in the country as part of the power struggle with Saudi Arabia and the negotiations over its nuclear programme. Riyadh continued to play a leading role in the international coalition involved in the armed conflict in Yemen, in which the United Arab Emirates also played a major role. For several years, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya have been scenarios of "proxy wars", in which regional and international disputes were clearly projected onto the dynamics of the conflict. Another conflict that stood out for its dynamics of internationalisation in 2021 was in Ethiopia (Tigray), after Eritrea became involved in support of the Ethiopian government and the fighting spread to the border area between Ethiopia and Sudan, where clashes took place between the armies of Ethiopia and Sudan with Sudanese militias. Also notable was Mozambique (north), where various international actors were involved, some of which contributed military and/or police contingents, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Rwanda, or training units, such as Portugal, the US and the EU, to support the Mozambican security forces' counterinsurgency operations.

Following the trend in previous years, most of the main motivations behind the armed conflicts in 2021 had to do with **the domestic or international policies of the respective governments or the political, economic, social or ideological system of a certain state**, which led to struggles to gain or chip away at power. One or both of these causes were found in 72% of the cases, meaning in 23 of the 32 armed conflicts reported in 2021. In 17 of these conflicts, there were armed actors that aspired to transform the system. Most were jihadist groups with an agenda based on their particular interpretation of Islamic precepts. Despite the weakening of the armed

10. For further information, see The Global Coalition Against Daesh website.
11. European Council, *EU imposes restrictive measures against the Wagner Group,* 13 December 2021.

group Islamic State in its main area of origin in the Middle East in recent years, ISIS affiliates or entities related to the organisation, which in some cases adopted specific names, remained active in many armed conflicts in all regions of the world, except the Americas. Thus, branches of ISIS were identified in Mozambique (north), the Western Sahel Region, the Lake Chad Region, the DRC (east-ADF), Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), the Philippines (Mindanao), Turkey (southeast), Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Other organisations were linked to al-Qaeda, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali and Libya and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen. Other active jihadist armed groups that aspired to change the system were Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines (Mindanao), al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region, and the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Taliban were especially prominent and emblematic in 2021, as they managed to regain power in Afghanistan militarily 20 years after their defeat and after two decades of foreign occupation, following the withdrawal of US military forces in the middle of the year.

Other notable motivations behind the armed conflicts were disputes around demands for identity and self-government, as one or both were seen in 20 or the 32 cases (63%). Examples of these kind of conflicts include the one between the government of Cameroon and political-military secessionist movements in the two English-speaking regions in the western part of the country (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), the one affecting the Ethiopian region of Tigray, the one in Mindanao in the Philippines, the one in Jammu and Kashmir in India, the one in Balochistan in Pakistan, the one in southern Thailand and the Kurdish issue in Turkey, to mention just a few. Lastly, there were also armed conflicts mainly caused by struggles to control territory and/or resources. These amounted to 34% of the total number of conflicts (11 of 32). The armed conflicts that involved disputes over resources were mainly concentrated in Africa, though they were also indirectly present conflicts in other regions, perpetuating violence through economies of war. The DRC (east) continued to be an emblematic case of armed conflicts with an important background linked to the control of resources, with much fighting related to the extraction of gold, coltan and other minerals. Mining areas were also scenes of acts of violence in Pakistan (Balochistan), another armed conflict partially caused by a dispute over resources. In the armed conflict between the Indian security forces and the CPI-M there were also dynamics of violence linked to mining in several Indian states. Issues related to the control of territory were especially significant in the case of Palestine-Israel.

In 2021, 41% of the armed conflicts registered higher levels of violence compared to the previous year

The trending rise in high-intensity armed conflicts intensified in 2021, accounting for more than half of them for the first time in a decade

Notably, **18 of the 32 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2021 were in places where there were serious gender inequalities**, with medium, high and very high levels of discrimination.[12] Gender inequalities were expressed in aspects such as the gender-specific impacts of violence and the use of sexual violence by the warring parties in different armed conflicts, in an international context in which the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted serious gender inequalities around the world.

In terms of **trends**, most of the armed conflicts in 2021 (13 of the 32), equivalent to 41%) showed an increase in the levels of violence compared to the previous year. Conflicts in all regions observed a deterioration in the situation: Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Ethiopia (Tigray), the Western Sahel Region, the CAR, the DRC (east-ADF), Sudan (Darfur), Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), Ukraine (east), and Israel-Palestine. Another 12 armed conflicts (accounting for 37% of all cases) observed levels of violence and fighting similar to those reported in 2020. Only in seven armed conflicts (22% of all worldwide) did the levels of violence and its impacts decrease: Libya, Mozambique (north), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Jammu and Kashmir), India (CPI-M) and Egypt (Sinai). In two of these cases (Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) and Libya), the reduction in violent incidents was related to ceasefire agreements or unilateral ceasefire declarations as part of negotiating processes.[13] In other cases, such as Mozambique (north), although the violence continued to be of high-intensity, the number of violent events and associated deaths in 2021 fell compared to the previous year, which had reported the country's highest death rate in the last decade.

The **intensity of the armed conflicts** in 2021 accentuated the trend of an increase in serious cases over the last 10 years. In other words, contexts characterised by levels of lethality of over a thousand victims per year, in addition to serious impacts on the population, massive forced displacements and severe consequences in the territory. If high-intensity conflicts accounted for around a quarter of all cases a decade ago, in recent years this proportion has been growing to represent practically half the conflicts (see Graph 1.4). During the last five years, high-intensity armed conflicts accounted for 40% of all armed conflicts in 2016 and 2017. They fell to between 27% and 32% between 2018 and 2019, respectively, and increased significantly in 2020, when they reached 47%. **In 2021, high-intensity conflicts were even more prevalent, reaching 53% and exceeding half of all cases for the first time in the last decade.**

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12. See chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security).
13. For further information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

In line with what was observed in 2020, the largest proportion of high-intensity conflicts in 2021 took place in Africa. The continent registered 12 of the 17 high-intensity armed conflicts identified around the world, or 71% of all cases. Twelve of Africa's 15 armed conflicts (80%) were of high intensity, a percentage much higher than that observed in recent years (in 2019, only 44% of Africa's armed conflicts were of high intensity). After Africa, the region with the second-highest number of high-intensity cases was the Middle East, with a total of three (9% of the total conflicts worldwide, but 60% of the conflicts in the region). In Asia, two high-intensity armed conflicts were identified, while in the Americas and Europe, no cases of this type were reported, although levels of militarised tension increased, hand in hand with the massive deployment of Russian troops near the Ukrainian border and warnings of a possible invasion. The 17 cases of serious armed conflict in 2021 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Mozambique (north), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the CAR, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

In many of the high-intensity armed conflicts, the hostilities and multiple dynamics of violence claimed well over 1,000 lives per year. In Afghanistan alone, which had the highest death toll in 2021, over 40,000 people lost their lives due to the armed conflict. The Afghan conflict was also the deadliest in 2020, though with less than 20,000 fatalities, and in 2019, when the body count also exceeded 40,000. In 2021, the second-bloodiest armed conflict was in Yemen, where more than 22,000 people died. Since 2020, the war in Yemen has been deadlier than the war in Syria, which for years had been the bloodiest in the region. In 2021, the armed conflict in Syria continued to far exceed the threshold of 1,000 fatalities per year and various estimates indicate that between 3,800 and 5,700 people may have died due to the fighting. These figures are significantly lower than those reported in previous years, however, when the hostilities produced much higher estimated death tolls (30,000 in 2018; more than 50,000 in 2016 and 2015, respectively; over 70,000 in 2014). Other armed conflicts that stood out for their deadliness in 2021 were in the Western Sahel Region, where around 5,000 people were estimated to have been killed that year; the DRC (east), with more than 4,800 people killed by violence; Somalia, over than 3,000; and the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), with between 1,800 and 3,800 fatalities, according to various accounts. In other contexts, no yearly statistics were provided, but reports also indicated thousands of deaths in 2021, as in the case of Ethiopia (Tigray).

In 2021, armed conflicts were generally not as influenced by COVID-19 as in 2020. In the second year of the

In 2021, Afghanistan continued to be the armed conflict with the highest death toll in the world (40,000), followed by Yemen (22,000) and Syria (between 3,800 and 5,700)

including massacres of civilians and the use of hunger as a weapon of war, according to human rights organisations.

In Myanmar, the security forces intensified their repression of the civilian population after the military coup. Armed groups continued to attack civilians as a tool to spread terror, such as the ISIS-K attacks on Shia mosques in Afghanistan and the killing of civilians by the ISIS branch in Sinai in Egypt, while armed state actors were also singled out for abuse against the civilian population. In Egypt (Sinai), for example, the Egyptian Armed Forces were denounced by human rights organisations

Graph 1.2. **Intensity of the armed conflicts in 2021**
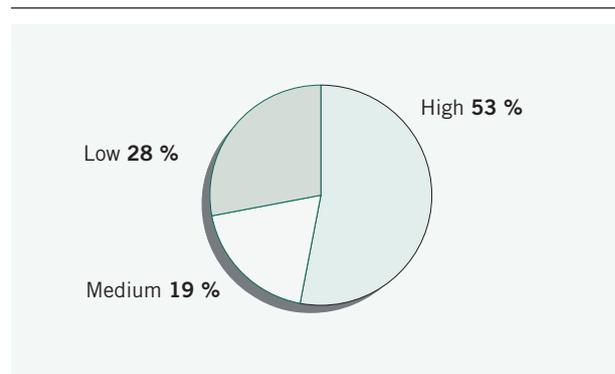
Graph 1.3. **Percentage of high intensity armed conflicts in the last decade**

* Percentage of high-intensity armed conflicts compared to the yearly total

Graph 1.4. **Intensity of the armed conflicts by region**

Box 1.1. **Regional trends in armed conflict**

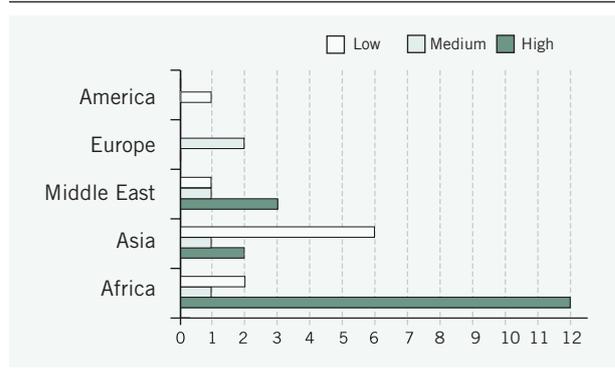|	
AFRICA	• Following the trend reported in previous periods, Africa was home to the largest number of armed conflicts globally. The continent registered 15 cases, representing 47% of the total. • The increase in high-intensity armed conflicts in Africa continued. While these cases accounted for 44% of all armed conflicts in 2016 (seven of the 16 at the time), in 2021 the percentage rose to 80% (12 of the 15 in the region). This figure is above the 73% reported in 2020. • Practically half the cases (seven out of 15) evolved towards higher levels of violence and instability. Three conflicts reported a decrease in hostilities (in Mozambique (north), Sudan (Kordofan and Blue Nile) and Libya), while the trend for the rest was similar to that of the previous year. • All the armed conflicts in Africa were internationalised internal ones, except for the one taking place in the Western Sahel Region, which is considered to be international in nature. • Various motivations were identified behind the armed conflicts in Africa. Prominent among them are aspirations to change the government or system, as one or both of these categories were found in 12 of the 15 conflicts (80%), followed by demands for self-government or identity, found in nine of the 15 (60%). Eight of the conflicts, or just over half (53%), were motivated by the control of resources, making Africa the region where this aspect is most significant.
AMERICA	• The region registered a single armed conflict, that of Colombia, one of the longest in the world. This case represented 3% of all armed conflicts worldwide. • The Colombian armed conflict took a turn for the worse in 2021 and reported higher levels of violence, increasing in intensity compared to the previous year, mainly as a result of clashes between the security forces, the armed group ELN, FARC dissident groups and different types of paramilitary organisations. • Although there was only one armed conflict in the Americas, the region continued to report extremely high levels of violence as a result of other dynamics of tension and criminality and stood out for its high homicide rates.
ASIA	• After Africa, Asia contained the second-largest number of armed conflicts, with nine, accounting for 28% of the total worldwide. • In terms of intensity, the armed conflict in Afghanistan was the deadliest in the world, with a death toll of over 40,000 in 2021. The armed conflict in Myanmar was also of high intensity, while the rest of the conflicts were of low intensity except for Pakistan, which was of medium intensity. • In contrast to the previous year, in which only one conflict had higher levels of violence and hostility, four Asian armed conflicts worsened in 221: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan) and Myanmar. There was a drop in the levels of violence in three other conflicts: India (Jamu and Kashmir), India (CPI-M) and the Philippines (Mindanao) and the rest evolved in a similar way to the previous period. • Asia continued to be the only region in the world with internal armed conflicts. The three armed conflicts of this type, in the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south) accounted for one third of the cases in the region. • In Asia, armed conflicts prevailed in which a change to the system was sought (motivation present in five of the nine conflicts, or 56%), or in which demands for self-government or identity were at stake (also in 56% of contexts). In one case, Pakistan (Balochistan), the issue of resources was especially important.
EUROPE	• Europe had one less armed conflict than the previous year, taking into account the end of the six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, which evolved into a socio-political crisis in 2021. The two armed conflicts in Europe accounted for 6% of all cases worldwide. • While both Turkey (southeast) and Ukraine (east) had reported lower levels of violence in 2020, in 2021 Ukraine was the scene of a significant escalation, hand in hand with the massive deployment of Russian troops near the border with Ukraine, while the first developed similarly to that of the previous year. Both conflicts were of medium intensity. • Both conflicts in Europe were caused by issues linked to self-government and identity. However, in Ukraine, the dispute between Moscow and Kyiv and between Moscow and Euro-Atlantic actors was also over issues of local and international politics such as Europe's political and security orientation and security architecture. • Both armed conflicts in Europe were internationalised internal in nature.
MIDDLE EAST	• Five armed conflicts were reported in the region, which accounted for 16% of all cases worldwide. The number of cases fell compared to the previous year, because the dynamics of the armed conflict in Yemen began to be analysed jointly, since the fighting done by the many different armed groups in the country became intertwined. In the previous edition of the report Alert! the conflict led by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and, to a lesser extent, by the ISIS affiliate in Yemen, was analysed separately. • The Middle East was the part of the world where the second-most high-intensity armed conflicts took place, after Africa. More than half the cases in the region (three out of five, equivalent to 60%) were of high intensity: Iraq, Syria and Yemen. These last two were the deadliest armed conflicts in 2021, after Afghanistan. • Most of the cases presented levels of violence similar to those of 2020. Only in one case, Egypt (Sinai) was there a relative drop in hostilities, although difficulties in obtaining information on the events in this case persisted. Meanwhile, in the case of Palestine-Israel, an escalation of violence was observed that resulted in the worst death toll in seven years. • The conflicts in the region were multi-causal, where four of the five cases (80%) had motivations linked to the search for a change of government or system or demands for identity or self-government. Two other cases (40%) were motivated by the control of resources and land.

pandemic, characterised by the gradual easing of mobility restrictions, it became clear that little attention had been paid to the UN Secretary-General's call in March 2020 to establish a global ceasefire to concentrate efforts to respond to the coronavirus, despite the formal support that it had obtained. The initiative was supported by 180 states, more than 800 civil society organisations and 20 armed organisations and was endorsed twice by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2565 (2021). Various analysts said that, despite its seriousness, the pandemic did not seem to affect the strategic calculations of the parties involved

in armed conflicts, nor was it considered a sufficient reason to suspend hostilities.[14] Data released in 2021 also confirmed that despite its profound economic consequences, COVID-19 did not lead to a decrease in military spending or the arms trade, which remained at levels similar to previous years.[15] An analysis of global conflict in 2021 makes it possible to identify some repercussions of the pandemic on the dynamics of armed conflicts, such as on the flow of combatants in some contexts (in the Philippines, mobility restrictions due to the pandemic would have made it difficult for foreign combatants to arrive to Mindanao) and the cynical use of the coronavirus by some governments to intensify restrictions and silence critics of the opposition, civil society and minorities.[16] The consequences of COVID-19 in 2021 mainly aggravated humanitarian crises and effects on civilians in armed conflict situations.

1.2.2. Impact of conflicts on the civilian population

Following the trend of previous years, civilians continued to suffer very serious consequences stemming from armed conflicts in 2021, as the United Nations and international and local organisations have regularly denounced. During the year, the impacts of clashes between armed actors and the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against civilians were amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the confluence with other crises, such as the climate emergency, which further aggravated the precariousness and lack of protection of many populations affected by armed conflicts.[17] The UN Secretary-General's annual report on protecting civilians in armed conflicts, published in May 2021, which studies the events of 2020, stated that armed conflicts have continued to be characterised by very high levels of civilian deaths, in addition to many people injured and seriously affected by psychological trauma, torture, disappearances, sexual violence and the destruction of homes, schools, markets, hospitals and other essential civil infrastructure such as drinking water and electricity systems. Civilians have been identified by the United Nations as the main fatalities in armed conflicts.[18]

The development of the various armed conflicts in 2021 confirms the persistence of the pattern of systematic abuse against civilians. Prominent cases included Ethiopia (Tigray), where all the parties involved in the dispute have been accused of committing atrocities,

OCHA repeated that armed conflicts continue to be the main cause of humanitarian needs around the world and warned in particular of the unprecedented increase in food insecurity

for indications of extrajudicially killing suspects accused of "terrorism". Armed private security actors, such as Russian military instructors from the Wagner Group and the South African military company Dyck Advisory Group, were also accused of abusing civilians and engaging in discriminatory practices. The use of explosive weapons had a special impact on the civilian population. Recent studies indicate that civilian victims of this type of weapon in populated areas accounted for 89% of all victims of explosive weapons in 2020.[19]

There was a significant number of civilian victims in 2021, which increased in many armed conflicts. In Mali, for example, more than 500 civilians were killed, wounded, kidnapped or disappeared between April and June alone, an increase of 25% compared to the previous quarter. In the entire Western Sahel region, civilian deaths (1,332 in 2021) doubled compared to 2020. In the DRC (east), more than 1,000 civilians had already been killed in the first months of the year due to violence, most in Ituri and North Kivu provinces. One of the most prominent cases was Afghanistan, where in the first half of 2021 alone, 1,659 civilians died from violence, which represented a rise of 50% over the previous year. In Yemen, more than 2,500 civilian victims of the conflict were documented in 2021, of which 769 died, amidst a significant increase in civilian casualties in the last quarter of the year. In Syria, although the death toll from the armed conflict has decreased in recent years, estimates pointed to more than 1,500 civilian deaths due to hostilities in 2021.

Attacks and threats against medical staff continued in 2021, as well as attacks against hospital infrastructure, practices that are considered to violate international humanitarian law. In 2021, examples were reported in various contexts such as Cameroon (Ambazonia/ Northwest and Southwest), where soldiers abused health personnel in a hospital during a search for militiamen; Afghanistan, where an attack on a military hospital in Kabul caused dozens of deaths at the end of the year; and Syria, where an attack on a hospital in the Afrin area caused serious damage to infrastructure and killed at least 18 people. This direct violence against healthcare staff and health centres and the pressures on the health system stemming from the hostilities were compounded by the consequences of the pandemic. In many cases, it is estimated that the levels of the spread of COVID-19 were much higher than the available data indicated, due to the difficulties or impossibility of conducting

14. Richard Atwood, *A Year of COVID and Conflict: What the Pandemic Did and Didn't Do*, International Crisis Group (ICG), 2 April 2021.
15. Stockholm International Peace Research (SIPRI), *World military spending rises to almost $2 trillion in 2020, 26 April 2021*, and SIPRI, *International arms transfers level off after years of sharp growth; Middle Eastern arms imports grow most, says SIPRI*, 15 March 2021.
16. For example, see the cases of Egypt, Tunisia and Chad in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises). For further information, see Iván Navarro Milián, "COVID-19 y vulneración de derechos humanos", *ECP Notes on Conflict and Peace*, no. 15, December 2021.
17. For further information, see María Villellas Ariño, "Conflictos, COVID-19 y cambio climático", *ECP Notes on Conflict and Peace*, no. 12, July 2021.
18. UN Secretary-General, *Protection of civilians in armed conflicts*, S/2021/423, 3 May 2021.
19. Jennifer Dathan, *Explosive Violence Monitor 2020*, Action on Armed Violence, 2021.

diagnostic tests. Coronavirus death figures were also more difficult to estimate in contexts of armed conflict.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or worsen humanitarian crisis situations, which were aggravated by other conditions such as the pandemic, the economic crisis and the climate emergency. According to the forecasts of the main United Nations humanitarian agency, OCHA, more than 274 million people would need humanitarian assistance in 2022, a significant increase compared to the 235 million predicted for the previous year, which was already the highest figure in decades.[20] OCHA repeated that armed conflicts continue to be the main cause of humanitarian needs around the world and warned in particular of the unprecedented increase in food insecurity due to the confluence of conflicts, the impacts of the pandemic, extreme weather events, the needy population's difficulties in accessing food and other factors. According to their estimates, a total of 811 million people had malnutrition problems in 2020 and the situation continued to deteriorate in 2021.

According to data available from OCHA up to September 2021, in the first months of 2021 about 161 million people in 42 countries were facing acute food insecurity, a figure that would rise to more than 280 million as the situation worsened in different contexts by the end of the year. Part of the increase is attributed to growing food insecurity in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Somalia. Moreover, critical situations of virtual famine were identified in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Yemen. According to OCHA data, by mid-2021 at least 5.5 million people were facing acute food insecurity in Ethiopia's Agar, Amhara and Tigray regions. The crisis in Afghanistan became one of the worst in the world, with over 22.8 million people (more than half the population) in a situation of acute food insecurity and by the end of the year, 3.2 million children under five were expected to be suffering from acute malnutrition. The population of Yemen continued to be affected by a deep humanitarian crisis, with 16.2 million people facing levels of acute food insecurity, of which five million were facing an emergency situation. The consequences of the violence of the conflict, COVID-19 and the humanitarian and economic crisis were also evident in Syria, where the population in need of assistance increased by 21% and the price of food increased by 128% compared to 2020. It is estimated that 90% of the Syrian population lived in poverty and that 12.4 million people (almost 60% of the population) faced food insecurity. In Myanmar, the military coup led to a huge economic crisis, compounded by the worsening impact of the pandemic.

The UN Secretary-General drew special attention to the impact of the pandemic on populations displaced by armed conflict, given the increased risk of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking

Armed conflicts also continued to have specific impacts on some population groups. Published in mid-2021, the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict documented almost 26,500 serious violations against children in 21 contexts (of which around 24,000 took place in 2020 and another 2,500 had been previously committed, but could only be documented in 2020).[21] The most frequent violations included the forced recruitment of children, minors killed or injured as a result of violence, the denial of access to humanitarian aid and the detention of minors for association or suspected links with groups classified as terrorists. Special concern was caused by the significant increase in the kidnapping of minors, which increased by 90%, and sexual violence, which rose by 70%. Sexual violence mainly affected girls, who accounted for 98% of the victims of sexual violence against minors. Forced recruitment, on the other hand, particularly affected boys, accounting for 85% of the minors affected. According to the UN Secretary-General's report, the armed conflicts with the most violations against minors were Afghanistan, the DRC, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Data on armed conflicts in 2021 point to a persistence of these forms of abuse, with examples in various contexts. For example, in Mozambique, child advocacy groups warned of the recruitment of children and the use of minors as objectives of war; the killing of minors by government forces and the Wagner Group was reported in the CAR; in the DRC (east), the UN repeated complaints about the use of children as combatants; in Myanmar, the death of minors was reported as part of the government's crackdown on peaceful protests against the coup d'état; in Yemen, emphasis was placed on the impact of explosive weapons and artillery fire on children; and in Iraq and Israel-Palestine, a significant percentage of civilian victims were minors.

Furthermore, the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch published a report, the result of an eight-year investigation, on the abuses committed against the elderly population, over 50 years of age, in armed conflict situations.[22] After studying the antecedents of various violations in countries such as Cameroon, the CAR, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan, Myanmar, Ukraine, Israel-Palestine and Syria, HRW concluded that both government forces and non-state armed actors have committed multiple forms of abuse, including summary execution, arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence, kidnapping and the destruction of homes and property. The report states that during hostilities many older people decide not to leave their homes because they think they will not be subjected to violence or choose to protect their family's

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20. OCHA, "Hunger is on the Rise. Unprecedented Levels of Food Insecurity Require Urgent Action to Prevent Famine", *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022*, December 2021.
21. UN Secretary-General, *Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict*, A/75/873-S/2021/437, 6 May 2021.
22. Human Rights Watch, *No One is Spared. Abuses Against Older People in Armed Conflict*, February 2022.

Map 1.2. **New internal forced displacements by conflict and violence in 2020**
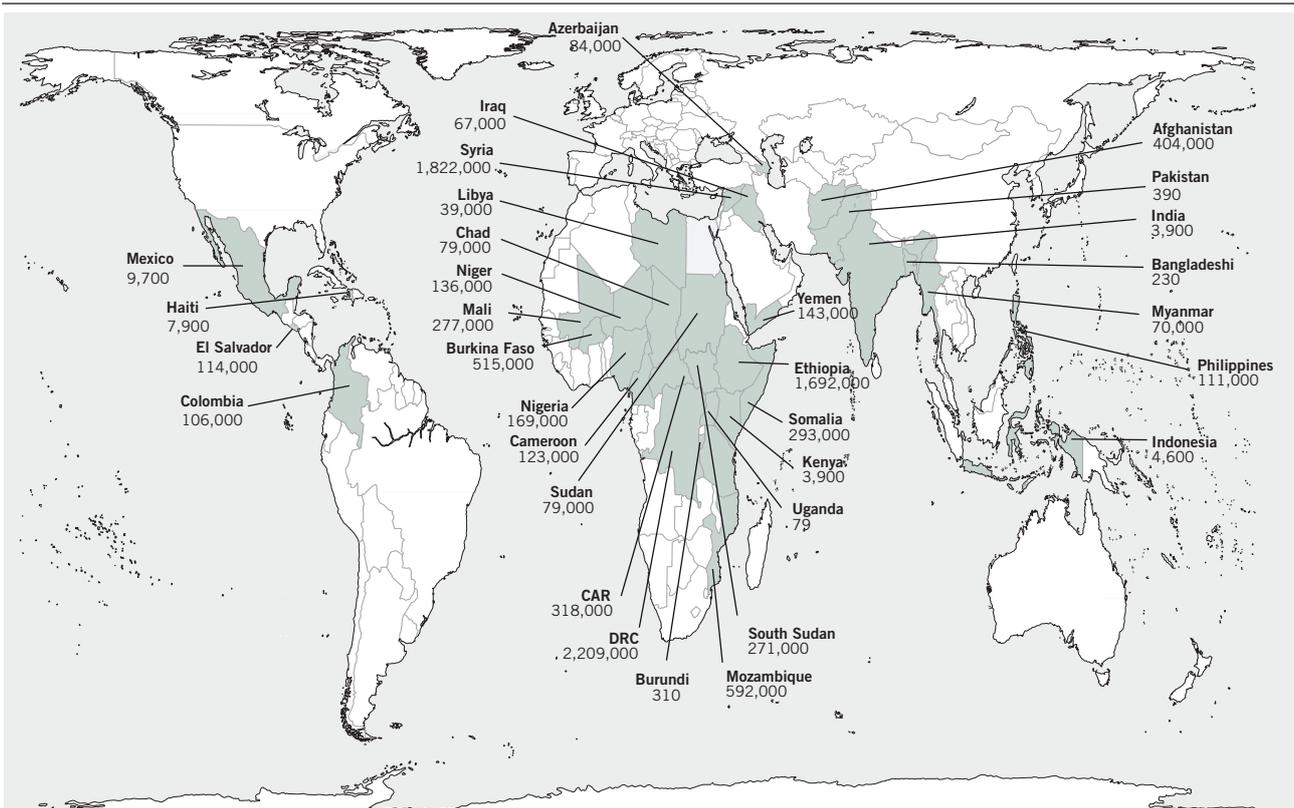
Azerbaijan
84,000

Iraq
67,000

Syria
1,822,000

Libya
39,000

Chad
79,000

Niger
136,000

Mali
277,000

Burkina Faso
515,000

Nigeria
169,000

Cameroon
123,000

Sudan
79,000

CAR
318,000

DRC
2,209,000

Burundi
310

Mozambique
592,000

South Sudan
271,000

Uganda
79

Kenya
3,900

Somalia
293,000

Ethiopia
1,692,000

Yemen
143,000

Afghanistan
404,000

Pakistan
390

India
3,900

Bangladeshi
230

Myanmar
70,000

Philippines
111,000

Indonesia
4,600

Mexico
9,700

Haiti
7,900

El Salvador
114,000

Colombia
106,000

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the data provided in *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021*, GRID, May 2021.

assets. In other cases, they refuse to leave their places of residence due to their previous experience of forced displacement or are simply unable to flee, due to mobility limitations or because their families cannot help them.

The use of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians by state and non-state armed actors, and especially against women and girls, continued to be reported in 2021. The UN Secretary-General's report that annually addresses this problem and studies the events that took place in 2020 stressed the effects of the pandemic in amplifying gender inequalities, which are at the root of sexual violence in times of both war and peace. In particular, COVID-19 gave rise to new concerns about sexual violence due to its repercussions in terms of militarisation, the increase in border controls and closures, the restriction of working space for women's organisations, the sexual harassment of health workers and sexual violence against women detained for violating periods of confinement. The UN Secretary-General drew special attention to the impact of the pandemic on populations displaced by armed conflict, given the increased risk of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking, exacerbated by the economic crisis and the reduction and/or difficulties in access to humanitarian aid. There were also problems

According to UNHCR, 82% of the people who crossed borders to flee situations of conflict, violence or persecution came from just 10 countries

in documenting the problem of sexual violence due to the COVID-19 mobility restrictions and in accessing assistance services.[23]

The report on sexual violence presented the evidence that the UN documented in 18 contexts, involving 52 armed actors, mostly non-state groups, although as in previous years, military and security forces were also involved in various conflicts. In line with previous periods, sexual violence was used as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism. This was true in Ethiopia (Tigray) after the start of military operations in the region in November 2020, as well as in Cameroon, the CAR and the DRC. The report also warns of negative mechanisms to alleviate the economic crisis exacerbated by the pandemic, particularly the marriages of girls up to 10 years of age from internally displaced populations in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. It also draws attention to the links between sexual violence, the trafficking of persons from countries in conflict and gender-based violence and its disproportionate impacts on women and girls and cites the situation of widows and sons and daughters of alleged extremists in Afghanistan and Iraq, affected by social stigma and often by arrests without due process. In 2021, new episodes of sexual violence were reported in Ethiopia (Tigray), the CAR, the DRC (east), Libya, Syria and Yemen.

23. UN Secretary-General, *Conflict-related sexual violence*, S/2021/312, 30 March 2021.

The repercussions of the armed conflicts also include forced displacement. According to UNHCR data, this continued to intensify and break record figures. By the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than double the number a decade ago, and UNHCR forecasts with the data available for the first half of 2021 indicated that the figure had already exceeded 84. million people.[24] The figures for forced displacement dipped temporarily due to the pandemic and the mobility restrictions aimed at containing the virus, but by the end of 2020, the previous trend had already recovered.[25] According to UNHCR data, in the first half of 2021 there had been more than 4.3 million new displacements, a significant increase over the previous year and more than in the pre-pandemic period. The escalation of violence and hostilities in Afghanistan, the DRC, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Sudan and countries in the Sahel region led to significant forced displacement in the first six months of 2021. More than 1.3 million people were displaced in the first half of the year in the DRC alone. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's advance displaced hundreds of thousands of people and in the period prior to their capture of Kabul, it was estimated that around 30,000 people were leaving the country per week. According to UNHCR, 82% of the people who crossed borders to flee situations of conflict, violence or persecution came from just 10 countries. The first of these continued to be Syria, with more than 6.8 million refugees, most of which went to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, but also to Germany. After Syria came Venezuela, Afghanistan (which became the third most common country of refugee origin, with more than 2.6 million people), South Sudan, Myanmar, the DRC, Sudan, Somalia, the CAR and Eritrea.

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. In 2020, the historic leader Pierre Nkurunziza passed away, although the new leader, Domitien Ndayishimiye, had an approach towards the political and armed opposition similar to that of his predecessor.

During the year, political violence and sporadic attacks by armed actors and governmental counterinsurgency actions continued alongside acts of repression, arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance of members of the political opposition by the security forces and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling party, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) counted 285 fatalities in the country in 2021 due to this activity.[26] In January, the CNDD-FDD appointed the former president of the Senate, Révérien Ndikuriyo, as the new secretary general of the party, replacing the current president of the country. This appointment was criticised by human rights circles as consolidation of the most intransigent positions since the 2020 elections. The RED-Tabara armed group, made up of between 500 and 800 combatants and based in the Congolese province of South Kivu, continued to be the main insurgent threat, carrying out sporadic actions and attacks during the year against members of the security forces, civilians and groups close to the CNDD-FDD. There were also sporadic clashes between RED-Tabara militias and the Burundian Armed Forces. In addition, Congolese military actions continued against suspected Burundian rebels in South Kivu, as well as by Imbonerakure militias, which in May clashed with Mai Mai militiamen aligned with RED-Tabara in the Congolese territory of Uvira. On 24 May, the Rwandan government claimed to have killed two National Liberation Front (FLN) rebels crossing the border from

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24. UNCHR, *Mid-year trends report 2021*, 11 November 2021.
25. For further information, see Pamela Urrutia Arestizábal, "Conflictos, COVID-19 y desplazamiento forzado", *ECP Notes on Conflict and Peace*, no. 13, October 2021.
26. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), January 2022.

Burundi. The Burundian government denied that there were any armed groups hostile to Rwanda on Burundian soil. In September, Imbonerakure military, police and militia forces were deployed near the DRC border amid a perceived imminent risk of attack by DRC-based Burundian rebels. In October, the DRC authorities arrested more than 30 suspected Burundian rebels in South Kivu province and on 10 October they claimed to have killed two Burundian members of the RED-Tabara armed group, though the organisation denied it. In addition, different acts of violence, explosions and attacks by unidentified groups were verified, which the government described as terrorist violence, increasing the climate of insecurity. One such example occurred in mid-September, when unidentified assailants launched at least four grenade attacks in the capital, Gitega, and the economic capital, Bujumbura, killing at least five people and injuring more than a hundred. On 21 September, the government blamed "unidentified terrorists" and RED-Tabara denied involvement. Political opponents and activists continued to be harassed, intimidated and assassinated in the country, especially from the opposition CNL party, and many politicians and opposition groups operate in exile, even at risk of persecution abroad. On 22 September, authorities issued an international arrest warrant for exiled opposition leader Alexis Sinduhije on suspicion of leading RED-Tabara.

Despite the situation of violence and instability, Burundi worked on improving relations with neighbouring countries during the year, especially with Rwanda and the DRC, and with the main actors of the international community, looking to give off an image that it was improving security and freedom to break its economic and political isolation. Amid rapprochement with Rwanda, on 2 April the government welcomed Kigali's decision made in late March to suspend three Burundian radio stations, which had been operating from Kigali since the 2015 political crisis in the country. During President Ndayishimiye's visit to the neighbouring DRC, Gitega and Kinshasa announced bilateral cooperation against armed groups in the eastern DRC on 13 July in an agreement that could lead to joint operations against Burundian armed groups in South Kivu province. At the international level, in its address to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi that took place on 11 March recognised some measures taken by the authorities to improve the human rights record, but concluded that the current situation was too complex and uncertain to be considered a genuine

Burundi tried to give an image of improved security and freedom in the country to break the economic and political isolation, despite the fact that violence and human rights violations persisted

improvement. On 16 June, the government lifted sanctions against media such as Ikiriho and the BBC, although others remained suspended. On 8 October, the UN Human Rights Council voted in favour of the appointment of a special rapporteur on human rights in Burundi, following the work of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (2016-2021). Its final report was published in September, indicating that despite some isolated symbolic gestures in the field of human rights, no structural reform had been undertaken to improve the situation, noting that state officials and the Imbonerakure had continued to commit serious human rights violations with the acquiescence of the authorities or even at their behest. The rule of law continued to gradually erode and the risk factors for the human rights situation to deteriorate were still present.[27]

On 27 April, the AU Peace and Security Council met to discuss the possible closure of the Human Rights Observers and Military Experts Mission in Burundi. The decision was announced in May, citing "significant advances" in the political and security situation, removing the country from the agenda. The Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General also closed on 31 May. The US Department of State's annual report on human rights issued in late March cited at least 205 extrajudicial executions in Burundi in 2020 and highlighted the widespread impunity of the government and its allies. In November, the US lifted sanctions against eight top military and security officials, including Prime Minister Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni, citing the drop in violence and return to political normality since the 2020 elections. In December 2020, the government and the EU held the first high-level meeting since the suspension of financial cooperation in 2016. This was followed by various meetings with the aim of normalising relations, including the lifting of EU sanctions and the resumption of direct financial support. The EU invited Burundian Foreign Minister Albert Shingiro on a European tour at the end of April. Following the meeting in June between the head of the EU delegation and President Ndayishimiye in Bujumbura, the EU's intention to start the process of resuming aid was announced after the government presented a reform roadmap accepted by the European Union. However, on 18 October the EU decided to renew sanctions for another year (until 31 October 2022) against three officials of the government of Burundi and a former general, initially imposed in October 2015 for their role in the climate of political violence triggered in 2015.

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27. United Nations, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, (A/HRC/48/68)*, 12 August 2021.

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of CAR, armed groups that are members of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC, made up of anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, 3R, FPRC, MPC and UPC), other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia (Wagner Group)
Intensity:	3
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, forcing a transitional government that led to the 2015-2016 elections. After a brief period of reduced instability and various peace agreements, armed groups continued to control most of the country. Neither the reduced Central African security forces (which barely controlled Bangui) nor MINUSCA were able to reverse the situation, so new contacts were promoted by the AU and ECCAS, which contributed to reaching the peace agreement of February 2019.

The year 2021 was shaped by events that occurred starting in December 2020, with the breakdown of the peace process and the resumption of hostilities by some of the signatories of the 2019 agreement. According to the ACLED research centre, from December 2020 to the end of 2021, at least 1,698 people were killed in the violence. As part of a political context dominated by the presidential and legislative elections of 27 December 2020, tensions increased after the Constitutional Court decided on 3 December to invalidate five of the 22 presidential candidacies, including that of the former CAR President Francois Bozizé. On 15 December, representatives of six armed groups, including the main signatories of the 2019 peace agreement, such as the anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, 3R, a faction of the FPRC, the MPC and the UPC, signed a joint statement criticising the Political Agreement and deploring the government's shortcomings in moving the peace process forward. On 17 December, they announced the formation of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC). Some of these groups supported the candidacy of Bozizé, who was accused of orchestrating a coup attempt. Between 18 and 23 December, the CPC launched simultaneous coordinated attacks in Bangui and throughout the country, committing serious violations against the civilian population, which led state bodies to abandon their security posts in many locations. Faced with this situation, MINUSCA received reinforcements from the UN mission in South Sudan and additional bilateral security support was deployed, mainly from Rwanda and Russia, through the Russian private contractor Wagner Group. The first round of the presidential and legislative elections took place amid escalating violence. Serious human rights violations were committed, including attacks by CPC fighters against 14 schools used as polling stations. President Archange Touadéra declared himself re-elected and addressed the nation on 18 January 2021 and expressed his willingness to engage in dialogue and collaborate with all parties in the peace process, except for the armed groups linked to the CPC. On 1 February, the Constitutional Court proclaimed the results of the legislative elections stating that 22 of the 140 MPs were elected in the first round, while 61 seats required a second round and elections still had to be held for the remaining 57 seats in districts where they had not taken place due to security conditions. The main opposition coalition rejected the results and announced its withdrawal from the electoral process, stressing the many irregularities and the prevailing climate of violence. The legislative elections were held on 14 March in the pending constituencies. On 30 March, President Touadéra took office and repeated his commitment to the 2019 Political Agreement. At least 144 civilians were confirmed killed by parties to the conflict between 15 December 2020 and late June 2021, while 213,000 civilians were displaced by late May 2021 as a consequence of the electoral and post-election crisis. Serious human rights violations persisted, including sexual violence, which was committed by all parties to the conflict, according to the United Nations.

Following the formation of the CPC, President Touadéra expelled from the government leaders of insurgent groups falling under the CPC, such as Maxime Mokom (anti-balaka); Bi Sidi Souleymane (aka Sidiki), from 3R; Mahamat Hamat Alhisene (alias Al-Khatim), from the MPC; and Ali Darassa, from the UPC, among other senior officials. In January, the CPC launched coordinated

attacks against Bangui and MINUSCA, and the Central African Armed Forces and the paramilitary bodies that support it carried out counter-offensives that managed to expel the CPC and regain control of routes and strategic locations near the capital. It was found that civil liberties had been restricted and that the situation had given rise to allegations of excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, torture and summary executions, including of minors, by government forces and Wagner Group security personnel. This situation created a climate of fear among the population. Even though 3R, the UPC and the MPC severed relations with the CPC between April and June, they remained active and continued to commit violations and attacks against civilians and security forces, while the Central African Armed Forces supported by Russian private contractors committed serious human rights violations.The government tried to promote a dialogue, although this suffered many delays throughout the year. The Community of Sant'Egidio used its good offices to facilitate a meeting that would lay the foundations for an agreement to end the hostilities and start the negotiating process and invited representatives of the government, civil society, political opposition and religious leaders of the country to Rome from 27 to 29 September.[28] After the meeting, which was attended by the general secretary of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Paolo Impagliazzo, the participants signed a joint declaration entitled "Towards the Republican Dialogue – for peace and the future of the Central African Republic", in which they made a call to all the active forces of the nation to prepare the way for dialogue in a spirit of openness, humility and pragmatism. Government representatives stuck to their refusal to include the CPC in the consultations held at the Rome forum. On 16 September, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) adopted a roadmap for peace in the country calling on the government to accept a ceasefire with the CPC and revitalise the 2019 peace agreement. In compliance with the recommendations of the international community and with the desire to promote the dialogue process, on 15 October President Touadéra declared a unilateral ceasefire that affected actions against armed groups. In response, the CPC agreed to respect the ceasefire if the government committed to it. However, in the following two weeks, government security forces, international paramilitaries and armed groups repeatedly violated the ceasefire.

The humanitarian emergency in the country reached levels not seen since 2015 due to the new dynamics of conflict observed since December 2020. Schools were systematically used for military purposes, according to various analyses. Humanitarian organisations were severely affected by insecurity, clashes and violent activities on all sides of the conflict, which directly targeted humanitarian personnel and their assets and hindered access to people in need of assistance. Some offices were looted, leading several organisations to temporarily suspend their activities. According to OCHA, as of 15 December 2021, there were 3.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, more than 664,000 internally displaced people in the country and 735,000 refugees in neighbouring countries.

The military alliance that the CAR has been forging with Russia in recent years was a source of growing concern, as highlighted by various analysts.[29] Although the government's use of Russian mercenaries broke the blockade that the rebel groups had imposed on the Cameroonian government's supply routes and helped it to regain control of many towns (which boosted popular support for Touadéra), its counteroffensive led to serious violations of human rights against civilians and summary executions by Russian mercenaries. In March, the UN Working Group on Mercenaries first raised the alarm about Wagner's activities, saying that it had received reports of serious human rights abuses,[30] including summary executions, torture and forced disappearance. In June, a panel of UN experts accused Russian instructors and CAR troops of large-scale looting, the use of excessive force and indiscriminate killings. It also stated that Syrian and Libyan mercenaries were fighting alongside Russian instructors. Russia angrily denied the accusations. Two months later, MINUSCA and the UN human rights office expressed concern about increasing abuses by all belligerents, holding the Russian Army and private contractors responsible for relaxing the country's arms embargo, and Russia continued to block initiatives to rehire staff for the sanctions monitoring committee. The previous sanctions monitoring committee had issued a report in June[32] accusing the Wagner Group's Russian military instructors of committing abuses against civilians. Tensions between MINUSCA and the government increased after an incident on 1 November when 10 unarmed Egyptian peacekeepers were wounded after their bus was attacked by the presidential guard.

DRC (east)	
Start:	1998
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of DRC, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, M23 (formerly CNDP), Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Government of Rwanda, MONUSCO
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

28. Jude Atenmanke, Rome-based Lay Catholic Association Facilitating "ceasefire, dialogue" in CAR, *ACIAFRICA*, 3 October 2021.
29. Among others, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2021; Bax, Pauline, *Russia's Influence in the Central African Republic*, ICG Commentary/Africa, ICG, 3 December 2021.
30. OHCHR, CAR: Experts alarmed by government's use of "Russian trainers", close contacts with UN peacekeepers, 31 March 2021.
31. United Nations, *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2536 (2020)*, UN Security Council, S/2021/569, 25 June 2021.

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.

Attacks by armed groups and inter-community violence continued in the eastern provinces of the DRC during 2021. Despite the military offensives launched by the Congolese Armed Forces, with the assistance of the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO), the violence continued to mount. More than 120 militias and armed groups remained active in the east of the country, especially in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika provinces. According to the June report of the Panel of Experts on the DRC,[32] the civilian population continued to suffer the consequences of the perpetual cycle of violence in the east and expressed its desperation in part by rioting and demonstrating against MONUSCO. The armed groups continued to act with almost total impunity in the area, according to the Panel of Experts.

According to the ACLED research centre,[33] 4,865 people lost their lives due to the atmosphere of armed violence in the country, 4,723 of which were confined to these five Congolese provinces, in more than 2,300 violent incidents. According to the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) in the DRC, during 2020, some 2,487 civilians had been killed by armed groups in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika and Ituri. The UN recorded the deaths of 1,043 additional civilians, including 233 women and 52 minors, in the first nine months of 2021. Most of the victims were in Ituri and North Kivu, where intercommunal violence and clashes between the FARDC and various militias intensified

The government declared a state of siege in eastern DRC, which led to an escalation of violence against civilians and shrank the political space

during the year. According to UNHCR, there were 5.6 million internally displaced people, including around three million minors, to which were added more than 942,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, making it the largest displacement crisis in Africa in recent years. The FAO and the WFP estimated in November that 27 million people, a quarter of the country's population, were suffering from a serious food emergency situation due to poor harvests, displacement caused by violence, disease and infrastructure collapse.[34]

On 30 April, President Félix Tshisekedi decreed a state of siege that entered into force on 6 May in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri to boost the presence of the FARDC and improve security. General Constant Ndima and General Jon Luboya (formerly of the group RCD-Goma) took charge of both provinces, a decision highly criticised for their responsibility for the serious human rights violations committed in the 1990s. Since then, the ADF, CODECO and other armed groups have continued to carry out violent attacks and some state security forces have been implicated in serious human rights violations. The state of siege was extended during the year without any improvement in the security situation.[35]

Indeed, provincial MPs, suspended by the state of siege since military commanders took control of the situation, and human rights organisations criticised the shrinking political space and the increase in human rights violations under the state of siege. In June, President Félix Tshisekedi toured the eastern provinces under a state of siege and apologised to civilians for the serious human rights violations committed by security forces and armed groups and promised to persecute those responsible for the abuse, adding that a mafia had developed within the army and the police, underpinned by a "law of silence".[36]

Beyond the ADF's activities in North Kivu and Ituri,[37] in the rest of **North Kivu**, in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, Walikale and southern Lubero, violent fighting continued between armed groups mainly involving factions of Nduma Defence of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R) and combatants of the Collective of Movements for Change (CMC) and gave rise to new alliances between groups and serious abuses against the civilian population. Illicit activities related to tin, tantalum and tungsten continued, according to the UN Panel of Experts. The Panel of Experts documented armed clashes in the mines around Rubaya during 2020, as well as cases of fraud in the coltan mines in the area, which calls into question the effectiveness of the efforts of the government and the private sector to deal with the issue.

32. United Nations, *Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council,* UN Security Council, S/2021/560, 10 June 2021.
33. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), January 2022.
34. FAO/WFP, *Food security crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could worsen in the coming months*, FAO/WFP Joint Statement, 10 November 2021.
35. HRW, DR Congo: Massacres Persist Despite Martial Law, 15 September 2021.
36. Reuters, Dozens of Congo's rebels lay down weapons in the east, 23 June 2021.
37. See the summary of the armed conflict in DRC (east-ADF) in this chapter.

In **Ituri**, the lack of progress in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of the factions of the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO) gradually contributed to the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in the territory of Djugu. Attacks against Congolese Armed Forces bases, the diversion of the Congolese Armed Forces' weaponry and cross-border trafficking triggered the use of light weapons among CODECO factions. The Bon Temple fighters, led by Tuwo, committed gang rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery in Banyali-Kilo, where gold is abundant. The killing of civilians by CODECO fighters, whose factions attacked and occupied various gold mines and looted gold trading centres in the territory of Djugu, especially in Mongbwalu, a gold hub, was also documented. In the territory of Irumu, the Patriotic and Integrationist Force of the Congo (FPIC) carried out attacks against the security forces and especially against civilians not belonging to the Bira community, while using minors as combatants, according to the UN. The Zaïre self-defence group continued to operate in the Irumu and Djugu territories and was involved in armed clashes with the CODECO and FPIC factions, and in attacks against civilians of the Bira and Lendu communities. It also mined gold and defended different gold deposits in both territories.

At the same time, some members of the security forces present in the Djugu and Irumu territories committed abuses that included acts of sexual violence related to the conflict, especially against the Lendu and Bira populations, considered supporters of CODECO and FPIC, respectively. The illegal presence of members of the Congolese Armed Forces in mining areas in the Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories was documented, where local cooperatives worked on gold extraction with companies owned by private Chinese investors.

In **South Kivu**, the violent clashes and attacks intensified in the Hauts-Plateaux territories of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga, and especially between Twirwaneho, which became an organised armed group, and a new coalition of Mai-Mai militias, of which Mai-Mai Yakutumba formed part. The Mai-Mai groups and Twirwaneho obtained weapons and ammunition through various means, for example by attacking the Congolese Armed Forces or diverting their stockpiles. Collusion between some of these groups and members of the Congolese Armed Forces fuelled the conflict. Attacks against civilians and the armed clashes forcibly displaced massive groups of people and gave rise to geographical segregation along ethnic lines. Twirwaneho and Mai-Mai coalition fighters committed conflict-related sexual violence and kidnapping. Some incited others to indulge in discrimination, hostility and violence according to the UN. Under the leadership of Mundus Munanga Babuyu, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale remained part of the National Coalition of the People for the Sovereignty of Congo (CNPSC) and a very close ally of Mai-Mai Yakutumba. Mai-Mai Yakutumba continued to profit from illegal rosewood logging, taxes and trade, as well as its various

criminal networks. The UN Panel of Experts traced wood coming from the forest reserves of South Kivu, under the control of Mai-Mai Yakutumba, and from criminal networks in the territory of South Irumu and the province of Kongo Central (previously called Bas Congo) to their final destinations (Belgium and China). Mai-Mai Yakutumba also profited from mining and taxes levied on some gold mines in the Misisi and Nyange areas, from which gold was exported to Dubai and Hong Kong. The Burundian armed groups RED-Tabara and FNL continued to occupy rear-area bases in the Hauts-Plateaux territory of Uvira. RED-Tabara often changed position to avoid FARDC operations.

Finally, rival armed groups and militias vying for control of mining areas or retaliating against recent government offensives have perpetrated violence in **Tanganyika**. More than 300,000 people are currently displaced by insecurity in this area.

DRC (east - ADF)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of DRC, Government of Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, ADF armed opposition group, MONUSCO
Intensity:	3
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. Since the start of the offensive by the Congolese Armed Forces in the region in 2019, there has been an escalation of violence with serious consequences for the civilian population.

During the year there was a new escalation of violence by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group in eastern DRC and it established its expansion into Ituri. Active in the Grand Nord region (north of North

Kivu province) for more than six years, ADF attacks in North Kivu intensified after the Congolese Armed Forces launched an offensive in October 2019. The Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) reported that the ADF attacks had been "systematic and brutal" and could amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. From 11 to 12 November, suspected ADF fighters carried out one of the deadliest attacks in North Kivu during 2021, killing at least 38 civilians and destroying the only health centre in the village of Kisunga in Beni.

In a geographical and qualitative leap in the ADF's activity, in November it set off three explosions in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, which caused the deployment of the Ugandan Armed Forces to the DRC

In the Grand Nord area, the security situation remained unstable due to ADF activity. Moreover, offensive operations against ADF launched jointly by FARDC and MONUSCO helped to aggravate the climate of violence and provoked reprisals by the ADF. Although heavy losses were inflicted on the ADF in the operations and several of its strongholds were dismantled, the group maintained its ability to cause harm to the civilian population. The ADF divided into small groups while retaining its command-and-control capability, expanding its area of operations and making more frequent use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). From November 2016 to 15 November 2020, no case of civilians injured by an IED was reported in the east of the country, while as of that date there was an escalation in the use of the devices, with serious consequences for the civilian population. The group managed to reconstitute itself and intensified its attacks, especially in the Rwenzori sector. The ADF perfected the techniques of constructing IEDs with the participation of combatants from outside the country. According to the report of the Panel of Experts of the DRC published in June,[38] despite the ADF's attempts to project its alignment with the armed group Islamic State (ISIS), it was not possible to establish whether it gave them direct support or exercised command-and-control functions over them. However, it should be noted that ISIS claimed responsibility for three attacks in the town of Komanda in which various people were killed in September and October. Throughout the territory of Beni, the ADF attacked, killed and kidnapped farmers, many of whom worked the cacao plantations, and forced local farmers to collaborate with them.

However, in a geographical and qualitative leap in the ADF's activity, on 16 November it set off three explosions in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, for which it claimed responsibility. The explosions were produced by three suicide bombers near the national Parliament and the Ugandan Police headquarters, leaving seven people dead and 40 injured. Two days later, Ugandan authorities blamed the attacks on the ADF, reacting first by conducting mass arrests of possible suspects inside the country and later by announcing new plans to

redeploy the Ugandan Army to the neighbouring DRC. On 30 November, the Ugandan Armed Forces reported the first air strikes against ADF positions on Congolese soil in an operation allegedly agreed upon with the Congolese Armed Forces. In early December, Ugandan troops entered DRC territory following an agreement with the Congolese government to combat the insurgency. The Congolese government, which had declared a state of siege in April in the eastern regions of the country, said that the Ugandan troops' presence would be strictly limited in time. Throughout December, the Ugandan and DRC armies attacked ADF positions in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri and dismantled different insurgent camps. In response, the ADF intensified its military operations, including a suicide attack at a restaurant in Beni on 25 December that left at least nine people dead in what was the first reported suicide attack in the country.

South Sudan	
Start:	2009
Type:	Self-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, SPLM-FD, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM, REMNASA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSOA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwelek), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA, composed of NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC), 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

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38. United Nations, *Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, UN Security Council, S/2021/560, 10 June 2021.

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.

During the year, the country presented dynamics of violence similar to those of the previous year due to clashes between the South Sudanese Armed Forces and irregular groups, the continuity of episodes of inter-community violence and the new tensions generated within the SPLA-IO that mainly affected the regions of Central and Western Equatoria, Jonglei, the Greater Pibor Administrative Area and Upper Nile. According to ACLED data, during 2021, a total of 699 episodes of armed violence were reported in the country that cost 1,936 lives. These figures are very similar to those reported in 2020, when 2,252 deaths were associated with battles, violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).[39] The humanitarian emergency continued in the country for another year. According to the United Nations, the high levels of violence, together with the reported floods and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused around 7.2 million people (60% of the population) to suffer high levels of food insecurity. The resurgence of armed conflict in parts of Central and Western Equatoria, Jonglei and the Pibor Administrative Zone continued to hamper humanitarian access and humanitarian personnel continued to come under attack.[40] According to UNHCR data from mid-2021, **2.3 million people were refugees outside national borders in South Sudan and another 1.7 million were internally displaced.[41]** In the first half of the year, 61,700 new refugees and 170,400 new internal displacements were reported. These data continue to mean that the country has the **largest refugee crisis in Africa and the fourth largest in the world**, ranking tenth globally in terms of the largest number of internally displaced persons.[42]

Progress was slow during the year on the implementation of the clauses of the 2018 peace agreement and the peace talks that began in 2020 in Rome between the

The dynamics of violence and instability continued in South Sudan, mainly affecting the regions of Central and Western Equatoria, Jonglei, the Pibor Administrative Area and Upper Nile

government and the groups that had not signed the 2018 peace agreement, organised through the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA), which includes the rebel organisations NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF and SSNMC.66 **However, violence continued between different actors throughout the year,** mainly in clashes between the South Sudanese Army (SSPDF) and the forces of the National Salvation Front (NAS) led by General Thomas Cirillo, which has not signed the 2018 peace agreement, as well as fighting between different SPLA-IO factions after the outbreak of internal struggles in early August. Meanwhile, episodes of inter-community violence also continued, mainly concentrated in the states of Upper Nile, Warrap, Lagos, Central Equatoria and Western Equatoria, motivated by tensions between communities allied to different factions of the government, as well as disputes over access to resources and cattle theft. On 19 February, coinciding with the first anniversary of the creation of the Transitional Government of National Unity, the UN warned that the levels of violence in the country were the highest reported since the beginning of the war, particularly in the states of Equatoria Central, Warrap and Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, and asked the government for progress in the implementation of the peace agreement. On 15 March, the UN Security Council unanimously extended the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (UNMISS) until 15 March 2022 and demanded that all parties to the conflict immediately halt the fighting and begin a political dialogue. It also threatened to impose new sanctions and demanded that all member states comply with their obligations to prevent the supply, sale or transfer of weapons to the country due to the arms embargo. Later, in May, there was a new escalation of violence in the country, the worst reported in the year, which left more than 400 people dead in different violent events. In the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, around Gumuruk, between 10 and 17 May, clashes were reported between members of the Lou Nuer and Dinka communities on the one hand and the Murle community on the other in which more than 150 people lost their lives. The Central Equatoria region also saw an increase in attacks along key trade routes against civilians and commercial vehicles attributed to the NAS. These events caused the UN Security Council to approve a resolution in late May that extended the arms embargo and the sanctions against South Sudan for one year. The South Sudanese government questioned the sanctions, arguing that they jeopardise the progress of the peace agreement and the equipment of the South Sudanese Armed Forces for national defence.

Amid the deteriorating security situation, a new round of peace talks between the Transitional Government

39. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), January 2022.
40. United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General of the UN Security Council of the situation in South Sudan*, S/2021/784, 9 September 2021.
41. UNHCR, Refugee Data Finger, 2021.
42. UNCHR, *Mid-year trends report 2021*, 11 November 2021.

and SSOMA factions led by Paul Malong and Pagan Amum were held in Rome from 15 to 18 July. However, attempts to restart peace talks between the government and the SSOMA faction led by Cirillo remained stalled, which helped to keep the violence active. In addition to the tensions over the slow implementation of the peace agreement and the two-way negotiations between the different factions of the SSOMA, in August there was a **split within the SPLA-IO movement led by Riek Machar, which added a new crisis in the country**. Through the Kitgwang Declaration, members of the SPLA-IO announced the dismissal of Machar as leader of the movement and appointed Simon Gatwech Dual as interim leader in his place, which opened a period of struggle and armed clashes in the state of Upper Nile between the forces loyal to Machar and the dissidents commanded by Dual, the self-styled "Kitgwang" faction, which resulted in dozens of fatalities. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) asked the SPLM-IO to cease hostilities within its group, but hostilities continued in September. President Kiir began talks with the "Kitgwang" faction in October, which increased tensions within the Transitional Government due to Riek Machar's disagreement. Until the end of the year, inter-community clashes continued to be reported in the country, aggravating a humanitarian crisis already made worse by the effects of the floods that occurred in the country in October and November, the most devastating in the last 60 years. At the end of the year, Amnesty International indicated that the violence in the country, directed mainly against civilians, could amount to war crimes.

Finally, UNMISS reported a worrying number of acts of **sexual violence** committed by all parties to the conflict. In response, on 19 June the South Sudanese government presented the South Sudanese Armed Forces' action plan on the fight against sexual violence related to the conflict. It unifies the action plans of the South Sudanese Army and the SPLA on preventing and eliminating sexual violence related to the armed conflict.

Sudan (Darfur)	
Start:	2003
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PDF pro-government militias, pro-government militias janjaweed, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, community militias, UNITAMS
Intensity:	3
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, concluding its deployment at the end of 2020.

For yet another year, the Darfur region continued to be the epicentre of armed violence in the country, reporting a deterioration in the security situation after the end of the mandate of the UN-AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). According to data from the ACLED research centre, during the year there were 1,027 deaths associated with the armed conflict in the Darfur region. These data are worse than in previous years. In 2020, 555 deaths caused by armed clashes, attacks against civilians and attacks with improvised explosives (IED) were reported, preceded by 268 in 2019, 859 during 2018 and 996 in 2017, although the figure for 2021 was still well below the 2,286 deaths reported in 2016.[43] The main reasons for the continued dynamics of armed violence in the region remained the clashes between the Sudanese security forces and the faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement commanded by Abdel Wahid al Nur (SLM/A-AW), which refused to sign the peace agreement reached in October 2020, and especially the persistence of inter-community clashes between members of different Arab and non-Arab communities, mainly due to disputes over land ownership or access to resources. According to UNHCR data from mid-2021, more than 800,000 people **had fled their homes in Sudan and taken refuge across national borders, mainly due to the armed conflict in Darfur. The number of internally displaced persons in mid-2021 stood at 2,552,174.**[44] These figures rank the country seventh in the world and third in Africa in terms of the number of people who have taken refuge from violence, behind South Sudan and the DRC, and ninth in terms of the number of internally displaced people. At the same time, **Sudan hosted over one million people from the CAR, the DRC and Ethiopia**, keeping the country in sixth place globally among host

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43. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), January 2022.
44. UNHCR, Refugee Data Finger, 2021.

countries and the second in Africa behind Uganda.[45] The year began with **UNAMID's definitive withdrawal from Darfur**, which ended its activities on 31 December 2020, as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolutions 2363 (2017) and 2429 (2018).[46] The withdrawal of the mission coincided with fresh clashes between members of different communities in January 2021 that left around **250 people dead and displaced over 100,000 in the states of West and South Darfur**. In mid-January, there were also clashes in North Darfur between the SLM/A-AW and government troops that claimed 17 lives. Although the task of protecting civilians in Darfur, which UNAMID has been carrying out to date, was to be assumed by the government of Sudan and by the new UN assistance mission in Sudan, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the increase in violence in January revealed how vulnerable the withdrawal of the hybrid mission left the local populations, as human rights organisations had predicted. In January, Amnesty International denounced the security vacuum created in Darfur and the failure of the Sudanese security forces to protect the civilian population, urging the UN Security Council to stop the withdrawal of UNAMID to protect civilians until security conditions allowed. Although the AU also suggested conducting a gradual withdrawal to avoid leaving a vacuum, the Sudanese government refused to maintain the hybrid mission and deployed Sudanese paramilitary forces called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the region on 22 January to help restore security. In February and March, outbreaks of violence continued to occur in the region. In April, new fighting between members of Arab and Massalit communities in the capital of the state of West Darfur, El Geneina, and its surroundings, caused at least 132 deaths, displaced tens of thousands of people and forced the government of Sudan to declare a state of emergency in the region. The head of the Sovereign Council of Sudan, General Abdul Fatah Al Burhan, and a delegation of military and intelligence officials visited El Geneina on 12 April to mediate between both sides, although representatives of the Massalit community they rejected the mediation on 15 April, accusing the RSF paramilitaries of supporting recurrent attacks against their communities.

In June, for the purpose of maintaining security and protecting civilians in Darfur after repeated inter-community clashes in the first half of the year, the government announced **the formation of a joint force for Darfur** made up of some 20,000 troops from the Sudanese Armed Forces, the General Intelligence Service, the RSF, the police forces and members of the armed groups that signed the October 2020 peace agreement

UNAMID's definitive withdrawal from Darfur (Sudan) left a vacuum that caused an increase in violence compared to previous years

and began their deployment on 14 September. However, violence continued in the region until the end of the year, with repeated inter-community clashes in different parts of Darfur. On 19 October, an outbreak of violence in the towns of Tawila and Dar es-Salam in North Darfur prompted the authorities to declare a state of emergency and in November, new clashes between pastoralist communities in Jebel Moon, on the border with Chad, claimed 43 lives, burned down more than one thousand homes in 46 communities and displaced around 4,300 people. These latest outbreaks of violence occurred in a period of **national crisis** marked by the attempted coup in September and another coup that managed to overthrow the civilian part of the Transitional Government on 25 October, triggering popular protests across the country.[47] Alongside the dynamics of violence in the Darfur region, during the year the Sudanese government and the SLM/A-AW continued to hold **peace negotiations, though without making any meaningful progress.**[48] At the end of the year, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Sudan announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the RSF to form and train paramilitary forces on humanitarian law and the applicability of the Geneva Conventions.

Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)	
Start:	2011
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed group SPLM-N, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) armed coalition, PDF pro-government militias, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, South Sudan
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

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

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45. UNCHR, *Mid-year trends report 2021*, 11 November 2021.
46. As mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 2559 (2020), UNAMID completed its withdrawal on 30 June 2021. UNAMID's withdrawal coincided with the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), in accordance with Resolution 2524 (2020).
47. See the summary on Sudan in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
48. See the summary on Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

During the year, the unilateral ceasefires carried out by the rebels and the Sudanese government in the southern regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile were extended. This helped to maintain a low level of violence, reporting 193 deaths associated with the armed conflict, most of them in the South Kordofan region (182). At the beginning of the year, the Northern Sudanese People's Liberation Movement led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLM-N al-Hilu), one of the groups that had not signed the October 2020 peace agreement, extended the unilateral cessation of hostilities that had begun in 2020 for five months, starting on 6 February. This made it possible to keep open the **peace negotiations**[49] with the Transitional Government, which were stalled due to discrepancies in relation to the demand for the creation of a non-denominational state. On 28 March, important progress was achieved in the negotiations when the parties signed the Declaration of Principles between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N al-Hilu, in which they agreed to establish a federal, civil and democratic state in Sudan, with freedom of religion, freedom of belief and religious and worship practices guaranteed for all Sudanese people. The agreement separates the identities of culture, region, ethnicity and religion from the state, principles that will be enshrined in the Constitution. Following the signing of the Declaration, talks between the parties resumed on 26 May in the South Sudanese capital, Juba, with a view to integrating the rebel group into the Transitional Government. However, the talks were suspended in mid-June due to disagreements regarding the delegation of powers between the central government and the regions and the integration of the armed groups into the Sudanese Army.[50]

While the peace negotiations went on, some violent events continued to be reported in the South Kordofan region. In June, the Sudanese government declared a state of emergency and a night curfew in South Kordofan after clashes in the Qadir area between members of the Dar Ali and Kenana communities. Starting in October, there was also an increase in violence in South Kordofan, as well as in other regions of the country such as Darfur and West Kordofan, coinciding with the **national crisis** marked by the coup d'état of 25 October, which sparked popular protests throughout the country.[51] From late November to early December, new inter-community clashes between members of Kenana and Hawazma communities in the town of Abu Jubayhah killed six people, wounded 14 and displaced around 15,000, forcing the local authorities to impose a curfew in the town and deploy the RSF.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia (Tigray)	
Start:	2020
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Ethiopia, Government of Eritrea, Tigray State Regional Government, security forces and militias of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), security forces of the Amhara and Afar regions, Fano Amharic militia
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
The appointment of Abiy Ahmed as Ethiopia's new prime minister in early 2018 brought about important and positive changes domestically and regionally in Ethiopia. However, Abiy's actions to reform the Ethiopian state led to its weakening. They gave a new impetus to the ethnic-based nationalist movements that had re-emerged during the mass mobilisations initiated in 2015 by the Oromo community that eventually brought Abiy Ahmed to power, as well as strong resistance from key actors such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party, formerly the leading party of the coalition that has ruled Ethiopia since 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which established the system of ethnic federalism after he came to power. The Tigray community leadership perceived a loss of power and privilege in the changes enacted by Abiy Ahmed. The TPLF is resisting the loss of power resulting from its non-participation in the new party forged from the ashes of the EPRDF coalition, the Prosperity Party (PP), which if it joined, would lead to the dilution of its power within a new party. These tensions intensified under Abiy Ahmed's liberalising reforms. As the EPRDF tightened its grip, new opportunities, grievances and discourses emerged from regional leaders and civil society actors. This triggered an escalation of political violence throughout the country and increased tension between the federal Government and the TPLF, culminating in the outbreak of armed conflict between the Ethiopian security forces and the security forces in the Tigray region. Moreover, the crisis took on regional dimensions due to the involvement of Eritrea, as well as militias and security forces from the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Amhara.

One year after the conflict in the Ethiopian region of Tigray started, it continued to escalate, causing thousands of deaths and forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of people (close to 1.2 million people, according to the UN), more than 63,000 of which have sought refuge in neighbouring Sudan, fleeing the climate of violence. All sides have committed atrocities, including massacres of civilians, sexual violence and the use of hunger as a weapon of war, according to human rights organisation. The conflict has taken on regional dimensions due to Eritrea's support for the Ethiopian government as well as the attacks perpetrated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in neighbouring

49. See the summary on Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021:Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.
50. Ibid.
51. See the summary on Sudan in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

Amhara and the involvement of security forces and militias in the conflict from this region of Ethiopia. The instability spread to the border states of Amhara and Afar. There were also clashes in the border area between the Ethiopian and Sudanese Armed Forces and Sudanese militias. In November, the United Nations indicated that more than 9.4 million people depended on humanitarian assistance (3.7 million in the Amhara region, 534,000 in Afar and 5.2 million in Tigray), of which at least 400,000 people from the Tigray region were in a situation of famine.[52] Various human rights organisations have documented serious human rights violations, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. The resolutions and criticism of the human rights violations come in a context where humanitarian organisations are the target of attacks by different opposing actors. Despite the capture of the capital of Tigray (Mekelle) and the government's declaration of victory three weeks after the conflict began in November 2020, fighting resumed later in 2021. The worsening humanitarian situation prompted the UN Security Council to hold its first public meeting on the conflict days after the TPLF retook control of the regional capital (Mekelle) and most of Tigray. The Federal Government declared a unilateral ceasefire on 28 June, announcing the withdrawal of its troops from the region. This marked the first cessation of hostilities since the start of the armed conflict eight months earlier. The TPLF responded to the ceasefire by arresting and displaying around 7,000 soldiers in the streets of Mekelle and holding the Ethiopian prime minister and the Eritrean president responsible for the crimes committed in Tigray.[53] Meanwhile, on 21 June, regional and parliamentary elections were held in which Abiy Ahmed won 410 of the 436 seats. The elections had been postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical problems, the conflict in Tigray and insecurity in some parts of the country, which prevented them from being held in three of the 10 regions in the country. The opposition and countries like the United States denounced the irregularities. The leader of the main opposition party, Birhanu Nega, of Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA), was defeated and the opposition parties EZEMA and National Movement of Amhara (NAMA) won less than 10 seats.

Although Abiy Ahmed's government tried to buy more weapons and enlist more recruits, Tigray forces broke the blockade around their region and seized towns in the direction of Addis Ababa in the south in November. They could also try to seize the Djibouti corridor, the main commercial artery, according to analysts, which would allow them to divert aid to Tigray, where desperate food shortages persist, and potentially affect the distribution of supplies to the capital. Tigray is under a de facto blockade that cuts it off from most aid, according to the UN. Ethiopian authorities and the TPLF blamed each other for obstructing humanitarian assistance. Ethiopian officials also accused the international community of ignoring the TPLF's alleged abuses. Faced with the advance of TPLF troops towards the capital, on 2 November Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared a state of national emergency for six months and encouraged the population to organise and create militias and self-defence groups. By declaring the state of emergency, the government began to establish roadblocks, interrupt transport services, impose curfews and military control in certain areas, arrest any person suspected of having links with qualified terrorist groups without a warrant and the conscript any citizen of military age.

On 5 November, eight anti-government insurgent groups pledged allegiance to the TPLF, although the most significant player, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), was already fighting federal troops alongside the TPLF. The alliance, the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces (UFEFCF), brings together members of formerly rival ethnic groups. The creation of this alliance was presented in Washington by Berhane Gebrechristos, representative of the insurgency in Tigray and the former Ethiopian foreign minister between 2010 and 2012. As a result of the events, the UN Security Council expressed its concern about the situation in a statement calling for a ceasefire and the creation of conditions for the start of an inclusive Ethiopian national dialogue to resolve the crisis. Serious violations of human rights were found that could be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity by all the actors involved in the conflict. In addition to mass executions of civilians in Mai-Kadra (southwest of Tigray) blamed on the TPLF,[54] and in Axum,[55] in January, Amnesty International confirmed in collaboration with CNN that the Ethiopian Army had committed extrajudicial killings of civilians in Mahibere Dego, near Axum. The Ethiopian government blocked access to and imposed a media blackout on the region in November. Since access to Tigray was allowed in late February, international media and human rights organisations have reported and confirmed the serious atrocities committed, including the use of sexual violence by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops.[56] In August, Amnesty International reported the widespread commission of rape and other acts of sexual

Various human rights organisations in the Ethiopian region of Tigray have documented serious human rights violations, including war crimes and crimes against humanity

52. VOA, *UN Food Stocks Looted in N. Ethiopia; Some Aid Distribution Halted*, 8 December 2021.
53. The East African, "TPLF gives five conditions for ceasefire, wants transition process", The East African, 31 July 2021.
54. Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Investigation reveals evidence that scores of civilians were killed in massacre in Tigray state", AI, 12 November 2020.
55. Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Eritrean troops' massacre of hundreds of Axum civilians may amount to crime against humanity", AI, 26 February 2021.
56. See BBC, "Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: 'I lost my hand when a soldier tried to rape me'", *BBC*, 15 February 2021; Feleke, Bethlehem; Mackintosh, Eliza; Mezzofiore, Gianluca; Polglase, Katie; Elbagir, Nima; Arvanitidis, Barbara and Platt, Alex, 'Practically this has been a genocide', *CNN*, 22 March 2021; Kassa, Lucy, "'A Tigrayan womb should never give birth': Rape in Tigray", *Al-Jazeera*, 21 April 2021.

violence by fighting forces affiliated with the Ethiopian government (Ethiopian and Eritrean Armed Forces, the Special Police of the Amhara region and Fano, an Amharic militia).[57] Rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war to inflict persistent physical and psychological harm on women and girls in Tigray, with the aim of degrading and dehumanising them, according to Amnesty International. Testimonies have been collected from medical sources on cases of sexual slavery and captivity, as well as multiple cases of rape.[58] There were also acts of ethnic cleansing[59] in the western part of Tigray, an area that was under the control of the Ahmara regional police and the Amharic militia Fano. In addition, arbitrary arrests and detentions, executions and discrimination and stigmatisation of members of the Tigray community were reported throughout the country. In July, the UN Human Rights Council approved a resolution calling for an immediate end to all human rights violations in Tigray, compliance with International Humanitarian Law and the verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean troops.[60]

Following the entry into force of the state of emergency on 6 December, Australia, Canada, Denmark, the US, the Netherlands and the UK issued a joint statement expressing concern about recent reports of the Ethiopian government's detention of a large number of Ethiopian citizens from the Tigray community on the basis of their ethnic origin and without charge, as highlighted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. However, in December there was a positive evolution of events that could contribute to the start of peace negotiations. Earlier this month, the federal government made significant territorial gains and recaptured all of Amhara. Later, it halted its offensive against the Tigray forces after the latter announced their withdrawal. On 20 December, Tigray forces announced a complete withdrawal from neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions, falling back to their stronghold in Tigray, and called for a ceasefire. On 24 December, the federal government said that federal security forces would stop at their current positions and refrain from advancing further into Tigray. On the same day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged the parties to take advantage of this opportunity to cease hostilities and guarantee the provision of humanitarian assistance. The US State Department said in late December that recent events offered an opportunity for the parties to sit down to negotiate. On 16 December, the NGOs Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International jointly accused pro-government forces of mass arrests, murders and forced expulsions of people from the Tigray ethnic group.

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 armed conflict in Somalia was of a similar intensity to that of the previous period. The year was marked by the persistence of attacks by the armed group al-Shabaab, by the operations of the African mission in the country (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army, the withdrawal of US and Ethiopian troops from the country and the future of AMISOM, as well as the serious political crisis resulting from delays in the electoral process. In 2021, military operations by the federal security forces and those of the federated states continued in conjunction with AMISOM, as well as attacks by al-Shabaab against the Somali security forces and AMISOM, including attacks using improvised explosive devices in the central and southern parts of the country, and especially in Mogadishu. In the capital, al-Shabaab's modus operandi consisted mainly

57. Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: "I don't know if they realized I was a person": Rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia", *AI*, 11 August 2021.
58. Al-Jazeera, "Top Ethiopia health official alleges 'sexual slavery' in Tigray", *Al-Jazeera*, 15 April 2021.
59. Walsh, Declan, "Ethiopia's War Leads to Ethnic Cleansing in Tigray Region, U.S. Report Says", *New York Times*, 26 February 2021.
60. UN Human Rights Council, Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, A/HRC/47/L.20/Rev.1, 13 July 2021.

of selective suicide bombings that killed dozens. The ACLED research centre noted that there were 3,144 fatalities in 2021.

Before the escalation of the conflict in Tigray,[61] Ethiopia withdrew 3,000 soldiers in November 2020. These troops were supporting the Somali Federal Government in its fight against al-Shabaab, but were not framed within the AMISOM mandate. In January 2021, the United States ended its military presence in the country, which had amounted to between 650 and 800 special forces, part of which were devoted to training Somali troops. This caused concern about a possible security vacuum in the country. However, the United States resumed its activities in the country six months later, on 20 and 23 July, when it launched airstrikes in the state of Galmudug, killing an unknown number of al-Shabaab militants. At the end of 2021 there were practically three million people displaced throughout the country according to OCHA. Nearly one million came from new population displacements generated in 2020 linked to the climate emergency (floods and the worst locust plague in 25 years). The humanitarian situation in the country remained dire due to multiple factors, including climatic shocks, conflict, disease and locust infestation. Almost half of the population, 5.9 million people, needed humanitarian assistance at the end of the year. The combined effects of erratic rainfall, flooding and conflict have led to widespread food insecurity. Thus, many warned of the effects of climate change and extreme weather conditions in Somalia due to their consequences for peacebuilding and development in a country where most of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood, so the multifaceted nature of climate change would reconfigure the local social, political and economic context, amplify local grievances and inter-community conflicts between farmers and ranchers and marginalise the population. These issues were exploited by political-military actors and by al-Shabaab.[62]

The Panel of Experts on Somalia published a devastating report in September[63] indicating that the armed group continued to maintain its full capacity to carry out complex and asymmetric attacks in the country. According to the group, al-Shabaab had taken advantage of the deep political differences that came to light during the prolonged period of political electoral uncertainty and remained ready to keep up its pace of operations in Mogadishu, as well as in the federated member states, in the medium and long term. Despite the efforts of the international community to promote political dialogue

> *The Panel of Experts on Somalia stated that al-Shabaab was not the root cause, but rather a symptom of the political conflict between the irreconcilable interests of the country's clans and political elites*

and move the electoral process forward, al-Shabaab and underlying interests that were difficult to conciliate remained. According to the Panel of Experts, the armed group therefore remained a symptom of the ongoing political conflict, not its root cause, and all parties involved in Somalia should readjust their priorities to override the specifically local conditions that let al-Shabaab continue to operate. During the year there were also various meetings held and government statements regarding the gradual process to transform and withdraw AMISOM from the country. In November, the UN Security Council extended the sanctions weighing on Somalia for one more year, blocking access to the purchase of weapons (against the will of the government, which intends to reform of the security sector and to be able to equip its security forces directly). Somalia opposes the expansion of AMISOM's presence in the country or its transformation into a hybrid AU/UN mission, which would mean that foreign soldiers and advisors would still remain in the country. The UN Security Council justified its decision on the grounds that the Somali state-building process has been influenced by al-Shabaab, a group that has infiltrated local institutions. In early November, a delegation from the AU Peace and Security Council visited Mogadishu, to whom the government repeated its willingness to reduce foreign forces and increase support for its forces so that they can be the guarantors of security in the country as part of the gradual transfer of tasks from AMISOM to the national security forces planned for 2023. AMISOM's mandate ended in late 2021, so they discussed four options to transform it. The proposals would be developed by the Quartet (the UN Security Council, the EU, the AU and the four African countries that sat on the Security Council in 2021).

The electoral process suffered many crises, setbacks and delays during the year. The term of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (also known as Farmajo) expired in February, triggering a constitutional crisis, where the opposition bloc of the 15 presidential candidates and representatives of civil society demanded the formation of a National Transitional Council that would lead to the holding of elections, while the president and the government argued that the Federal Government should remain in power until the elections. The different rounds of negotiations held in February and March between Prime Minister Roble and the opposition bloc to tackle the situation failed. This led to an escalation of violence in February and March and clashes between the security forces and opponents of Farmajo and his government. The violence

61. See the summary on Ethiopia (Tigray) in this chapter.
62. See Cedric H. de Coning et al, *Climate, Peace and Security Factsheet.Somalia*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; February 2021, Escola de Cultura de Pau, "Climate change, peace and security in Somalia", ECP visual explainer, July 2021.
63. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 16 September 2021 from the Panel of Experts on Somalia addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee arising from Resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia*, United Nations, S/2021/849 of 6 October 2021.

spread to the federal security forces, resulting in clashes in April between armed forces loyal to Farmajo and armed forces loyal to the opposition, causing dozens of fatalities. In late April, the UN Security Council urged all parties to reject violence and resume political dialogue. UNSOM and other international partners warned that the fragmentation of the security forces along clan lines could divert them from their main objective, al-Shabaab. Finally, the international community rejected extending the presidential term by two years, forcing Farmajo to ask Parliament to annul the extension of the presidential term on 28 April and reopen dialogue with the federal member states to establish a new electoral timetable. The annulment of the extended term was accepted unanimously by Parliament, which lowered tensions (with the billeting of pro-opposition federal troops) and made it easier to resume the dialogue as part of the NCC on 22 May.[64] The NCC reached an agreement on 27 May according to which the indirect parliamentary elections would be held within 60 days. Finally, the electoral process began with delays, although the elections to the Upper House began on 29 July in all the federated member states, having elected 52 of the 54 seats, 14 of which were won by women; this is equivalent to 26% female representation, lower than the minimum quota of 30% for women that the NCC had promised. The elections to the Lower House began in November, but by they had not yet been completed by the end of December, so the indirect election of the country's new president was also postponed.[65]

Maghreb - North Africa

Libya	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, Resources, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, several armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA, also called Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF), 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:	2
Trend:	↓

Despite the decrease in violence due to the ceasefire and the formation of a unity government, Libya's political future seemed uncertain at the end of the year after crucial elections were cancelled

Summary:

In the context of the uprisings in North Africa, popular protests against the government of Muammar Gaddafi began in February 2011. In power since 1969, his regime was characterized by an authoritarian stance repression of dissent, corruption and serious shortcomings at the institutional level. Internal conflict degenerated into an escalation of violence leading to a civil war and an international military intervention by NATO forces. After months of fighting and the capture and execution of Gaddafi in late October, the rebels announced the liberation of Libya. However, the country remains affected by high levels of violence derived from multiple factors, including the inability of the new authorities to control the country and ensure a secure environment; the high presence of militias unwilling to surrender their weapons; and disputes over resources and trafficking routes. The situation in the country deteriorated from mid-2014 onward, with higher levels of violence and 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 witnessed a significant drop in violence and lethality during 2021 compared to previous years, as part of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement signed between the main contending parties in Geneva on 23 October 2020. According to data from the ACLED study centre, in 2021 a total of 115 people died due to various episodes of violence, a figure significantly lower than that reported the previous year, in which almost 1,500 people lost their lives, and that of 2019, when more than 2,000 people died due to hostilities. Despite the undeniable reduction in clashes, uncertainties remained throughout the year about the future of Libya due to non-compliance with other aspects of the ceasefire, the continuous complaints about abuses and multiple forms of violence by various armed actors and by the growing tensions and ups and downs of the political process. At the end of 2021, a climate of uncertainty prevailed over the future of the country due to the cancellation of the elections that were supposed to be held on 24 December.[66]

Overall, the main change in the dynamics of the armed conflict in 2021 compared to the previous year was the suspension of hostilities between the GNA forces of the Tripoli-based government, supported by Turkey, and the forces affiliated with former General Khalifa Haftar, known interchangeably as the LNA or ALAF, powerful in the eastern part of the country, which are backed mainly by Egypt, the UAE and Russia. Both

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64. The National Consultative Council (NCC) on the elections is a space for dialogue and agreement in which the Federal Government and the federated states are present.
65. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.
66. See the summary on Libya in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

sides were involved in many clashes in 2019 and 2020. **The cessation of hostilities took place alongside the intra-Libyan negotiations on political, economic and security issues sponsored by the UN and various international actors that led to the formation of a unity government at the beginning of the year, among other developments.**[67] The ceasefire was maintained despite initial signs of mistrust and the fact that both groups traded blame for non-compliance and continued to display their power through armed parades. The main acts of violence reported during the year were clashes and fighting between some of the many armed groups and militias active in the country (the incidents took place mainly in Tripoli and in the border area with Chad), assassinations (including the killing of Mahmoud al-Werfalli, commander of a militia affiliated with the LNA, investigated for war crimes by the International Criminal Court), the detonation of explosive ordnance and armed actions by ISIS. In June, the Islamic State branch in Libya claimed responsibility for its first attack in several months in Sebha (south), in which six fighters from a militia close to ALAF were killed. Both ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) continued to operate in all regions of the country and issued threats to civilians and UN staff. Also in 2021, new mass graves were found in areas that were controlled by militias close to ALAF. Amnesty International also reported that between 2018 and 2021, military courts in the east of the country sentenced hundreds of civilians critical of ALAF, including 22 death sentences.

Meanwhile, as in previous years, the UN mission in Libya, UNSMIL, continued to document forced disappearances, kidnappings, extortion, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence associated with the conflict, torture, attacks against human rights defenders by various armed groups and very serious abuses against the migrant and refugee population in 2021. **Given the rise of the central Mediterranean route as a way to reach Europe, the number of migrants and refugees detained in Libya increased exponentially** (according to UNSMIL data, in August there were more than 5,800 migrants and refugees arbitrarily detained only in official centres, compared to 1,000 in January). Organisations such as Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders (MSF) documented and denounced the abuses against migrants and refugees in detention centres and MSF even suspended its activities in two of these facilities due to the violations identified. The International Criminal Court also warned that it had collected evidence of serious crimes in detention centres, including torture and sexual violence. The UN Human Rights Council's independent commission of inquiry on Libya ruled along the same lines in October, indicating

that abuses against migrants and refugees in the country could be considered crimes against humanity. After a year of work analysing events that occurred in the North African country since 2016, the commission also concluded that there was evidence of war crimes and that all parties involved in the conflict, including third-party states, foreign fighters and mercenaries, had violated principles of international humanitarian law, particularly those related to proportionality and distinctions between civilians and combatants. The commission underlined the serious impact of the violence on the civilian population, especially between 2019 and 2020, highlighting the consequences of air strikes, the remnants of mines and other explosive devices and the destruction of schools and hospitals.[68]

One major problem in guaranteeing long-term change in the dynamics of the conflict in Libya is the non-compliance with the arms embargo on the country imposed in 2011 (in March a panel of UN experts declared that the ban was still "totally ineffective") and the high presence of foreign forces and mercenaries in Libya. Even though the ceasefire agreement adopted in October 2020 provided for a total withdrawal from Libyan territory (land, sea and air) within three months,[69] various foreign forces continued to be present in the country, such as Turkish forces and mercenaries from Russia, Syria, Chad and Sudan. Throughout the year, the United Nations stressed the need to put an end to the foreign intervention. As part of the second Conference on Libya held in Berlin in June, the UN Secretary-General called on all internal and external actors involved in the conflict to agree on a plan with a clear timetable for withdrawal. It was not until October that the 5+5 Joint Military Commission announced an action plan for the "phased, balanced and synchronised" withdrawal of mercenaries and foreign forces. However, the deadlines for its implementation were not disclosed and the proposal was pending consideration and support by the international actors involved in Libya.[70] Also in October, the first UN observers (of a team of 60 people) arrived in Libya. They plan to oversee the ceasefire following the approval of the monitoring mechanism in April (UN Security Council Resolution 2570). The United Nations also continued to stress the importance of activating disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes for combatants, security sector reform (SSR) and unification of the military forces in Libya. At the end of the year, tension increased due to the impossibility of carrying out the planned elections. The electoral authorities failed to publish the final list of candidates amid intense disputes over the electoral law and the eligibility of some candidates, including controversial figures such as General Haftar, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi

67. Ibid.
68. HCHR, *Libya: Evidence crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 2016, UN report finds*, 4 October 2021; OHCHR, *Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya*, 1 October 2021. The commission will continue its work and is expected to issue a new report in mid-2022.
69. UNSMIL, *Agreement for a Complete and Permanent Ceasefire in Libya*, 23 October 2020.
70. UNSMIL, *United Nations welcomes the JMC's signing of Action Plan for the withdrawal of mercenaries, foreign fighters and foreign forces*, 8 October 2021.

(one of Muammar Gaddafi's sons) and Prime Minister Dbeibbah, who had announced that he would not stand for election. The cancellation of the vote led to a deployment of vehicles and armed men on the outskirts of Tripoli. At the end of 2021, there was no agreement on the new date for the elections, nor on the continuity of the mandate of the unity government, which expired with the elections.

Southern Africa

Mozambique (north)	
Start:	2019
Type:	System, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) -formerly Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)-, al-Qaeda, South African private security company DAG (Dyck Advisory Group), Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM)
Intensity:	3
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.

The year was characterised by a slight decrease in armed violence in the province of Cabo Delgado as compared with previous year, as well as the deployment of military forces from different international actors to help the Mozambican security forces in the fight against the jihadist insurgency. In 2021, ACLED reported 1,067 violent deaths in the province of Cabo Delgado, less than the 1,639 in 2020, when the highest death rate of the last decade was reported in the country.[71] However, the intensity of the violence in 2021 continued to be much higher than what was witnessed in the area in the first years of the insurgency, as 119 deaths were reported in 2017, 126 in 2018 and 689 in 2019. In total, by the end of 2021, it was estimated that around 3,500 people had lost their lives since the outbreak of violence in late 2017 and that around 800,000 people had been forcibly displaced from their homes.

In January there were intense jihadist attacks against an important natural gas plant in Quitunda, in the **district of Palma**, operated by the French oil and gas company Total, which forced a shutdown of the activities of the liquefied natural gas project. These attacks caused President Filipe Nyusi to replace the head of the Mozambican Armed Forces, Lázaro Menete, with General Eugenio Mussa, who died just three weeks after his appointment due to COVID-19, according to official sources. His death prompted Nyusi to appoint Joaquim Rivas Mangrasse as the new Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces on 12 March. In early February, Mozambican forces **launched an attack on the districts of Muidumbe and Mocimboa da Praia in an attempt to regain control over the capital of the district, Mocimboa da Praia, which has been under rebel control since August 2020. In March, there was a new jihadist attack on the city of Palma for which ISIS claimed responsibility. The attack killed dozens of people, including foreigners for the first time since the conflict began, and around 70,000 people were displaced by the violence. The Mozambican government reported that it had regained control of the city on 4 April after a joint military operation conducted by the Mozambican Armed Forces and the private South African military company** Dyck Advisory Group (DAG). The NGO Amnesty International complained that the rescue operation in the city conducted by DAG was marred by racial discrimination, with white contractors being evacuated before blacks.

Meanwhile, the Southern African Development Community (**SADC**) held various summits on the security situation in Cabo Delgado during the year. After several meetings were cancelled due to COVID-19, the regional body convened the extraordinary summit of SADC heads of state and government on 8 April, where it agreed to send a technical mission to Cabo Delgado to develop a security support plan. The mission recommended sending a regional military police force made up of 3,000 troops. Subsequently, in another extraordinary summit held on 23 June, the SADC approved the deployment of a Reserve Force to the northern region, without determining the number of troops. A day later, the government of **Rwanda** announced a bilateral agreement with the government

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71. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), January 2022.

of Mozambique for the deployment of a joint Rwandan Army and police force made up of 1,000 troops to help combat the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. The new force became effective on 9 July, carrying out military actions in the districts of Palma, Muidumbe and Mocimboa da Praia. Meanwhile, special forces from **South Africa** were deployed on 19 July in Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado, aimed at paving the way for the deployment of the SADC Reserve Force. The South African government has pledged to send 1,495 soldiers as part of the regional force. On 8 August, Mozambique and Rwanda announced that joint forces had regained full control of the strategic city of Mocimboa da Praia. The day after the announcement, the **SADC Reserve Force (SAMIM)** was officially deployed in Cabo Delgado. Initially made up of 757 soldiers, it was a far cry from the 3,000 recommended by the SADC technical team. Other international actors also helped to strengthen the security strategy during the year. **Portugal and the US** provided military training to the Mozambican troops and on 12 July the **EU** formally established a military training mission for the Mozambican Armed Forces made up of 1,000 European troops who will spend two years in the country. Also at the beginning of the year, the governments of Mozambique and **Tanzania** agreed to resume and strengthen the joint defence and security commission. In March, the US State Department had listed the Cabo Delgado insurgency as a terrorist organisation linked to ISIS under the leadership of Tanzanian Abu Yasir Hassan.

The deployment of international troops was followed by several attacks claimed by ISIS in different districts of the region (Mocimboa da Praia, Muidumbe and Palma), using **improvised explosive devices** that allegedly contained parts of landmines, a new tactic by the insurgents in the area. In early September, the joint operations of the Mozambican, Rwandan and SAMIM troops were extended to the **province of Niassa** (bordering Cabo Delgado) after intelligence reports warned of a possible expansion of jihadist activity.

Finally, during the year, different incidents related to **human rights violations** in the region. In March, Amnesty International accused the insurgents, the Mozambican government and DAG of violating international humanitarian law, including war crimes in 2020. The NGO Save the Children in Mozambique also accused the armed groups operating in the north of using minors as war targets. In early October, UNICEF and Human Rights Watch (HRW) complained that the insurgents had kidnapped and recruited hundreds of boys and girls in the northeastern region. An HRW report indicated that since 2018, the insurgency had abducted and recruited hundreds of boys and girls in the northeastern region. An HRW report also stated that since 2018, the insurgents had kidnapped over 600 women and girls and asked the authorities to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of displaced women in exchange for humanitarian aid in Cabo Delgado.

Western Africa

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	
Start:	2018
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Cameroon, Government of Nigeria, a political-military secessionist movement including the opposition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako, to which belong the armed groups Lebialem Red Dragons and SOCADEF) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku, whose armed wing is the Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF), various different militias and smaller armed groups
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.

Violence continued to escalate in the two Anglophone regions of western Cameroon due to the actions of the secessionist armed groups, as well as the excessive use of force, abuse and extrajudicial execution as part of the counterinsurgency operations carried out by the Cameroonian Armed Forces and local militias. Armed groups also carried out some attacks outside both regions. According to the ACLED research

centre, 915 people died in 2021 as a result of the conflict affecting the region and its surroundings (the Northwest and Southwest regions and the neighbouring Littoral, West and Central regions). Various insurgent leaders were executed or captured at different times of the year, such as General Nokia and General Cobra (captured in March and April, respectively), General Small Pikin (executed in January), General Blink and Idi Amin Dada (both executed in April) and Rambo (executed in July). In April, the opposition coalition Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC) and the Nigerian separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) announced an alliance. Cameroon and Nigeria responded to this in August by announcing that their respective security forces would cooperate against the respective insurgencies. During the year, the use of improvised explosive devices (IED) by the insurgency against vehicles and military detachments increased, causing dozens of fatalities. In September, the Interim Government of Ambazonia faction (IG Sisiku) declared a total shutdown of activity for three weeks in both regions. Insurgent activity increased on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the proclamation of independence of the self-styled Ambazonia (formed by the Anglophone regions) on 1 October, multiplying insurgent checkpoints and clashes with security forces. On that day, the separatist movements forced the shutdown (general strike and curfews) and held parades in both regions. The celebration of the Africa Cup of Nations football tournament in Cameroon between 9 January and 6 February 2022 raised fears of an escalation of violence in the Anglophone regions, since some matches were played in towns in those regions.

Humanitarian organisations continued to operate in very difficult conditions due to the persisting violence, the use of explosive devices and demands for illegal payments and extortion at irregular checkpoints within some communities, which continued to expose humanitarian workers and civilians to high risk and hindered their freedom of movement. The death of a five-year-old girl at a checkpoint in Buea (capital of the Southwest region) after the car was shot at by a military policeman because the driver refused to pay the extortion fee triggered a reaction from thousands of people protesting the abuses of the Cameroonian Army, including riots that lynched and killed police officers. This incident intensified inter-community tensions between the English-speaking and French-speaking communities in the country and in the media. In December, OCHA indicated that 2.2 million people were affected by the humanitarian situation in the Northwest and Southwest regions, with almost 600,000 internally displaced people in both regions and almost 70,000 refugees in neighbouring Nigeria. The neutrality of civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools was permanently violated by both sides.

For example, in November soldiers stormed Kumbo Hospital, in the Northwest region, committing abuses against healthcare staff in search of militiamen. The assault was condemned by the Catholic Church and the diplomatic delegations present in the country, with British MP David Alton describing it as a war crime. Alton questioned his government for its inaction in the face of the conflict, to which London responded by stating that on 15 November it had condemned the attacks on civilians and urged the parties to promote dialogue along with the delegations of Canada, Switzerland and the United States. In August, more than 60 local and international human rights organisations called on the UN Human Rights Council to try to make the conflict more visible on the international agenda.[72] The conflict is considered one of the most neglected humanitarian crises today, according to various analysts. In addition, many initiatives were taken by civil society actors and political-military groups to relaunch the dialogue process with the government. However, contacts between the government and political-military groups to promote a negotiated solution to the conflict remained at an impasse.[73]

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Nigeria,, Civilian Joint Task Force pro-government milita, Boko Haram factions (ISWAP, JAS-Abubakar Shekau, Ansaru, Bakura), 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 expanded to the Lake Chad region, while also affecting border territories of countries neighbouring the Nigerian region: the Extrème Nord region in Cameroon, Diffa in Niger and the province of Lac in Chad. Since mid-2016 Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon have developed a regional strategy of military pressure on BH through the

72. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, *Cameroon: Multilateral action is urgently needed*, 17 August 2021.
73. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios,* Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

implementation of a regional joint military force (MNJTF), which has highlighted the group's resilience and also the unwillingness of the Nigerian political and military authorities to deal with the situation, in addition to the shortcomings of the Nigerian Armed Forces, which have serious internal corruption problems. BH has split into four factions: The Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (JAS) faction, led by Abubakar Shekau, leader of BH since 2009; Ansaru, which aligned with al-Qaeda in 2012 and had not committed any military actions since 2013 until early 2020; Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which split from JAS in 2016; and finally Bakura, an ISWAP splinter group that emerged in 2018 and subsequently moved closer to Shekau in opposition to ISWAP.

The activities of the different Boko Haram (BH) factions persisted in the Lake Chad region, which includes northeast Nigeria, the Extrème Nord region in Cameroon, Diffa in Niger and the province of Lac in Chad, despite the counter-insurgency operations, causing new population displacements and widespread human rights violations. The death of the leader of the armed group JAS, Abubakar Shekau, triggered the surrender of thousands of combatants and the recruitment of some of them by the rival group ISWAP. In December 2020, the ICC prosecutor had ruled that there were reasonable grounds to believe that both Nigerian security forces and BH factions had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country. The surrender of a large part of the JAS members and the restructuring of ISWAP resulted in a drop in violence in northeastern Nigeria at certain times of the year. JAS, Ansaru and mainly ISWAP continued their attacks against military bases and detachments, including suicide attacks, kidnappings and summary executions of civilians and humanitarian workers.

In Nigeria, the authorities warned that Boko Haram's actions extended beyond the northeast and to surrounding regions of the Nigerian Middle Belt. Coinciding with Ramadan, between mid-April and mid-May there was an increase in attacks by jihadist groups. According to the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) database, the number of fatalities in the Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa fell from previous years (1,810 in 2021 compared to 2,603 in 2020, 2,607 in 2019, 2,243 in 2018 and 1,907 in 2017). The death toll of BH's actions and the clashes between BH factions and the security forces since the start of the conflict in 2011 in these Nigerian states alone is 41,932, according to the NST database. According to the ACLED research centre, in 2021 3,792 people were killed in the region (the Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa; the Extrème Nord region in Cameroon; Diffa in Niger; and the province of Lac in Chad). In Nigeria as a whole, the country most affected by the activities of BH factions, there were an estimated 2.73 million internally displaced people as of December 2020 according to IDMC, of whom close to two million were internally displaced in the northeastern part of the country, according to OCHA, and around 257,000 people had sought refuge in neighbouring countries. **OCHA warned that the northeast was affected by the worst humanitarian crisis in the last four years** and said that 5.1 million people were facing a serious humanitarian situation. The security situation had deteriorated as a result of the conflict, affecting most of the northern regions beyond those traditionally affected. Thus, between January and June there were around 294,000 new displacements, a significant increase compared to the 169,000 new displacements for all of 2020.

The highlight of the year was the death on 20 May of JAS faction leader Abubakar Shekau, who committed suicide to escape capture by the rival ISWAP group in Borno State (northeast). This action was preceded by a major ISWAP offensive on Shekau's stronghold in Sambisa Forest and the seizure of territory previously under their control. ISWAP confirmed Shekau's suicide on 6 June and a video of rival ISWAP and JAS fighters pledging allegiance to Islamic State (ISIS) was broadcast on 26 June. His death caused thousands of the group's fighters to lay down their arms and surrender to the authorities in the following months, while the ISWAP faction increased the mass recruitment of JAS fighters and tried to occupy the space that JAS was abandoning. On 2 September, the Nigerian Army announced the surrender of around 6,000 JAS fighters in the previous weeks and months and the authorities pointed out that the DDR programme in place since 2016, Safe Corridor, was being overwhelmed by the situation. A month after Shekau's death, 24-year-old Bakura Modu was appointed as the new leader of JAS, replacing Shekau.[74]

The new leader appeared in a video and spoke of the group's willingness to work in collaboration with ISIS. Shekau's death weakened the group, which expressed doubt about the new leader's ability to give continuity to the armed group. Weeks before his death, Shekau had executed several JAS commanders for alleged treason, including Abu Fatimah, and appointed Abu Muhammad as the new military commander. In July, there was a pause in ISWAP's attacks in Borno State, since according to the International Crisis Group it reorganised its leadership according to the instructions of Islamic State (ISIS). In doing so, ISWAP restored Abbah Gana as leader of the Islamic Caliphate of Africa (a region that encompasses the Lake Chad basin between Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon).

74. Maina, Maina, Bakura Modu replaces late Shekau as Boko Haram's leader, *Daily Post*, 19 June 2021.

Mali	
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, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, JNIM/GSIM, Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP) –also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)-, Katiba Macina, MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Holland, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom), Russia
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 new armed groups demanding greater autonomy for the area. The fall of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, which for several 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. Although a peace agreement was signed in 2015 in the north of the country between the Arab-Tuareg groups (CMA and Platform), the exclusion of groups with jihadist agendas from the peace negotiations has kept the war going and extended the dynamics of the war to the central region of the country (Mopti).

The instability in the country continued for another year, characterised by three important dynamics: the ongoing insecurity, concentrating the greatest violence in the central region and increasing in the southern region, the crisis in governance that gave rise to a new coup in the country and the rise of tensions within the international security complex. According to data from the ACLED research centre, 995 violent events were reported during 2021, including battles, violence against civilians and actions with improvised explosive devices throughout the country, concentrated in the northern, central and southern regions, which left 1,887 people dead. Although the number of violent events was close to that of the previous year, the events themselves were significantly less bloody. The number of fatalities dropped notably compared to the 2,731 deaths reported during 2020, the deadliest year in the country since the latest wave of violence broke out. In total, since the beginning of the armed conflict in 2012, around 12,000 people have lost their lives in the country. Likewise, instability and insecurity continued to **forcibly displace thousands of people** and increase humanitarian need. The number of internally displaced people has almost quadrupled in two years, reaching 400,000 in late 2021. This increase is mainly explained by the deterioration of the security situation in the central regions of Ségou and Mopti, as well as in northern Timbuktu. In October, more than 154,000 Malians were refugees in neighbouring countries, mainly in Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Mali also provides shelter to almost 45,000 refugees from Burkina Faso (13,000), Niger (17,000) and Mauritania (15,000). The violence and the effects of climate change in the country have also created an **alarming humanitarian crisis**. At the end of 2021, around 1.3 million people were estimated to be food insecure, mainly in the regions of Gao (41.5% of the population), Mopti (40.8%), Kidal (29.6%), Timbuktu (26.5%) and Kulikoró (26.1%). Data from the UN Secretary-General on the country's economic situation estimate that in 2020, 41.9% of the population was in extreme poverty. However, spending on security in the 2022 national budget increased by 21%, to 357.7 million dollars, exceeding budget increases in other items such as healthcare (11%) and education (4.4%).[75]

Armed conflict remained active and security in Mali continued to deteriorate during the year, characterised by the increase in attacks against civilians and UN peacekeeping forces. As such, MINUSMA reported that at least 527 civilians were killed, wounded, kidnapped or disappeared between April and June. This is more than a 25% increase since the first quarter of 2021, mainly due to the action of Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and other jihadist groups such as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). In general terms, the central region (Mopti and Ségou) continued to be the epicentre of the violence, although in the second half of the year there was a shift in violence towards the southern region of the country (Sikasso). The first major violent event of the year was a French drone attack on a wedding in the town of Bounti, in Mopti (centre) in early January that left 19 dead and generated a wave of anti-French protests in the country. On 15 March, in the Gao region (north), suspected ISGS militants ambushed a Malian Army patrol near the city of Tessit in the Ansongo district, killing at least 33 soldiers in the

75. UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Mali*, S/2021/1117, 4 January 2022.

deadliest attack against security forces in months. On 13 April, unidentified gunmen in Bamako assassinated Sidi Brahim Ould Sidati, the leader of the former rebel Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), a signatory to the 2015 Algiers peace agreement. In the central regions, a truce was reached in April between Katiba Macina and members of Donso self-defence groups in Niono district, Ségou, although this failed to contain the violence for the rest of the year. In August, France's Operation Barkhane reported the death of ISGS leader Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui in a drone strike in northern Mali. His death was later confirmed in October by ISGS. The death of Nasser al-Tergui, one of the leaders of al-Qaeda affiliate JNIM, was also reported in mid-October.

The new coup d'état in Mali in May and the arrival of Russian forces in the country strained relations between the Malian government and its Western partners

The dynamics of insecurity in the country were exacerbated by a **new political crisis in May due to a new coup d'état** that increased tensions between the new military junta and the international community, the effects of which were transferred to the military security complex. On 24 May, Colonel Assimi Goïta, who until then had been the transitional vice president and leader of the August 2020 coup, led a new military coup that overthrew the first transitional government led by Bah N'Daw, proclaiming himself the new president of the country and appointing Choguel Kokalla Maïga as prime minister. The coup prompted different reactions inside and outside the country. Inside, there were demonstrations in support of the military that expressed frustration with the previous government. Mali's main international partners, including the ECOWAS regional bloc, the AU, the EU, France and the US, condemned the junta's action. The UN Security Council unanimously condemned the coup, but stopped short of including coercive measures after Russia and China blocked them. The AU and ECOWAS suspended Mali's membership. The World Bank froze payments to the country. France temporarily suspended joint military operations with Malian troops on 3 June, which resumed a month later. On 16 September, ECOWAS imposed the first sanctions, which sparked protests against it. Subsequently, following Goïta's announcement that the deadline for elections scheduled for February 2022 would not be met, on 7 November ECOWAS imposed further sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes on 149 state officials (not including Goïta, in an apparent attempt to keep the line of communication open). On 15 November, the EU also announced the imposition of sanctions on "those who obstruct" Mali's transition.

Meanwhile, the military coup, the junta's refusal to respect the election date and the anti-French demonstrations in the country produced great **tension between the governments of Mali and France**. On 10 June, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of Operation Barkhane in the Sahel under its current format, giving way to strengthening the European Takuba task force. On 9 July, during the G5 Sahel summit, Macron detailed the reconfiguration of the French military presence in the Sahel, indicating that it would reduce the number of troops by half and close three bases in northern Mali in early 2022. Days later, on 15 July, the UN Secretary-General asked the Security Council to increase the authorised MINUSMA force with 2,069 troops. On 18 December, Chad announced that it would send 1,000 additional soldiers to reinforce MINUSMA. In October, France began the withdrawal of French forces involved in Operation Barkhane from the Kidal region, then later from Tessalit. On 14 December, they officially left Timbuktu, handing over the bases to the Malian Army.

Amid tensions with France and European partners, the government of Mali announced an **agreement with Russia for the deployment of Russian forces in the country**, which according to press reports would be at least 1,000 soldiers from the Russian private security company Wagner Group, although both the Malian and Russian governments denied this. On 23 December, 16 European countries and Canada jointly condemned the alleged deployment of the Wagner Group's mercenaries in Mali and France declared that their presence would be "incompatible" with French continuity. Previously, on 13 December, the EU imposed sanctions on the Wagner Group for allegedly committing serious human rights abuses in several countries, including torture and extrajudicial execution. Several demonstrations took place in the country in support of the agreement with Russia.

Western Sahel Region	
Start:	2018
Type:	System, Resources, Identity Internacional
Main parties:	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, 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), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom), Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in the Province of West Africa (ISWAP) - also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)-, Macina Liberation Front (FML), Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups and community militias, Russia
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The Western Sahel 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.

The insecurity and instability in the western Sahel maintained its trend of recent years due to the crisis of governance in the region, the persistence of episodes of violence and a crisis in the regional military-international security complex due to Russia's arrival to the region. According to the African Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS), during 2021, **2,005 violent events were reported in the Sahel (specifically Burkina Faso, Mali and western Niger) related to the activity of jihadist armed groups. This was 70% more than the previous year, when 1,180 violent episodes were reported.** Burkina Faso was the scene of 58% of all violent events in the region. These episodes of violence **caused 4,839 deaths, or 17% more than the previous year (4,250), and makes the western Sahel region the deadliest for actions linked to jihadist groups than any other region in Africa** (Lake Chad , Somalia, Central Africa or Mozambique). In fact, although in all of Africa reported deaths linked to armed actions by these groups fell by 7% in 2021 compared to the previous year, the Sahel was the exception. Particularly, attacks against civilians (833) and related deaths (1,332) in the Sahel have doubled since 2020. The number of battles between security forces and jihadist groups in the region increased during in 2021, with two characteristics: clashes with groups linked to the coalition of the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM or GSIM)) increased by 50%, while clashes with the

The UN warned that the deteriorating security, humanitarian and climate crisis in the Sahel region has put millions of people in a situation of acute food insecurity

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) fell by 45%. Reviewing specifically by country, according to data provided by **ACLED** in 2021 (which reports a higher number of violent events than those indicated by the ACSS (2,448), as well as more deaths (5,279) in the region), in Burkina Faso 1,289 episodes of violence claimed 2,290 lives; in Mali there were 995 violent events mostly in the northern, central and southern regions of the country that killed 1,887 people; and in southwestern Niger, in the Tillaberi region (the main area affected by the violence), the Dosso region and the Tahoua region, 164 violent events caused at least 1,102 deaths.[76]

One of the main consequences that continues to generate the increase in instability was the **forced displacement of people**. At the end of 2021, around 2.5 million people were displaced from their homes, including 190,000 refugees and 2.2 million internally displaced people, with Burkina Faso being the most affected country, with approximately 1.6 million people displaced, representing 60% of the total. Since 2013, when 217,000 displaced persons were reported, the number of forcibly displaced people has multiplied by ten. In 2021 almost half a million new displaced people were reported. In Niger, the number of internally displaced persons in the Tillaberi and Tahoua regions increased by 53%, while Mali registered a 30% increase over the previous year. Likewise, the **humanitarian situation** throughout the region remained very worrying due to the combined impacts of instability, violence, forced displacement, malnutrition and disease, impacting the growing **food insecurity** affecting millions of people in West Africa and the Sahel. The UN estimates that by next year, when the dry season arrives in the region, around 35.8 million people will suffer from acute food insecurity, an alarming increase of 24% compared to 2020, according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) survey that humanitarian agencies use to measure levels of need.

In terms of the **episodes of violence**, despite the national military missions, the security situation remained complex. Armed activity continued to expand on the triple border of Liptako-Gourma, directed mainly against the security forces and the civilian population. In **Mali**, the UN mission (MINUSMA) continued to be targeted by armed jihadist organisations. On 9 July, AQIM and JNIM issued a joint appeal (the first after three years without any major communication) urging their combatants to continue fighting against local and international forces. On 25 July, JNIM claimed responsibility for eight attacks in northern Mali against MINUSMA bases and convoys. The security situation also deteriorated considerably in the central regions of

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76. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), January 2022.

the country (Mopti and Ségou). The largest massacre against civilians in **Niger** in eight years took place on 2 January, when around 100 people were killed in two communities in the Tillaberi region. The attacks displaced 10,000 people and OCHA warned that 12 of the 13 departments in the region were in a state of emergency. Later, on 21 March, in another attack in the Tahoua region, 141 people were killed. According to local media, both attacks bore the stamp of the Islamic State branch in West Africa Province (ISGS or ISWAP). The most prominent of many incidents in **Burkina Faso** during the year included an attack in the northern community of Solhan on 4 June, where at least 132 people were killed; an ambush of a convoy of 80 vehicles on the Arbinda-Gorgadji highway in Soum province, which caused at least 86 deaths, including 65 civilians on 18 August; and an assault on a military camp in Inata that killed 49 soldiers and four civilians, the largest loss of the Burkinabe security forces on record. During the year there were also attacks on military bases in the **Ivory Coast** (21 April) and in **Benin** (1 December).

The **security complex in the region** during the year was marked by the impact of the coup in Mali, as well as by the announcement of the hiring of Russian forces to combat the insurgencies, which produced a crisis between Mali and its regional and international partners.[77] Meanwhile, the new military junta announced a **military agreement with Russia** to deploy Russian combatants in the country, which also provoked adverse reactions from its military partners. According to media reports, by the end of the year around 400 Russian mercenaries from the private security company Wagner Group, which is also involved in armed conflicts in Libya, Mozambique and the Central African Republic, were deployed in the central region of Ségou, while others went to Timbuktu, in the north. The arrival of these alleged Russian mercenaries in Mali was condemned by 16 European governments, who issued a joint statement blasting the deployment of this type of force in the region. France announced changes to Operation Barkhane in the country, reporting that by the end of 2022 it will have withdrawn 40% of the mission's 5,100 troops, while the European Takuba task force (deployed since late 2020 and made up of special forces from Mali and Niger and 11 European countries) will take over from France's partial withdrawal in Menaka and Gao. At the end of the year, various countries involved in the European force threatened to withdraw from the mission if Russian forces remained in the country. However, there were demonstrations against the French presence in Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso during the year, as well as shows of support for Russia's arrival to combat the insurgency.

The signing of a military agreement between Mali and Russia threatened to transform the international military coalitions in the Sahel

1.3.2. America

Colombia	
Start:	1964
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	ELN, FARC (dissidents), paramilitary groups
Intensity:	2
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 persisted, with clashes between the security forces, the armed group ELN, different kinds of paramilitary groups and dissident FARC guerrilla groups, demobilised after the 2016 peace agreement. Throughout the year, fighting took place among all these groups in different parts of the country, especially in Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Chocó, Norte de Santander, Santander and especially Cauca, where the clashes were constant and a significant part of the deaths were reported as resulting from the violence. The dissident groups of the FARC, the ELN and the paramilitary group Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia or Clan del Golfo clashed during the year, vying for territorial control of various areas of the country. Clashes also intensified on the Pacific coast. Armed clashes, security force operations, bomb attacks and attacks on infrastructure all took place. The Conflict Responses Foundation pointed out that the FARC dissidents may have organised into 30 structures that have emerged since 2016, without being able to speak of a national project that groups and coordinates them all, although some of these groups may aspire to establish coordination among all the dissident groups of the demobilised FARC, such as Segunda Marquetalia and the faction led by Gentil Duarte.[78] According to the CERAC

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77. See the summary on Mali in this chapter.
78. Eduardo Álvarez Vanegas, *Las caras de las disidencias: cinco años de incertidumbre y evolución*, Fundación CORE, 2021

centre for analysis, between June and November there was an increase in fighting involving the armed group ELN, for a total of 25 battles in which its participation was verified. The UN verification mission in the country confirmed the intensification of violence in the areas affected by the conflict that had been prioritised for the implementation of the peace agreement. The violence caused the constant forced displacement of the population and thousands of people had to flee their homes as a result of the armed conflict. According to the organisation CODHES, **82,846 people were displaced between January and November 2021, an increase of 169% over the figures of forced displacement in 2020 and the highest figure in the last five years**. The organisation pointed out these people were mostly Afro-descendant and indigenous populations, with the departments of Nariño, Antioquia, Chocó and Cauca being the most affected. In addition, the ELN continued to kidnap both civilians and soldiers.

The armed conflict was also aggravated by the social and political tension gripping the country since the start of the social protests known as the National Strike. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace warned of an increase in armed clashes in several municipalities with the presence of armed actors who could take advantage of the fact that the security forces were concentrated in other places to contain the social protests. INDEPAZ identified that during 2021 there were 88 massacres in which 313 people died, less fatalities than the previous year. Outstanding clashes of the year included an operation by the security forces in Guaviare against the FARC dissident group of Gentil Duarte in March that killed 12 people and an attack against Colombian Army facilities in the city of Cúcuta, department of Norte de Santander, in June. The government indicated that ELN or FARC dissidents were behind the attack, although the former denied responsibility for the events. A car bomb injured 36 people, 29 of them soldiers, in the most serious attack in the country since the one that took place in Bogotá in January 2019. The attack was carried out by the ELN. In addition, clashes between FARC dissident groups, the ELN and the Venezuelan security forces were reported in the border area between the two countries in the department of Arauca in Colombia and the state of Apure in Venezuela, which intensified during the year. The Venezuelan Armed Forces reportedly intensified their military operations against the Colombian insurgents. Violence against demobilised ex-combatants of the FARC was also repeated and between January and September, 44 demobilised people had been murdered, according to the UN mission in the country, a number slightly lower than that of the same period in the previous year. Since the signing of the peace agreement, 292 ex-combatants have been murdered (283 men and 9 women).[79] Furthermore, according to INDEPAZ, 168 social leaders and human rights defenders were killed during 2021, of which 26 were women. This organisation highlighted

that the department of Cauca was the one in which the greatest number of murders were committed, in keeping with the situation of growing violence that was experienced in the department during the year.

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-K), National Resistance Front (NRF)
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, and the refusal of the Taliban government to hand over Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders (on Afghan territory) the US attacked the country aided by a contingent of British forces. After the signing of the Bonn agreements, an interim government was established, led by Hamid Karzai and subsequently ratified at the polls. Since 2006 there has been an escalation of violence, motivated by the rebuilding of the Taliban militias. Following the 2014 presidential and provincial elections, the country was plunged into a crisis sparked by allegations of electoral fraud after the second round in which the two most voted leaders, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, kept the results in the air for months. In September, an agreement was reached to create a two-headed government with Ghani as president and Abdullah as chief executive. In 2011, the international troops began their withdrawal, which was completed at the end of 2014, although the mission "Resolute Support" was deployed on the ground, with a NATO mandate to train Afghan forces and another force to carry out training and counterterrorism operations, made up of US soldiers, "Freedom Sentinel" mission.

The year 2021 was marked in Afghanistan by the rise to power of the Taliban 20 years after its defeat, and the withdrawal of US military forces, as well as other countries' forces, after two decades of occupation. On 15 August, the Taliban took control of Kabul, the country's capital, after President Ashraf Ghani left the country and attempts to reach a negotiated agreement between the Taliban and the government failed.[80] Although the violence increased throughout the year,

79. United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, *Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2021/824, 24 September 2021.
80. See the summary on Afghanistan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria.

the Taliban military offensive intensified after the US announced that its complete military withdrawal from the country would conclude on 11 September, four months later than initially planned in the timetable agreed by the Trump administration and the Taliban in their February 2020 agreement. According to conflict-related death tolls compiled by UNAMA, during the first six months of the year, 1,659 civilians died as a result of the violence, an increase of almost 50% compared to 2020 and a change in the falling death rate of previous years. According to data from the ACLED research centre, 41,731 people died due to violence during 2021, but 41,000 of these deaths occurred between January and August, with a drastic drop in mortality as a result of armed violence after the Taliban took power. The year began with intense clashes between the Taliban and the Afghan security forces and with attacks by Taliban infiltrators in the security forces. In addition, the security forces carried out aerial bombardments that not only caused deaths among the Taliban ranks, but also killed many civilians, such as an airstrike that caused the death of 18 civilians, most of them minors, in the province of Nimroz. The Taliban were expanding their territorial control and in February they managed to control several districts in Zabul province, winning important military victories in Kunduz province. During the following months, the clashes and attacks continued.

In April, US President Joe Biden announced that the withdrawal of US troops would be completed before 11 September, leading to an intensification of violence that different analysts interpreted as preparation for a large-scale offensive throughout the country. As of 1 May, the date initially agreed for the completion of the US military withdrawal, the offensive increased and many bases and detachments of the Afghan Armed Forces were abandoned in the face of the Taliban advance, which gradually gained control of the country's rural areas. Thousands of soldiers surrendered in the following months due to the lack of military capacity and the decreasing international military support, especially by air, on which they had based their ability to control the territory. Much of the territorial control by the Taliban was achieved through local ceasefire agreements after which the Taliban came to control the area and the military abandoned military installations by surrendering and leaving. The Taliban advance forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country and in the weeks prior to the capture of Kabul it was estimated that around 30,000 people were leaving the country weekly. In July, the Taliban began attacks against the city of Kandahar and consolidated their positions in various border areas of the country. Although air attacks by Afghan forces with international support were resumed, the Taliban's progress on the ground could not be countered. The withdrawal of US troops had been practically completed, which revealed the weakness of the Afghan Armed Forces. Although it

The announced withdrawal of US troops led to an escalation in the Taliban offensive throughout the country that culminated in the fall of the government of Ashraf Ghani

was officially stated that they were made up of 30,000 soldiers, some media outlets pointed out that the real figure could be a third of the official figure. On 6 August, the Taliban took their first provincial capital, Zaranj, the capital of Nimroz, giving way in the following two days to the fall of four other capitals. Finally, after capturing Kandahar, Herat, Ghazni and other important areas, on 15 August the Taliban consolidated their control of the city of Kabul while the government fell and President Ashraf Ghani and other high-level officials fled the country. A few days earlier, the US government had ordered the closure of its embassy and had moved its diplomatic mission to the airport.

In the following days, thousands of people, especially collaborators working with international troops and governments, workers at international organisations, activists, human rights and women's rights defenders and journalists tried to flee, crowding at the airport, from where some governments carried out air evacuations and where there were huge crowds and different moments of tension. The US deployed 3,000 soldiers to the airport. On 26 August, two bombs exploded at the airport in an attack claimed by ISIS-K, killing 200 Afghans and 13 US soldiers. On 30 August, the last US military flight left Kabul, ending the US military presence in the country. In early September, the Taliban took control of Panjshir province, the only active focus of resistance, although in the following months there were clashes between the National Resistance Front (NRF) and the Taliban in Parwan, Panjshir and Baghlan provinces. The Taliban appointed an interim government headed by Mohammad Hassan Akhund, one of the founders of the Taliban movement, who was appointed prime minister while Abdul Ghani Baradar, the negotiator of the 2020 deal with the US, was named deputy prime minister. After the departure of the US and the rest of the international troops from the country, the US government, the World Bank and the IMF froze Afghanistan's funds abroad and suspended payments, starting a serious humanitarian crisis in the country due to the Afghan economy's huge dependence on the circulation of cash and the suspension of international humanitarian aid. Different demonstrations and social protests were staged against the new regime, some of them led by women who criticised their exclusion from the public sphere after the Taliban took power, as well as the ban on the right to education for girls over 12 years old. Armed violence was drastically reduced, but responsibility for different attacks against the Taliban were claimed by ISIS-K, which increased markedly starting October, when an attack on a Shia mosque in Kunduz province caused the death of 40 civilians and another similar attack in Kandahar killed 50 civilians. In November, an attack on the Sardar Daud Khan military hospital in Kabul caused dozens of deaths. The United Nations noted that ISIS-K was present in every province of the country.

India (Jammu and Kashmir)	
Start:	1989
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Governments, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, United Jihad Council, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), The Resistance Front (TRF)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

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

The armed conflict in Jammu and Kashmir continued throughout the year, although the impact in terms of mortality fell as a result of clashes between security forces and armed groups. According to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal think tank, 274 people died from the violence. The ACLED research centre collected similar figures, reporting a total of 290 deaths. Throughout the year, the security forces were involved in armed clashes and operations that killed people and wounded dozens. In addition, the political and social situation continued to be shaped by the withdrawal of statehood and the continuous restrictions imposed by the government to counteract the political and armed activity of the Kashmiri opposition. In April, there was an escalation of violence after a policeman was killed in an attack against a leader of the ruling BJP party. This prompted the security forces to kill three insurgents, including two of those allegedly responsible for the death of the policeman. These events led to protests and demonstrations. In the days that followed, many arrests were made of people accused of belonging to insurgent organisations and armed clashes were repeated, causing the deaths of at least 10 people. In addition, the media reported that the police had warned them not to carry out live coverage of security operations, in what they considered an attack on freedom of the press and expression. In September, following the death of Kashmiri independence leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, 92, who had been under house arrest since 2010, the government decreed a communications blackout and a curfew for fear of social protests, since the family stated that he had been buried by the security forces a few hours after his death, without their wishes having been respected. In October, violence escalated again after several attacks were carried out against the non-Muslim migrant population (mainly Hindus and Sikhs) by the armed group The Resistance Front (TRF). The TRF may have been created after the withdrawal of state status and according to the Indian government, it is linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen groups. Following the attacks, the Indian government detained 700 people for questioning and 13 people were killed in security operations. In addition, the attacks increased fear among the local Hindu community, which was massively displaced in the 1990s due to insurgent violence directed against it. Following the October attacks, new population displacements took place. In November, security forces arrested human rights defender and activist Khurram Parvez, co-founder of the Jammu-Kashmir Civil Society Coalition and president of the South Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances. The arrest occurred after complaints by his organisation regarding the murder of several people by the security forces, pointing out that they were civilians and not insurgents, which also triggered protests. Many incidents were reported this month, including the killing of two civilians by security forces as part of a counter-insurgency operation in Srinagar. Accusations that they were insurgents led to intense social protests. Later, there were several clashes between the security forces and armed groups. In one of them, a Hizbul Mujahideen commander was killed, according to military sources. The Indian government also announced its intention to hold elections to the legislative assembly once the delimitation commission had completed its task. This commission began its work to redefine electoral constituencies following Jammu and Kashmir's loss of statehood. Various political parties were opposed to the call for elections, demanding the return to state status before the elections were held.

India (CPI-M)	
Start:	1967
Type:	System Interno
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 between the Indian security forces and the Naxalite armed group CPI-M continued to be active throughout 2021, although the trending decrease in violence and mortality associated with the conflict that began in 2019 was consolidated and the lowest body count resulting from the armed conflict in the last two decades was reported. According to death tolls compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal research centre, 237 people died as a result of armed clashes, security force operations and attacks by the Naxalite insurgents during 2021. Throughout the year there were clashes that affected districts in at least nine Indian states, although the most affected were again the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha and Telangana. Security forces carried out operations against the CPI-M and arrested people throughout the year. Clashes were repeated sporadically, although with less intensity than in previous years, and the Maoist insurgents also selectively killed civilians accused of collaborating with the Indian government or state governments and security forces. In March, four commanders of the armed group were killed in fighting with the security forces in the Gaya district, Bihar state. Days later, the armed group stated that it was willing to carry out peace talks with the Chhattisgarh government as long as its conditions were met, including the prior dismantling of the military camps in the areas affected by the conflict, lifting the ban on the CPI-M and releasing its imprisoned leaders. In November, one of the largest operations against the Naxalite insurgents was carried out in the state of Maharashtra, in which 26 members of the armed group were killed, including the Milind Teltumbde, a member of the CPI-M central committee.

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 remained active in Pakistan and there was an increase in violence and fatalities, mainly due to the increase in activity by the armed group TTP, as a result of the Taliban victory in Afghanistan, which had repercussions on the dynamics of the conflict in the neighbouring country. Thus, armed violence increased gradually throughout the year, especially during the third quarter, coinciding with the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan as a whole.[81] In recent years, the insurgents' armed activity dropped off due to the intensification of operations by the security forces since 2014, a trend that may have changed in the second half of 2021. According to figures collected by the Centre for Research and Security Studies of Pakistan, 853 people died in the country as a result of armed violence, though this drops to 605 if deaths in the province of Balochistan are excluded. As in previous years, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the province most affected by the violence, and especially the districts of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where the Pakistani Taliban insurgents' armed activity is concentrated. According to figures collected by the ACLED research centre, 457 deaths were reported in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkwa, including the FATA territories, in 2021. Throughout the year there were security operations, targeted killings, bombings and armed attacks by the insurgency. In addition, there were clashes between the security forces and the Taliban insurgency, especially in the districts of North and South Waziristan. Although the number of suicide attacks in the country had dropped, after having caused a high number of fatalities in previous years, some considerable ones were reported. One suicide attack was carried out by Taliban insurgents in April in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, presumably against the Chinese ambassador to the country, who was in the city. Five people were killed and many more were wounded. In fact, attacks against Chinese workers at different pieces of infrastructure in the country were repeated at

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81. See the summary on Afghanistan in this chapter.

various times of the year. In July, a bomb in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province killed nine Chinese engineers, two Pakistani civilians and two Pakistani soldiers. The departure of US troops from Afghanistan could lead to an increase in attacks against Chinese workers and infrastructure in Pakistan, which have been constant in recent years, both by Taliban insurgents and by Baloch nationalist armed groups.

In October, Prime Minister Ismail Khan revealed that he was conducting negotiations with Taliban factions active in the country, resulting in a month-long ceasefire agreement. However, the agreement did not prevent the insurgent attacks from continuing, which caused the deaths of several members of the security forces in November in areas close to the border with Afghanistan. During the negotiations, the TTP reportedly presented three demands to the Pakistani government: authorisation to open a political office in a third country, revocation of the merger of the FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and imposition of the Taliban interpretation of Islam on Pakistan. The agreement had been facilitated by the Taliban government of Afghanistan and it was hoped that negotiations would take place during the ceasefire agreement, which could be prolonged if the negotiations went well. In fact, the formation of a negotiating commission with representatives of both parties was announced. According to the Pakistani Taliban, the government had also promised to release more than 100 prisoners of the armed group. However, the agreement was broken in December due to the unilateral breaking of the ceasefire by the TTP, which accused the government of having violated the ceasefire.

Pakistan (Balochistan)	
Start:	2005
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internationalised 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.

The armed conflict in the province of Balochistan remained active and there was a slight uptick in the number of deaths caused by the violence. According to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 313 people were killed. The Centre for Research and Security Studies of Pakistan (CRSSP) said that 248 people had died of violence in the province. Throughout the year, the security forces carried out operations against the different Balochi nationalist and Taliban insurgent groups active in the province. Armed groups also carried out attacks and armed clashes were reported. According to the CRSSP, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) was the most active armed insurgent group during the year, although other groups such as the Balochistan Republican Army (BRA) and the Baluch Liberation Front (BLF) also carried out acts of violence. The most prominent armed actions by the BLA were an attack in Kohlu district in February that killed five members of the security forces and injured six others and an attack in Harnai district in September that killed four members of the security forces when their vehicle exploded. In May, it was announced that one of the most prominent commanders of the armed group, Mir Abdul Nabi Baduzai Bangulzai, had died in Kandahar, Afghanistan, after being attacked by a group of unidentified armed men. Also in May, a bomb exploded during a pro-Palestinian demonstration organised by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party, killing seven people. It was not revealed who was responsible. In October, there was an explosion near the University of Balochistan in Quetta as a security force vehicle passed by, killing one police officer and wounding 17 others. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. ISIS activity in the province was also confirmed. In January, the armed group claimed responsibility for the murder of 11 miners of the Hazara ethnic group in the city of Mach. The Hazara population has been subject to persecution by ISIS for being mainly Shia Muslims. The miners were kidnapped prior to their murder. Civil society organisations complained that human rights violations continued to be repeated in the province. The Baluchistan Human Rights Council noted that there had been 480 enforced disappearances during 2020, although the figures could be higher, since they were conservative estimates. In July, the prime minister stated that talks with the Balochi insurgency were being prepared and announced the appointment of Shahzain Bugti, a member of the National Assembly and grandson of Nawab Akbar Bugti, a deceased Balochi insurgency leader, as his special assistant for reconciliation and harmony in Balochistan, although his role was unknown. The announcement was met with scepticism by Balochi political leaders.

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); PDF
Intensity:	3
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 situation in Myanmar deteriorated notably during the year due to the coup d'état launched by the country's military leaders on 1 February. The coup occurred hours before the formation of Parliament resulting from the 2020 elections. The military alleged that electoral fraud had taken place during the November elections. The government had refused to postpone the formation of Parliament after the electoral commission had rejected the accusations of fraud. State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the NLD, the party that won by a large majority in the elections, was arrested, along with other political leaders such as President U Win Myint. The military took control of the legislative and judicial branches and blocked internet access in the country. Although initially after the coup it was announced that new elections would be held within one or two years, in August General Min Aung Hlaing announced that the elections and transfer of power would take place in August 2023, exceeding the two-year limit established by the Constitution. The general announced the formation of an interim government headed by himself as prime minister and at the same time as head of the State Administration Council, that is, simultaneously occupying the positions of head of state and government. In September, the government renamed itself the "union government". In response to the coup, on 16 April the opposition proclaimed a National Unity Government (NUG), appointed by the MPs elected in the elections. At the beginning of May, it announced the formation of its military wing, the Popular Defence Force (PDF), in an attempt to group and coordinate the different militias and groups that emerged in the wake of the coup.

After the coup, widespread social protests broke out and were violently repressed. Tens of thousands of people participated in massive demonstrations and in different actions of non-violent resistance. There were also strikes by public employees. On 27 March, coinciding with the Armed Forces Day celebrations, security forces killed 158 people, including 14 minors, who were participating in peaceful protests against the coup. **Since the military coup, 1,964 people have died as a result of the repressive action of the state security forces, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, who also reported that 8,100 people had been detained on charges related to their political activity in against the coup.** The Independent Investigation Mechanism for Myanmar, established by the United Nations, said that the first indications were that the military regime had committed crimes against humanity in its crackdown on social protests. The security forces carried out night raids, mass arrests, arrests of relatives of opponents for their use as hostages, torture and the use of heavy weapons in cities, among other repressive strategies. Demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience were repeated throughout the year, taking place in the main cities, but also in rural areas. However, there was a gradual rise in armed actions against the government. On 7 September, the NUG declared a "people's defensive war" against the military government and a month later announced the formation of a command structure to coordinate the PDF with the armed ethnic groups. Dozens of civilians also formed militias that carried out attacks against the security forces. Since the coup d'état, around 250 groups have been formed, of very different sizes and capacities for action. According to the analysis of the International Crisis Group, the different armed and resistance groups carried out actions against the government that have included assassinations (until September there have been 800 assassinations of people linked to the government or the security forces or accused of being informants); hundreds of improvised explosive devices detonated against government buildings, businesses of people considered close to the military regime and police and military posts; drive-by shootings against security forces; and sabotage of infrastructure, such as telephone and electricity towers and railway lines. Paramilitary groups were also formed to protect people linked to the government and the security forces. Ethnic armed groups also continued their activity and continued the counter-insurgency operations of the security forces against them. In September, clashes between the Chin

Defence Force militia and the Burmese Armed Forces in Chin state, which caused the death of 30 soldiers, forcibly displaced more than 10,000 people, many of whom took refuge in India. Between October and November, violence intensified in different parts of the country, forcibly displacing tens of thousands of people. In Kayah state, thousands of people later had to flee due to the intensification of military bombardments against various towns and clashes with the KNDF and KA armed groups. In late December, 35 civilians, including two Save the Children aid workers, were killed in a massacre by security forces in the town of Moso. Major clashes also took place in Shan state with the armed group MNDAA. In addition, clashes between the Burmese Armed Forces and the Arakan Army resumed in Rakhine state for the first time since November 2020, when a ceasefire was unofficially initiated after two years of intense fighting. In December, 15,000 people were displaced in Karen state (5,000 taking refuge in Thailand) as a result of the military offensive against the KNLA and the PDF. **The self-proclaimed Government of National Unity stated that between June and August the action of the armed opposition had caused the death of 1,710 soldiers**, that 1,300 soldiers had died in October, that more than 400 had been wounded in clashes with the different resistance groups and that this figure was approximately twice the number of soldiers killed in September. The coup d'état also gave way to an enormously serious economic and humanitarian crisis, with an alarming increase in poverty levels and lack of access to food and basic social services amid the growing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint were arrested, they were charged with various crimes, including sedition, violation of COVID-19 restrictions, corruption, violation of the law of official secrets and others. The military government imposed many obstacles on them to contact their lawyers, who pointed out that they were baseless, fabricated charges. In addition, during the trial, Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers were prevented from making statements to the media, after they revealed that President U Win Myint had stated in court that the military had threatened to force him to resign during the coup, which would demonstrate the illegality of the coup leaders' seizure of power. In October, the first conviction of a senior NLD leader occurred, with U Win Htein being sentenced to 20 years in prison for high treason. The government also announced that it planned to dissolve the NLD, claiming to have found evidence that the party manipulated the November 2020 elections. However, China had stated that one of its conditions to continue supporting the regime was the non-dissolution of Aung San Suu Kyi's party. In December, Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint were sentenced to four years in prison, later reduced to two in a partial pardon by Prime Minister General Min Aung Hlaing. The ruling stated that they would serve their sentence in their "current detention location", so it was unknown whether they would be sent to prison or remain under house arrest.

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.

The levels of violence stemming from the armed conflict between the Philippine government and the armed opposition group NPA were similar to those of the previous year. In late 2020, the Philippine Armed Forces declared that throughout the year, 201 members of the NPA had died in combat, another 264 had been arrested and another 7,615 had surrendered or turned themselves in to the authorities. According to journalistic sources, by the end of 2021, about 200 people had died and many more had been injured. Although it is unknown how many NPA fighters decided to join the government's demobilisation and reintegration programmes in 2021, Manila asserts that the pace remained steady. For example, in November alone, over 200 fighters surrendered in Davao and Leyte provinces. In any case, the Philippine Armed Forces have repeatedly stated that they still aim to eradicate the NPA militarily before the end of Rodrigo Duterte's term of office in June 2022. One of the main battles between the Philippine Armed Forces and the NPA claimed the lives of 25 fighters in the province of East Samar in mid-August during an operation in which the Philippine Army used drones to identify NPA camps and military aircraft to bomb the group's positions. According to the government, the three provinces that make up the island of Samar (Western, Central and Eastern Samar) are one of the main areas of influence of the NPA. In Eastern Samar, for example, there are 29 municipalities in which the group maintains a strong presence, while in another 45 the government has eliminated or reduced it to a minimum. Many clashes also broke out between the parties in September and

October, with 22 and 19 dead, respectively. Among those who died in October was Jorge Madlos, also known as Ka Oris, a spokesman for the group and one of the top leaders of the NPA in recent decades. According to the government, Madlos' death is a severe setback for the NPA. In December, the Philippine Armed Forces also used air support in an operation against about 70 fighters who had gathered near the city of Iloilo to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Up to 20 fighters may have died, according to the Philippine Army. The government continued to accuse the NPA of violating international humanitarian law (especially with the use of anti-personnel mines and attacks on civilians), while both the Communist movement and many human rights organisations continued to accuse the government of cracking down on certain people accused of belonging to the NPA or its surroundings. In March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed alarm over the execution of nine activists by state security forces. According to human rights organisations, hundreds of people have been killed on charges of belonging to the Communist insurgency since Duterte came to power in 2016.

According to a study[82] on the patterns and dynamics of the violence perpetrated by the NPA between 2018 and early 2021, the armed group has carried out regular and sustained armed activity in 15 of the 17 administrative regions of the Philippines (in all but Metro Manila and in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao), with Bicol (Luzon), Caraga (Mindanao) and Visayas—east, centre and west—being the most affected regions. These figures are consistent with statements by the NPA during the year, which said it was militarily active in 73 of the country's 81 provinces. As for their modus operandi, 73% of their actions are carried out with small arms and 15% with improvised explosive devices or anti-personnel mines. Most of their attacks are aimed at small police and military posts or consist of ambushes against convoys of state security forces, although they also carry out attacks on civilians (usually state officials, community leaders accused of collaborating with the state, who commit "crimes" against the population or who refuse to cooperate with the NPA). The report notes that the NPA also carries out many attacks on businesses, especially mining, forestry, agriculture, electricity and telecommunications companies. A 2017 report by the Philippine Armed Forces estimated that the NPA earned about $50 million a year in extortion from agricultural and mining companies. Finally, the government anti-narcotics agency stated that between July 2016 and September 2021, around 6,200 people had died in the so-called war on drugs that Rodrigo Duterte started after coming to power. This figure is lower than those offered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (8,663 between July 2016 and June 2020), the International Criminal Court (between 12,000 and 13,000, between July 2016 and March 2019) and the ACLED research centre (7,742 between January 2016 and November 2021).

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, Toraife group, factions of MILF and MNLF
Intensity:	1
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 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 led 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.

No death toll was released on the conflict between the Philippine government and various Islamist insurgencies in Mindanao, but various analysts suggested that the intensity and lethality of the clashes decreased compared to the previous year. In May, the Philippine Armed Forces declared that since the beginning of the year, 41 BIFF combatants and four Abu Sayyaf fighters had died. The main episodes of violence were reported in March, May and September. In March, after the BIFF attacked several military detachments in Maguindanao, the Philippine Armed Forces launched a major offensive in 10 municipalities, killing 24 combatants and displacing more than 66,000 people in the Datu Saudi Ampatuan region. In May, five BIFF members were killed during the Philippine Army counteroffensive to retake the public market in the town of Datu Paglas

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82. Anton Alifaldi, *Terrorism in the Philippines: Examining the data and what to expect in the coming years*, IHS Markit, 9 March 2021.

(Maguindanao province), which the group occupied for several hours shortly after President Rodrigo Duterte had visited a military camp nearby. After the clashes, which led to the temporary evacuation of part of the population of Datu Paglas, the president urged the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (the MILF-led interim government of the Bagsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) to control and combat the armed groups operating in the region to prevent the declaration of a high-intensity offensive by the Philippine Armed Forces. On similar dates, three Abu Sayyaf fighters were killed by the Philippine Army in the town of Sumisip, on the island of Basilan. In September, 16 BIFF combatants and one soldier were killed in various clashes in the town of Shariff Saydona Mustapha, in Maguindanao province. The fighters were part of the BIFF faction led by Ustadz Karialan, one of the three main members of the group. The other two factions of the group, led respectively by Ismail Abubakar and Abu Turaife, declared allegiance to Islamic State, but Karialan has not yet done so. The Philippine Army stated that it was not clear if Commander Karialan was among those who died. In this regard, it should be noted that during the year two of the main leaders of the Daula Islamiyah group (also known as the Maute Group) died: Usop Nasif in April, near the city of Marawi, and Salahuddin Hassan in October, in Maguindanao province.

Nevertheless, **the government and some analysts stated on several occasions that the different armed Islamist groups operating in Mindanao are getting weaker and weaker**. According to the government, after the serious clashes between Philippine security forces and various armed groups that took over the city of Marawi for several months in 2017, Manila has drastically and sustainedly stepped up military pressure against said groups, which may have entailed, among other things, weakening their sources of international support and financing, reducing their areas of control or influence and increasing the number of deserter, surrendered or captured combatants, which in turn may have provided valuable data intelligence on group activity. In late September, the government declared that around 300 BIFF fighters had surrendered since the beginning of the year. Furthermore, in 2021 the Philippine Armed Forces took over some major BIFF and Abu Sayyaf camps. According to some media outlets, in 2021 the BIFF attacked a market to stock up on food, while Abu Sayyaf allegedly attacked civilians to get food, a modus operandi that was not common long ago. According to these same sources, the rise in suicide attacks reported in the region since 2019 could be related to this increasing weakening of these groups, as it is considered a much cheaper and more effective military strategy than facing the Philippine Armed Forces on equal footing on the battlefield. In December 2021, the government arrested nine women allegedly linked to Abu Sayyaf (including three daughters of Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who died in July 2020), accusing

them of intending to carry out suicide attacks. Other sources suggest that COVID-19 restriction measures are hindering the arrival of foreign fighters in Mindanao, a flow that had increased after the weakening of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. In that vein, the Philippine government and other governments in Southeast Asia increased security measures in Mindanao after the Taliban took power in Afghanistan.

Finally, **some analysts indicate that the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, led temporarily until 2025 by MILF leader Ebrahim Murad, may have also eroded the legitimacy and membership of the armed groups opposed to the 2014 peace agreement**. In fact, in February, Ebrahim Murad publicly declared that he was in talks with two of the three main BIFF factions so that around 900 combatants could rejoin the MILF and support the efforts of the transitional government. The BIFF split from the MILF over its opposition to the peace talks that led to the 2014 peace agreement. In May, however, the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority declared that the government would not enter into negotiations with the BIFF factions, Abu Sayyaf or Daula Islamiyah, as they have already rejected any possibility of dialogue or cooperation with the Bangsamoro government.

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.

Amid the impasse in the peace negotiations between the government and the armed opposition group BRN,

the levels of violence were slightly higher than those of the previous year. According to the research centre Deep South Watch, by the end of the year 113 people had been killed and another 190 were wounded. Compared to the previous year, the number of people who died was practically the same (116 in 2020 and 113 in 2021), but the total number of victims increased (277 in 2020 and 303 in 2021) and there was a notable rise in the number of episodes of violence, which went from 335 to 481 (an increase of 44%). **This is the first time since 2021, when 1,850 episodes of violence were reported, that the number of incidents increased compared to the previous year**. However, in 2020 the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was greater than in 2021, especially due to lockdowns and other mobility restrictions. Also, in April 2020 the BRN declared a ceasefire. **Of a total of 21,328 incidents of violence, from 2004 to the end of 2021, 7,314 people were killed due to the armed conflict and 13,584 people were injured.** Although a spokesman for the Thai Armed Forces declared that 95% of the episodes of violence in the southern part of the country were related to illegal trade and crime during the year, in September the government once again extended the emergency decree that only governs the southern part of the country and that has been renewed 65 times since its imposition in 2005. This decree, which grants special powers to the Thai Armed Forces (such as holding people without charges for 30 days), was criticised by local groups and human rights organisations. In addition, according to media reports, between 2004 and 2016 the cost of Thai Army activity in the three southern Muslim-majority provinces, with around 70,000 troops deployed, was 8.6 billion dollars. According to these same reports, after the military junta took power in 2014, military spending in the south of the country may have doubled. Regarding the episodes of violence that occurred during the year, the months with the highest mortality associated with the conflict were January and September, with 14 fatalities in each. In November, the BRN, which according to some media reports has between 8,000 and 9,000 members, may have carried out some actions aimed at influencing the local elections that took place on 28 November. Improvised explosive devices were used in many of the insurgent attacks that received the most media coverage. In March, for example, eight volunteers were injured after an explosive device exploded, just days before two police officers were injured in another roadside explosion. In July, five policemen were injured in a similar explosion in the Sai Buri district of Pattani province. In September, two police officers were killed and four others injured after an explosive device was detonated remotely. Attacks on trains also took place at various times of the year. In mid-December, for example, three people were injured after a bomb exploded on a train with around 300 passengers in the town of Khok Poh.

Although the number of people killed as a result of the conflict in the south of Thailand is similar to that of 2020, both the total number of incidents of violence and the number of people injured increased compared to the previous year

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Ukraine (east)	
Start:	2014
Type:	Government, Identity, Self-government 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 conflict remained at low levels in terms of direct fighting and fatalities, although the military crisis between Ukraine and its Western allies and Russia worsened, with a massive deployment of Russian troops near its border with Ukraine and warnings from Ukraine and the US of a possible Russian invasion. In 2021, 149 people lost their lives, according to the ACLED research centre database, in line with the one hundred reported in 2020 (compared to the 400 in 2019). After a certain drop in violence in the second half of 2020 due to the agreement in July 2020 on measures to strengthen the ceasefire, violations of the ceasefire increased in 2021, with a greater impact on the population of the conflict zone and civilian infrastructure. Likewise, of the three areas designated in previous years as disengagement areas (Stanytsia Luhanksa, Zolote and Petrivske), violations of the ceasefire were recorded throughout the year in Petrivske and to a lesser extent in Zolote. In late December, Ukraine and the forces of Lugansk and Donetsk agreed to re-adhere to the 2020 ceasefire.

International military tension surrounding the conflict escalated at various times, including in April due to the deployment of several tens of thousands of Russian troops and military equipment near the border with Ukraine. According to data from the James intelligence information agency published in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, Russia deployed 40,000 troops in the Voronezh region, as many in Crimea and military equipment in both areas and in the Rostov region. The material deployed included tanks, long-range artillery and a short-range ballistic missile system, while the Black Sea fleet was also strengthened, according to the same sources. Russia framed the deployment as necessary for conducting military exercises as well as a response to alleged provocations and military escalation in Ukraine, though OSCE observation reports denied the accusations. The deployment sounded an alarm in Ukraine, the EU, the US and elsewhere about the risk of an invasion. The Ukrainian government redoubled its demands for membership in NATO. Meanwhile, Russia warned that Ukraine's entry into NATO would have irreversible consequences for Ukraine's statehood. Russia withdrew its troops at the end of April, reducing military tension. At the annual NATO summit in June, NATO continued to urge Ukraine to carry out internal reforms prior to integration, without yet inviting it to an action plan for accession.

The internationalised military crisis intensified again at the end of the year, with alerts from Ukrainian and US representatives starting in November about the deployment of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine (between 85,000 and 100,000 troops with heavy weapons, according to intelligence sources from both countries) and risks of a possible invasion in early 2022 that according to the same sources could involve up to 175,000 troops. Russia described this as disinformation and denounced the Western-backed militarisation of Ukraine, accusing it of mobilising heavy weapons to the front line as well as sending a military ship to the Kerch Strait, which Ukraine alleged was a rescue ship. The Ukrainian navy denounced that Russia had blocked about 70% of the Sea of Azov. The Russian and US presidents discussed the crisis in a videoconference meeting in early December and again at the end of the month. Russia demanded legal guarantees for NATO's non-expansion to Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, and a ban on the establishment of troops and weapons outside NATO's borders in 1997, among other demands. In addition, it blamed Ukraine for the breach of the Minsk agreements. Joe Biden warned of economic sanctions and other responses in the event of a military escalation over Ukraine. Both presidents agreed that their teams would continue to meet to de-escalate the crisis and negotiations between the US and Russia, NATO and Russia and at the OSCE were scheduled for early January. The militarised crisis was focused on the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and, in addition, highlighted a conflict between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic countries around the security architecture of the continent, under Russian military threat.[83]

In relation to the humanitarian dimension of the conflict, only two crossing points remained open during the year (Stanytsia Luhanska and Novotroitske/Olenivka) due to the restrictions imposed by the rebel forces. As OCHA warned, the majority closure of the contact line made it difficult for hundreds of thousands of people to travel to access essential services, which led to a drastic reduction in travel along this route. Meanwhile, transit through Russia increased, which is more expensive for populations in a vulnerable situation. OCHA warned of the housing and income needs for the population displaced by the conflict. One and a half million people remained internally displaced. Factors such as the economic impact of the pandemic, movement restrictions and the rise in the price of electricity and other services, among others, aggravated their situation. In addition, 3.4 million civilians continued to be affected by the conflict, according to OHCHR. The population near the contact line faced problems such as economic difficulties and access to transportation, clean water and health care. Rebel forces in Donetsk and Lugansk imposed new decrees for the forced military conscription of men. In addition, OHCHR echoed reports of threats in areas under rebel control against those who did not apply for Russian citizenship. During the year Ukraine also increased pressure against the main opposition party, Opposition Platform – For Life, an ally of the Kremlin in Ukraine that is considered a way for Russia to influence the political dynamics of Ukraine, and against its co-leader Viktor Medvedchuk, who is close to the Russian president. The steps taken included the closure in February of three television channels by presidential decree accused of pro-Russian disinformation and the seizure of Medvedchuk's family assets that month, sanctions against Medvedchuk in April and his house arrest in May on charges of high treason and looting resources in Crimea. The Russian president criticised his arrest as a purge that threatened to turn Ukraine into the antithesis of Russia and warned that Russia would respond.

South-east Europe

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

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83. See the summary on Ukraine in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

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 (Democratization Initiative in 2008, Oslo Dialogue in 2009-2011 and the Imrali process in 2013-2015). In 2015 the war was restarted. The armed conflict has caused around 40,000 fatalities since the 80s. The war in Syria 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 armed conflict between Turkey and the PKK remained active in southeastern Turkey and in northern Iraq, where the Turkish Army launched new military operations against the Kurdish armed group, while the political, judicial and police persecution of Kurdish political and social actors intensified. Between January and mid-December, 391 people died due to the conflict (79% members of the PKK), according to the International Crisis Group (ICG), which maintains a body count related to the PKK conflict in Turkey and Iraq (376 in 2020). ACLED counted 296 deaths within Turkey (545 in 2020). The Turkish Army carried out military operations during the year in southeastern Turkey, including areas in the provinces of Mardin, Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Bingöl, Ağrı, Hakkari, Tunceli and Sirnak. In September, Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu stated that for the first time the number of PKK members inside Turkey was less than 200, though this could not be independently verified. In its annual report on Turkey, the European Commission noted that the security situation in Turkey's border areas remained fragile, with "recurrent acts of terrorism" committed by the PKK.

As in 2020 and in recent years, one of the main theatres of the conflict between Turkey and the PKK was northern Iraq. ICG reported 254 deaths there related to the conflict (65% of the total). In February, Turkey launched the military air and ground Operation Claw-Eagle 2 against Gare mountain (Duhok province, northern Iraq).[84] Its objectives included the release of 13 hostages (mainly identified as military and police) in the hands of the PKK from 2015 to 2016 after the breakdown of the peace process. The operation resulted in the deaths of all 13. Turkey accused the PKK of executing the 13 hostages before they could be released and the PKK blamed Turkey's bombing of the PKK base for their deaths. In addition to the hostages, 48 PKK members and three Turkish soldiers were also killed, according to Turkey. Turkey's pro-Kurdish party HDP called on all parties to support an independent delegation to conduct an investigation and open access the area. In April and May, Turkey's ground and air military operations in northern Iraq (Operations Claw-Lightning and Claw-Thunderbolt) intensified again. The PKK admitted 18 fatalities of its own in both operations and Turkey admitted nine. In subsequent months, Turkey continued to carry out air attacks against the PKK in Kurdish areas of Iraq, including in the mountainous area of Asos (Suleimaniya governorate, bordering with Iran). In August, some analysts indicated that these attacks represented an expansion beyond the border areas, penetrating up to 200 kilometres into Iraqi territory. Also at the regional level, Turkey continued to associate the Syrian Kurdish YPG forces with the PKK, understanding them to be the same actor. In this context, Turkey and the YPG carried out attacks and made mutual accusations in a year in which alarms sounded between September and October about a possible large-scale operation by Turkey against Kurdish areas of Syria that ultimately did not take place.[85]

In the political and social sphere, the persecution against Kurdish political and social actors in Turkey continued and even worsened, with hundreds of arrests during the year. According to the annual report of the European Commission on Turkey, around 4,000 members and officials of the HDP party were in prison, including elected MPs. **The situation was aggravated by the beginning of judicial proceedings against the HDP, initiated with the filing of charges by the Public Prosecutor's Office against the third-largest political party in the country**, accusing it of undermining the unity of the state and the nation and asking for its dissolution. The charges were accepted for processing by the Constitutional Court. **Human rights NGOs continued to denounce serious violations. Turkey continued to refuse to implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning cases such as that of Kurdish opposition leader Selahattin Demirtaş. The ECtHR ruled for Demirtaş'** immediate release, considering his prolonged pre-trial detention to be politically motivated. As a whole, the conflict took place amid a worsening political and economic situation in Turkey, a demand for early elections by the opposition and continuous arrests of people for alleged links with ISIS.

84. See the summary on Iraq in this chapter.
85. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.

1.3.5. Oriente Medio

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:	1
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 taking place mainly in the Sinai between the Egyptian security forces and the armed group Islamic State (ISIS) presented similar or relatively lower levels of violence than the previous year, with periodic low-intensity incidents. Analysis of the conflict continued to be affected by the lack of access to journalists and independent investigators and by inaccurate information on the impact of some acts of violence. Nevertheless, informal counts based on available data point to more than 150 people killed in various incidents throughout the year. The ACLED research centre counted more than 220 deaths in Egypt in 2021 due to clashes and explosives. These figures are consistent with those observed the previous year based on informal counts (between 150 and 200 people died),

but lower if ACLED data are taken as a reference, which in 2020 identified more than 600 deaths. Despite the difficulties of specifying the toll, the data point to lower levels of violence than in previous years, in which much the numbers of fatalities were much higher.

Following the trend of previous years, the violence took the form of armed actions by ISIS against the security forces and military equipment, operations by the security forces against the armed group, remotely detonated explosive attacks, ambushes, sniper attacks, attacks on gas pipelines and attacks against the civilians, including killings and kidnappings. During 2021, violent incidents carried out by ISIS and pro-government tribal militias stood out. ISIS continued to spread images and videos of executions of tribal militiamen and civilians as a means of propaganda and terror. The acts of violence continued to be concentrated in towns such as Al Arish, Rafah (bordering Gaza), Sheikh Zuweid and Maghara (central Sinai). The Egyptian authorities announced the construction of a wall to protect the area of Sharm el Sheikh (southern Sinai) from the violence of the armed conflict, which takes place mainly in the north of the province. Moreover, Israel and Egypt agreed to strengthen the Egyptian military presence at the border crossing with the Gaza Strip, Rafah. This agreement between the parties is required due to the provisions of the 1979 peace treaty. During 2021, the government also reported the death of several senior ISIS officials in armed actions and claimed to have killed 89 suspected members of the armed group in a military operation in August. **The circulation of a video by the Egyptian Armed Forces recording the death of two unarmed men prompted complaints from human rights organisations, which warned of extrajudicial killings by the security forces on the grounds of "terrorism".** Human Rights Watch stated in a report that many alleged militants were killed without posing a threat to the security forces or when they were already in custody. It also warned that in 2021, the Egyptian Army continued to demolish hundreds of homes as part of its fight against ISIS, a practice that could constitute a war crime.[86]

During 2021, the government of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was the target of much criticism for the human rights situation in the country.[87] In this context, despite announcements that there would be no more "blank checks" for al-Sisi, **the new US government decided to suspend military aid to Egypt only partially. The US authorities transferred more than half the committed funds (170 million dollars) to Egypt to counter-terrorism, border control and non-proliferation activities.** The United States made the delivery of the other 130 million dollars conditional on the response to human rights requirements, but this prompted disappointment and criticism among human rights activists who considered this measure more symbolic than substantive. US

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86. Human Rights Watch, *Egypt: 'Shootouts' Disguise Apparent Extrajudicial Executions*, 7 September 2021; and "Egypt: Events of 2021", *HRW World Report 2022*, January 2022.
87. See the summary on Egypt in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

lawmakers have demanded clarification as to whether any of the weapons provided by Washington have been used in abuses by Egyptian security forces. Analysts claimed that the Egyptian government uses the jihadist threat to ensure military aid flows, stigmatise the political opposition and provide cover for its repressive practices, arguing that signs of abuse have not stopped cooperation by Western countries such as the United States.[88] **On 25 October, the Egyptian government announced the end of the state of emergency in force in the country since April 2017**, when an ISIS bomb attack against two Coptic churches killed 47 people. The state of emergency, renewed quarterly since then on the grounds that it was necessary to "combat terrorism", enabled the authorities to impose restrictions on rights such as freedom of assembly, conduct arrests and searches without warrants and censor the media, among other practices. The Egyptian president assured that the state of emergency was no longer necessary because the country had become an "oasis" of stability and security in the region thanks to its population and its "loyal men". Critics received the lifting of the state of emergency with scepticism and stressed that doing so alone did not change the repressive system in force in the country.[89] In the weeks that followed, human rights groups repeated their complaints against the Egyptian government after it took a series of steps that have allowed the repression of dissidents to intensify. In early October, the government also passed a decree transferring powers to the Ministry of Defence to administer Sinai province, allowing it to impose curfews and restrictions on movement and communications. At the end of the year, ISIS remained active and acts of violence persisted in Sinai.

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.

The armed conflict in Iraq presented high-intensity levels of violence and lethality similar to those observed the previous year and continued to be characterised by multiple dynamics of violence carried out by local and foreign armed actors. According to data from Iraq Body Count (IBC), 1,610 people killed by the conflict in 2021, of which 941 were combatants and 669 were civilians. In its figures, IBC underlined the very serious impact of hostilities on minors, highlighting that 70 minors lost their lives in 2021, accounting for 10.4% of all civilian victims, a much higher percentage than that reported in 2020 and 2019 (3.5 and 3.8%, respectively). Data from the ACLED research centre showed a higher death toll, identifying a total of 2,511 fatalities in 2021 due to clashes, explosive attacks and other acts of violence. This coincides with the death toll of the previous year (2,500) and is lower than that of previous years. According to OCHA data, by the end of the year 1.2 million people remained in a situation of internal displacement and 4.1 million required humanitarian assistance.

Violence in the country continued to be carried out by multiple actors. **The armed group Islamic State (ISIS) remained active throughout the year and carried out attacks mainly in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din**. ISIS clashed with Iraqi security forces and Kurdish forces (peshmergas) and launched attacks against community leaders and civilians accused of collaborating with the authorities. ISIS launched one of its bloodiest attacks in Baghdad in January, when a double suicide attack left 32 dead and wounded more than a hundred. It was the most serious attack in the Iraqi capital in years. A similar ISIS attack in July, on the eve of the Eid al Adha holiday, killed another 35 people in Baghdad. At the same time, attacks against US targets and those of the international coalition against ISIS led by the US continued, with periodic rocket fire on Baghdad and Erbil airports and other military air bases (such as Ayn al-Assad, in Anbar governorate). Nobody claimed responsibility for many of these attacks, but others were claimed by or attributed to pro-Iranian militias. In this regard, **Iraq continued to be a scene of indirect confrontation between Iran and**

88. Michael Wahid Hanna, *How the Counter-terrorism Imperative Has Warped U.S.-Egyptian Ties*, International Crisis Group, 13 September 2021.
89. Vivian Yee, "Egypt's Leader Ends State of Emergency, Says It's No Longer Needed", *The New York Times*, 25 October 2021.

the West, and particularly the United States, as has become especially evident since the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in a US operation in Baghdad in January 2020. Attacks against Iranian-backed militias were also reported in actions attributed to the US during 2021. In addition, throughout the year there were frequent reports of hostilities between Turkey and PKK forces deployed in northern Iraq, with various fatalities on both sides,[90] alongside more sporadic clashes between Kurdish actors, mainly the PKK and KRG. Protests also continued throughout the year, especially in the southern part of the country, and there were reports of murders and other attacks against activists, journalists and against candidates for the October elections. These elections were originally scheduled for 2022 but were moved up in response to the wave of protests that shook the country in 2019 as part of what is known as the "Tishreen movement". Human Rights Watch warned of the climate of impunity and the failure of the Iraqi authorities to prosecute those responsible for the abuses against protesters and critics of political elites and paramilitary groups, including arbitrary arrests, disappearances and extrajudicial killings. HRW stated that between late 2019 and 2020, 487 protesters died in Baghdad and cities in the south of the country and that by the end of 2021, the committee created in May 2020 by the Iraqi government to investigate these deaths had not yet presented its results.[91]

Beyond the climate of persistent violence in the country, **the situation in Iraq experienced growing tension in the last quarter due to the electoral process**. Validated by the UN and EU observers, the elections had a turnout of 36%, the lowest since the new political system was installed after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The low turnout was considered a reflection of Iraqi disaffection and voter apathy. Throughout the year, groups linked to the Tishreen movement had called for a boycott of the elections for various reasons, including because they thought that they lacked legitimacy and did not offer equal opportunities and also because of attacks against activists. The vote, which was conducted with a new electoral system, produced an unexpected result, giving victory to the movement of Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr, who in August retracted his decision to boycott the elections and went from having 58 to 73 seats. The main losing force in the elections was the Fatah Alliance, aligned with Iran, which dropped from 48 to 18 seats. The Fatah Alliance represents the interests of paramilitary groups created in 2014 to support the fight against ISIS. Despite the results, analysts highlighted that Fatah maintained coercive capital and the ability to influence the formation of the new government.[92] **After**

The Iraqi prime minister survived a drone attack amid growing tension over the electoral results

the elections, a group of Shia forces linked to the armed factions that suffered electoral setbacks, including the Fatah Alliance, questioned the results of the elections, denouncing fraud and staging protests in Baghdad's Green Zone for weeks that led to acts of violence. Faced with the deaths of two protesters in clashes with security forces in early November, the leader of one of these factions, the Asaib Ahl al-Haq group, issued threats against Prime Minister Mustafa al-Khadimi.

Days later, **al-Khadimi survived an assassination attempt (his home was attacked by drones) for which nobody claimed responsibility. The attack was widely blamed on Shia militias** and interpreted as a message not to run for re-election. The incident drummed up international support for the prime minister and prompted the head of Iran's al-Quds Brigades, Email Ga'ani (Soleimani's successor) to travel to Baghdad to condemn the attack and explain that it crossed Tehran's "red lines".[93] **The election results were interpreted as a sign of the Iraqi population's desire to curb and dominate the many armed groups that have proliferated in Iraq in recent years and engaged in extortion, intimidation and the killing of civilians.**[94] The cleric al-Sadr, considered a nationalist leader who is suspicious of the influence of both the US and Iran in the country, had been in favour of more control over the use of weapons and critical of the militias that he considers "undisciplined", including some formally affiliated with the Iraqi state (Popular Mobilisation Units, or PMUs). In November, he urged the militias to disband and submit to the control of the prime minister and the institutions. As a sign of goodwill, he announced the dissolution of the Promise Day Brigade, an armed group loyal to the cleric. Another armed organisation linked to al-Sadr, Saraya al-Salam (formerly known as the al-Mahdi Army) was already part of the Hashd al-Shaabi forces, an organisation formally controlled by the prime minister and created years ago to institutionalise control over paramilitary forces. At the end of the year, after rejecting allegations of fraud, the Iraqi electoral authorities ratified the results of the elections, although uncertainty remained on the formation of the government. With the support of other political forces, former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki appeared as one of the candidates with options to challenge al-Sadr's dominance. Finally, in 2021 the governments of Iraq and the US continued the "strategic dialogue" established during the previous year and agreed that US troops would end their combat mission in the country. Thus, **at the beginning of December it was announced that all US forces in Iraq (some 2,500 troops) would henceforth be limited to training and advisory roles**. However, diplomatic and

90. See the summary on Turkey (southeast) in this chapter.
91. Human Rights Watch, *Iraq: Impunity for Serious Abuses*, HRW, 13 January 2022.
92. Renad Mansour and Victoria Stewart Jolley, *Explaining Iraq's election results*, Chatham House, 22 October 2021.
93. Nussaibah Younis, *Iraq election: How a failed assassination attempt could break the political deadlock*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 10 November 2021.
94. Nussaibah Younis, *Iraq vote to restrain armed groups*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 15 October 2021.

security sources clarified that the announcement does not represent a significant change in the activities of US forces in the country, which in the last two years had played a very limited role in combat operations. Pro-Iranian paramilitary groups criticised the continuation of US troops in Iraq. In this context, attacks against US targets continued, including the embassy in Baghdad.

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International[95]
Main parties:	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

During 2021, the direct violence associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory increased, causing the bloodiest period in the last seven years. According to OCHA data, deaths amounted to 350 in 2021, of which 339 were Palestinians and 11 Israelis.[96] This figure is a significant increase over what was reported in the previous two years (35 in 2020, 147 in 2019), similar to that reported in 2018 (313) and the highest since 2014.[97] The vast majority of the 2021 victims were reported in May, after a series of incidents

in East Jerusalem led to an intense escalation of hostilities in Gaza, while demonstrations, clashes and acts of violence took place in the West Bank and cities with large Palestinian populations with Israeli citizenship. Despite the fragmentation imposed by the Israeli occupation, the demonstrations in different parts of historic Palestine were considered an unprecedented event, a sign of the erosion of the status quo and the weariness of the multiple forms of repression, dispossession and discrimination that the Palestinian population suffers. This development took place amid continuity in Israeli policy despite the change of government (in June Benjamin Netanyahu was replaced by a new multi-party government led by the ultra-nationalist Naftali Bennet), persistent political division among the Palestinian leadership and a lack of perspective on a peace process that has become irrelevant.[98]

During the first months of the year, the most significant sources of tension were centred in East Jerusalem and were related to attempts to expel Palestinian families from the emblematic neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, threats of demolition of more than one thousand Palestinian homes in the Silwan area, ultra-nationalist Jewish-Israeli demonstrations claiming Jerusalem as their capital and chants of "death to the Arabs" in the historic centre of the city and the repression of Palestinians by Israeli forces during Ramadan, including the use of violence in al-Aqsa Mosque. Faced with these events, which resulted in more than a thousand people being injured (the vast majority of them Palestinians), Hamas issued an ultimatum to Israel on 10 May, demanding the withdrawal of its forces from the Esplanade of the Mosques and from Sheikh Jarrah and the release of the Palestinians detained during the demonstrations. Hours later, the Palestinian group launched several rockets from the Gaza Strip to Jerusalem, giving way to an intense offensive by Israel. **In just 11 days, the Israeli attacks on Gaza (as part of Operation Guardian of the Walls) caused the death of 260 Palestinians**, of which half (129) were civilians, including 66 minors.[99] Another 2,200 people were injured in the Gaza Strip, including 685 minors and 480 women, and around 113,000 people were forcibly internally displaced due to the violence. On many occasions, Israel did not issue evacuation alerts for civilians and its attacks destroyed many pieces of infrastructure (health centres, residential buildings, shops, schools, media outlets and the precarious electrical

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95. Despite the fact that "Palestine" (whose Palestinian National Authority is a political entity linked to a specific population and territory) is not an internationally recognised state, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is considered "international" and not "internal" because it is an illegally occupied territory with Israel's alleged claim to the territory not being recognised by international law or by any United Nations resolution.

96. OCHA OPT, *Data on casualties*, 1 January 2022.

97. In 2014, mainly as a result of a bloody Israeli offensive on Gaza, a total of 2,329 Palestinians were killed, while another 88 Israelis were killed in violence in the same period.

98. See the analysis on Palestine and Israel-Palestine in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks In Focus, 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios,* Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

99. OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,* A/76/433, 22 October 2021.

network) and affected medical personnel, including a high-ranking official responsible for the response to COVID-19 in Gaza who died along with 12 other members of his family.[100] In the same period, Hamas fired more than 4,000 rockets into Israel, killing 12 people, including two minors.

At the same time, protests in the West Bank over the Israeli offensive in Gaza were repressed with live fire by Israeli forces and led to some clashes that in May alone resulted in 34 Palestinian deaths, the highest figure in a month in a decade,[101] and wounded more than 1,700 people. The events in Jerusalem, al-Aqsa and Gaza also led to many demonstrations by Palestinians with Israeli citizenship in cities such as Lod/al-Lid, Tel Aviv/Jaffa, Haifa and others, as well as acts of violence unprecedented in their extent, which resulted in the deaths of two Jewish Israelis and two Palestinians in addition to dozens of people injured. The incidents included a violent crackdown on Palestinian protests, attacks by Jewish-Israeli ultranationalists on the Palestinian population, mosques and Muslim cemeteries due to the inaction of the Israeli police and Palestinian attacks on Jewish-Israelis and arson attacks on synagogues and police cars. Observers noted that Israeli-Jewish violence was significantly less prosecuted: 92% of the 2,142 people arrested for these incidents were Palestinian and 90% of the 170 people charged were Palestinian.[102] In this context, an unprecedented strike took place on 18 May, which was interpreted as a sign of unity against Israeli colonial policies. In the following months, the fragile ceasefire in Gaza was maintained but various acts of tension and violence continued to occur, both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Throughout the year, many incidents were associated with the policy of expansion of illegal settlements and de facto annexation of occupied Palestinian territories promoted by the Israeli authorities, which announced new expansion plans that include thousands of homes throughout 2021. United Nations Experts and human rights NGOs also **warned of the increase in violence by Israeli settlers in 2021, at the highest level in recent years, and denounced the complicity of the Israeli authorities** for their policy of supporting settlements and their inaction in the face of many abuses, which in some cases have the collusion and support of the Israeli security forces.

In just 11 days, Israeli attacks on Gaza caused the deaths of 260 Palestinians, wounded another 2,200 and displaced more than 100,000

In the first 10 months of the year alone, 410 attacks by settlers against the Palestinian population were reported, including assaults, intimidation, shootings, vandalism against property, destruction of trees and crops and other practices, especially in rural areas near settlements, compared to 358 attacks in 2020 and 335 in 2019. A quarter of the attacks in 2021 affected people and resulted in the deaths of four Palestinians. Most of these settler attacks go unpunished (according to the Israeli human rights organisation Yesh Din, 91% of investigations between 2005 and 2019 were closed by Israeli authorities without charges against any settlers) and given the lack of prospects for obtaining justice, many Palestinians decide not to report them.[103]

Additionally, throughout 2021, Israel maintained its policy of restricting movement, intensified due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many repercussions for the Palestinian population. These consequences included blocking access to health care, especially for sick Gazans awaiting exit permits for treatment outside the Gaza Strip. During the year, **the Israeli authorities were also accused of institutionalised discrimination in their coronavirus response policies**, especially regarding the vaccination of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories.[105] **Israel also intensified the persecution and criminalisation of Palestinian civil society organisations**. In October, the Israeli government issued a military order to designate six Palestinian NGOs prominent in their human rights work as terrorists (Adameer, al-Haq, Defense for Children in Palestine, Union Agricultural Work Committees, Bisan Center for Research and Development and the Union of Palestinian Women Committees), outlawing them, authorising the closure of their offices and the arrest of their workers and prohibiting financing and public support for their activities. This decision was widely criticized internationally by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which said that it was encouraged by the international community's failure to confront the many human rights abuses committed by Israel.[105] During 2021, after years of deliberations, the **International Criminal Court ratified its jurisdiction to investigate war crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territories. In March, the prosecution announced the start of an investigation of events that occurred as of June 2014.**

100. International Crisis Group and USMEP, *Beyond Business as Usual in Israel-Palestine*, Middle East Report no.225, 10 August 2021.
101. Al-Jazeera, "Israeli forces open fire on Palestinians; hundreds wounded", *Al-Jazeera*, 9 July 2021.
102. ICG y USMEP, op. cit.
103. OHCHR, *UN experts alarmed by rise in settler violence in occupied Palestinian territory*, 10 November 2021.
104. Amnesty International, *Denying COVID-19 vaccines to Palestinians exposes Israel's institutionalized discrimination*, 6 January 2021; Human Rights Watch, *Israel's Discriminatory Vaccine Push Underscores Need for Action*, 19 March 2021. For more information, see the observatory *Conflictos, paz y COVID-19* ("Conflicts, peace and COVID-19") by Escola de Cultura de Pau.
105. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, *Israel/Palestine: Designation of Palestinian Rights Groups as Terrorists. Attack on the Human Rights Movement*, 22 October 2021.

Syria	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, System, Sef-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
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 and the Arab Israeli conflict, internally the regime has been characterised by 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.

A decade after it started, the armed conflict in Syria continued to be characterised by dynamics of violence that involved many local, regional and international armed actors, clashes and attacks that affected different areas of the country, high death tolls and other serious consequences for the civilian population. As in previous years, difficulties persisted in making a detailed assessment of the impact of the hostilities in the country. Despite the divergent thresholds offered by different sources, in general terms the data collected confirmed the armed conflict's great deadliness, though with significantly less fatalities than reported in previous years. According to the monitoring carried out by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), in 2021 at least 3,882 people died due to the hostilities, of which 1,558 were civilians, including 383 minors and 193 women.[106] The periodic reports of the UN Secretary-General confirmed the death of 764 civilians in incidents that occurred throughout Syria between December 2020 and November 2021, including 205

minors and 86 women, in addition to thousands of injured people.[107] Following the trend of previous years, ACLED's body count was higher and pointed to a total of 5,737 fatalities due to the Syrian conflict in 2021. The trend points to a drop in deadliness considering the very serious counts of the last five years: between 7,000 and 8,000 people in 2020, 15,000 in 2019, 30,000 in 2018, 10,000 in 2017 and 17,000 in 2016. The SOHR highlighted that the death toll in 2021 was the lowest since the outbreak of the revolt against Assad in 2011.

Throughout the year, the UN continued to document deliberate and indiscriminate attacks against civilian targets and denounced that the parties to the conflict continued to systematically commit abuses and human rights violations, including but not limited to killings, arbitrary detentions, torture and mistreatment, kidnappings and violations of freedom of movement, demonstration and expression. Women and girls continued to face many forms of gender-based violence, including forced marriage. Likewise, very serious violations against minors were documented in the context of the armed conflict, including deaths and injuries (mostly (72%) in the northwestern zone), the extensive and systematic recruitment and use of boys— and, to a lesser extent, of girls—by dozens of armed actors, kidnappings, sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals.[108] The UN Secretary-General stressed that the crimes in Syria cannot continue with impunity and insisted on his call to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that it had completed a registry of 350,209 individuals killed in the Syrian conflict between March 2011 and March 2021, which is considered the minimum verifiable number and below the real death toll.

In 2021, various battlefronts continued to be active with clashes of varying intensity involving various armed actors. On the **north-eastern front**, the hostilities mainly pitted the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), led by the Kurdish YPG/YPJ militias, against Turkey and groups close to Ankara, as well as against Assad regime forces. The violence in this area affected towns such as Qamishli, Hassakeh, Ras al-Ayn and Ain Issa and included Turkish air attacks. In Manjib there were also tension and violence between the Kurdish security forces and the Arab population due to a compulsory conscription edict that was finally reversed by the Kurdish authorities after more than a dozen people were killed. In the **northwest**, the truce agreed in March 2020 by Russia and Turkey around Idlib was formally upheld, but in a context marked by periodic incidents that included clashes, exchanges of artillery fire and continuous Russian air strikes in the southern area of

106. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, *Lowest yearly death toll ever. 3,882 people killed across Syria in 2021*, SOHR, 31 December 2021.

107. United Nations, *Report of the Secretary General on implementation of council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020) and 2585 (2021)*, bimonthly reports from January to December 2021.

108. UNSC, *Report of the Secretary General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic*, S/2021/398, 23 April 2021. (The report studies the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020).

Idlib and in the governorates of Hama and Latakia. In August, UN representatives warned of an escalation in the bombing, the most significant since the ceasefire agreement. Armed groups such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) continued to be active in this area, maintaining their campaign against rival groups such as Hurras al-Din (linked to al-Qaeda), Jundallah, Jabal al-Turkman and Junud al-Sham. US air strikes against positions of groups linked to al-Qaeda were also recounted. Violence involving Turkish and Kurdish forces was also reported in Afrin, Azaz and Tel Rifaat (north of Aleppo). An attack on a hospital in Afrin in June caused serious damage and the deaths of 18 people. Tensions in this area intensified in the last quarter, fuelling speculation of a new large-scale offensive by Ankara against the YPG/YPJ and a possible significant military confrontation between Turkish forces on the one hand and Syrian and Russian forces on the other.[109] The **central area** of Syria, in addition to the eastern area, was where the armed group Islamic State concentrated its activities, especially in Deir-er Zor, Hassakah and the rural area of Homs, with offensives and clashes with pro-government troops and groups, Iranian-backed militias and SDF fighters. Throughout the year, Russian airstrikes were reported against suspected ISIS positions. Information about the periodic incidents in this region indicated dozens and dozens of deaths.

In the **southwest**, there were many clashes between government forces and former opposition combatants, especially in towns in the governorate of Deraa, in addition to the murders of former dissident militiamen involved in "reconciliation" agreements with the regime. The violence in the southwest intensified after the presidential election in May that catapulted Bashar Assad to a fourth term with 95% of the vote, though the election was described as fraudulent by various actors in the international community. In the middle of the year, government forces launched artillery attacks and a ground offensive against besieged neighbourhoods. Armed clashes multiplied throughout the governorate, killing many civilians and forcibly displacing thousands of people. The violence did not subside until September, following a Russian-brokered deal calling for the insurgents to surrender, although killings, regime attacks and explosive detonations continued through the end of the year. Moscow had already mediated in this area at the beginning of the year and intervened in ceasefire agreements between other armed actors in Syria throughout 2021, such as between the Syrian government and the SDF in the northeast, for example. In October, Damascus was the scene of the deadliest attack since 2017, when a bus carrying military personnel was hit by an explosion that killed 15 soldiers. Throughout 2021, Israeli attacks continued against Iranian and Hezbollah targets and infrastructure

in Syria (causing an undetermined number of fatalities, including civilians), in addition to some US offensives. The al-Hawl camp that houses refugees and families of suspected Islamic State fighters (almost 60,000 people, 94% of them women and minors) continued to receive attention in 2021. The situation continued to deteriorate and many acts of violence were reported, including 86 murders between January and November

The Syrian population faced severe challenges due to the direct and indirect consequences of the armed conflict, the severe economic crisis, the impact of COVID-19 and other factors that affected the humanitarian situation. The conflict continued to have serious repercussions in terms of forced displacement, which after a decade of conflict has affected more than 60% of the Syrian population. At the end of 2021, a total of 6.7 million people were internally displaced, while another 6.6 million had been forced to leave the country (the vast majority of which, 5.6 million, remained refugees in countries close to Syria). The Syrian government and some armed groups continued to impose obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid and international assistance continued to face logistical and operational difficulties due to the reduction to a single border access since 2020. At the end of the year, the total population in need of assistance rose to 13.4 million people, 21% more than the previous year. The indicators of food insecurity worsened in 2021 due to the sharp increase in the prices of basic products (food costs were 128% higher in October than the previous year) and the price of fuel also skyrocketed. It is estimated that 90% of the Syrian population lived in poverty and that 12.4 million people faced food insecurity (almost 60% of the population) after a decade of armed conflict and serious deterioration of the economy. Millions of people, especially in northern and northeastern Syria, were also affected by the lack of regular access to drinking water and an increase in diseases associated with this insufficiency. The UN also warned of the infection rates for the COVID-19 pandemic, much higher than those recognised in official reports, and as of the second half of 2021 identified a significant increase in the number of infections and mortality rates. At the end of the year, less than 3% of the population in Syria had received the full set of vaccines against the coronavirus. On the 10th anniversary of the revolution, parts of the Syrian opposition raised their demands and demonstrated against the regime, with protests in cities such as Idlib and Deraa. Meanwhile, the negotiations sponsored by the UN were bumpy and showed no progress in 2021.[110] Meanwhile, attempts to rehabilitate the Syrian regime on the international scene continued. For example, the UAE called to readmit Damascus to the Arab League in March.

After a decade of conflict and mired in a serious economic and humanitarian crisis, it is estimated that 90% of the Syrian population lived in poverty and 60% faced food insecurity

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109. Security Council Report, *Syria: November 2021 Monthly Forecast,* 29 October 2021.
110. For further information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

The Gulf

Yemen[111]	
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), AQAP, ISIS, 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 in 2014 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. Additionally, Yemen has been the scene of al-Qaeda activities since the 1990s, especially since the merger of the Saudi and Yemeni branches that gave rise to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2009. As of 2014, the group has taken advantage of the climate of instability in the country to advance its objectives and its militiamen have been involved in clashes with the Houthis, with government forces, with UAE troops and with tribal militias. Since al-Qaeda's attack on the USS Cole in 2000, the US has been involved in periodic attacks against the group. The conflict in Yemen has also favoured ISIS activity in the country.

Yemen continued to be the scene of one of the most serious armed conflicts in the world. Hostilities continued to affect the entire country, with no progress made on a nationwide ceasefire agreement. The armed conflict caused more than 22,000 deaths in 2021 (22,154 according to figures from the ACLED research centre). This figure is similar to those reported in the previous two years: 20,000 in 2020 and 23,000 in 2019. The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, an initiative that investigates the impacts of violence on the Yemeni civilian population for the United Nations, documented 2,508 civilian victims in 2021, mainly due to air strikes, artillery fire and small arms. Of this total, at least 769 people lost their lives, including 131 minors and 56 women.[112] The data revealed a significant rise in civilian casualties in the last quarter of the year. The violence continued to force massive population displacements, especially internally and in many cases repeatedly. In Ma'arib alone, one of the areas most affected by the fighting in 2021, between January and November over 65,000 people (or around 10,000 families) had been forced to flee their homes.[113] The armed conflict threatened to lead to total economic collapse and continued to aggravate the dramatic humanitarian situation in the country. According to OCHA data, at the end of 2021 more than 20 million Yemenis required humanitarian aid, half of them urgently. The UN reiterated its complaints about the situation of minors during the year. In a report published in August on events that occurred in 2019 and 2020, the UN identified 8,526 serious violations against children committed by various armed actors in the conflict, most of them related to the denial of access to humanitarian aid, forced recruitment or acts of violence that resulted in the death or injury of minors. The total number of minors who died between 2019 and 2020 (mainly due to mortar and artillery attacks, battles with light weapons and remnants of explosives) amounts to 2,612, broken down into 1,889 boys and 723 girls.[114]

The **hostilities** continued between Houthis and government troops supported by an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia other anti-Houthi forces, including southern separatists and tribal forces, in fighting waged on multiple fronts. One of the hotspots of the year was Ma'arib, especially starting from February, when the Houthis intensified their offensive to try to capture the area, the last bastion of the government of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi in the north of the country, where major oil wells are located. The hostilities around Ma'arib fluctuated in intensity and intensified in October, after the Houthis consolidated their control over the adjacent al-Bayda region. Other foci of the dispute were al-Dhala, Taiz, Hajja, Shebwa, Lahj, al-Bayda and Al Hudaydah. In this last location, the surprise withdrawal of forces allied to Saudi Arabia and the Hadi government (the

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111. In previous editions of the report *Alert!*, the armed conflict led by the Houthis and the AQAP were addressed separately. This year they are analyzed jointly due to the convergence in the dynamics of conflict.

112. Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP), "Civilian impact incidents and civilian casualties per hub per month" and CIMP Quarterly reports - 2021 (1 February 2022).

113. OCHA Yemen, "Aid agencies ramp up aid efforts in Ma'rib as tensions persist", Humanitarian Update no.11, November 2021.

114. UN Report of the Secretary General, *Children and armed conflict in Yemen*, S/2021/761, 27 August 2021.

Joint Resistance Forces) allowed the Houthis to swiftly overrun the abandoned positions. The UN mission that monitors compliance with the agreement on Al Hudaydah (UNMHA), one of the components of the 2018 Stockholm Agreement, assured that it had not been informed of the withdrawal, which modified the correlation of forces on the ground. In the following weeks there were new clashes, the worst on the Red Sea coast since 2018, including Saudi airstrikes in support of their allied forces in Al Hudaydah and also in other areas such as Sana'a, Saada and Ma'arib. Throughout the year, the Houthis launched cross-border attacks into Saudi territory. **Attempts to promote a ceasefire throughout Yemen remained at an impasse in 2021**, despite efforts by the UN and Oman and a greater diplomatic initiative displayed by the US. After the Trump administration declared the Houthis a terrorist group in early 2021, the new Biden administration reversed the decision, temporarily suspended military cooperation with Riyadh (specifically with regard to the "offensive operations" of the Saudi-led coalition) and appointed a special envoy for Yemen. However, at the end of the year, after many meetings with local and regional actors with interests in the conflict, the gulf between Hadi's Saudi-backed government and the Houthis remained. The Houthis repeated their demand to open the port of Al Hudaydah and the Sana'a airport and the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country as preconditions for dialogue.

Meanwhile, **in 2021 a second front remained active in the country, between the Hadi government and the southern separatist forces of the Southern Transitional Council** (STC), despite the Riyadh Agreement signed between the parties in 2019 and the formation of a unity government in late 2020. Throughout the year, tensions between these sectors were evident, with mutual accusations of unilateral appointments to government or security posts, the STC's harsh criticism of Hadi and his entourage, a growing concentration of troops and heavy vehicles by both sides in the Abyan region and regular demonstrations in southern Yemen over the price hikes, electricity blackouts and problems in distributing water, aid and medical services. Despite Riyadh's mediation attempts, the protests intensified from September onwards, leading to clashes with the security forces that resulted in several fatalities. There were also other acts of violence, including car bomb attacks. Moreover, **the armed group al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remained active during 2021**, although its activities were overshadowed by the rest of the dynamics of violence and conflict in the country. According to reports, during the year AQAP forces clashed with the Security Belt Forces and other groups close to the UAE and Saudi Arabia in the Shebwah and Abyan regions

and with the Houthis in al-Bayda.[115] Some analysts stressed the decline of the group, as the frequency of its operations may less than 10% of what it was at its height in 2017), though it has not disappeared.[116] AQAP remained ensconced in the central and eastern part of the country and according to UN estimates may have around 7,000 combatants. Meanwhile, the ISIS affiliate has been significantly weakened in recent years due to its clashes with the Houthis and AQAP and may only have a few hundred militiamen.[117]

In this context, at the end of the year **the new UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, warned of the alarming drift in the country, the result of the military escalation and the continuous violence and the risk that the armed conflict could turn become even more fragmented** and bloodier. One of the main concerns was Ma'arib, due to the increase in hostilities and the possibility that the fighting in the city would lead to an urban war with even more serious consequences for civilians. Likewise, they warned of the growing number of prisoners held by the parties to the conflict, due to the severe economic consequences of the crisis and the drastic rollback of women's rights due to the conflict.[118] Finally, and along the same lines, the **UN Human Rights Council's Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen published its fourth report in September, highlighting the wide range of abuses perpetrated by the various actors involved in the conflict**: attacks that violate the most basic principles of international humanitarian law, obstacles to access to food and health products, arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, sexual violence, torture, persecution of journalists and human rights defenders and other practices. The Group also deplored that despite the complaints and appeals made in recent years, third countries, among which it mentions Canada, France, Iran and the United Kingdom, continued to supply weapons and provide military support to the parties to the conflict, thereby contributing to the cycle of violence and the suffering of the Yemeni population. Given the evidence, the Group called on the UN Security Council to refer the Yemeni case to the International Criminal Court to ensure that there will be no impunity for the most serious abuses. However, the mandate of the Group, which began its investigative work in 2017, was not renewed in October, in a decision that was considered a severe setback for the victims of the armed conflict and for the prospects for accountability, as well as a reflection of the lack of political will to address the situation in Yemen.[119] According to reports, Saudi Arabia, expressly singled out in recent years for its responsibility for the civilian victims of the Yemeni conflict, deployed a combination of threats and incentives to block the Group's work.[120]

115. UN Security Council, *Twenty-eighth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2021/655, 21 July 2021.
116. Elizabeth Kendall, *Where is AQAP Now?*, Sanaa Centre, 21 October 2021.
117. Kali Robinson, *Yemen's Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and Suffering*. Council on Foreign Relations, 2 September 2021.
118. OSESGY, *Briefing to United Nations Security Council by the Special Envoy for Yemen*, 14 December 2021.
119. OHCHR, *Statement by Group of Experts on Yemen on HRC rejection of resolution to renew their mandate*, 8 October 2021.
120. Stephanie Kirchgaessner, *"Saudis used 'incentives and threats' to shut down UN investigation in Yemen"*, The Guardian, 1 December 2021.

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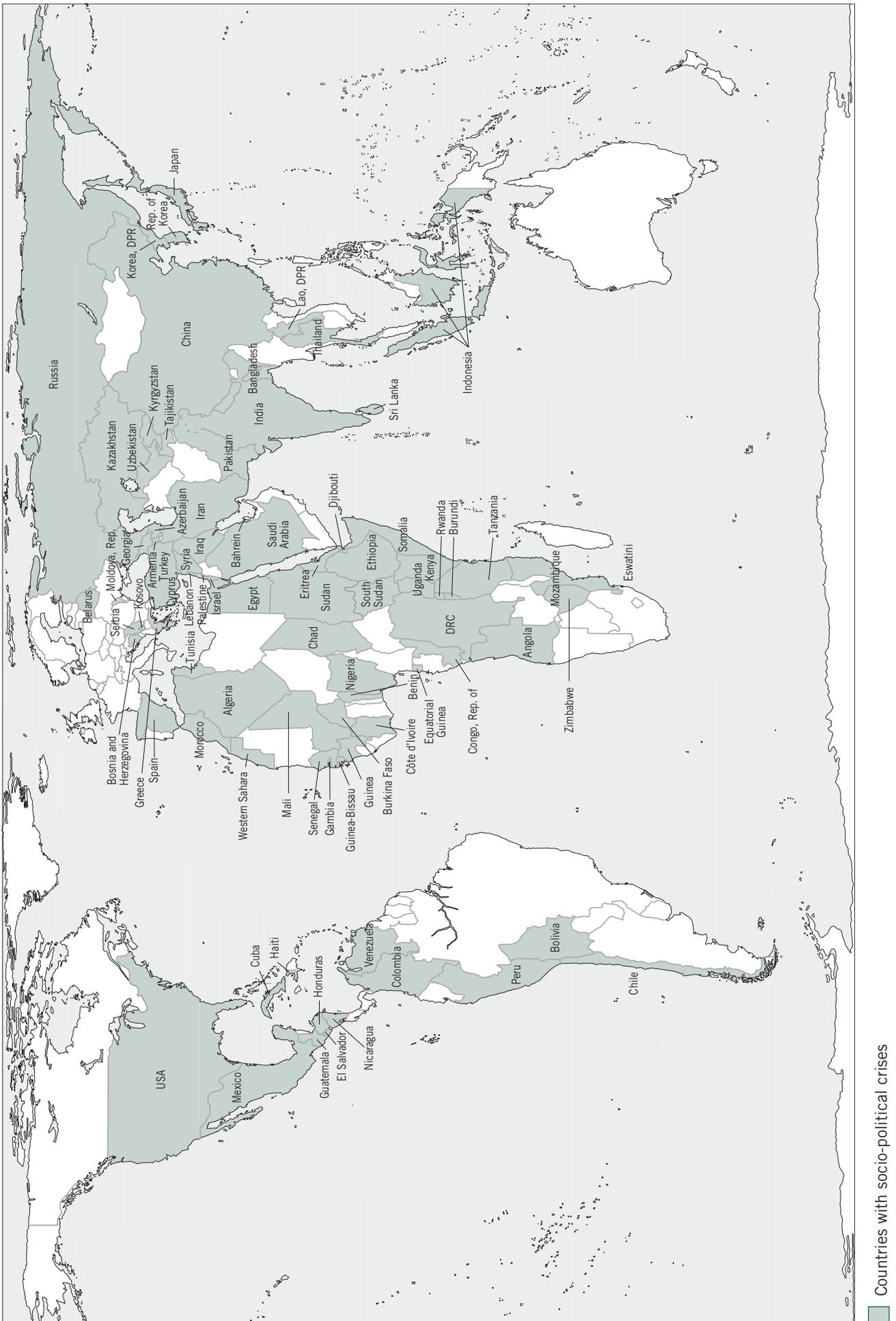
Countries with socio-political crises

2. Socio-political crises

- During 2021, 98 socio-political crises were recorded globally. The cases were concentrated mainly in Africa (40) and Asia (24), while the rest of the tensions were located in America (12), the Middle East (11) and Europe (11).
- In 2021 there were four coup d'états in sub-Saharan Africa that overthrew governments in Mali, Guinea, Sudan and Chad, making it the year with the highest number of successful coups in the region since 1999.
- The situation in Chad deteriorated after the death of President Idriss Déby and a coup by a military junta supplanting the current government.
- Mali suffered its second coup d'état in less than nine months, which had a mixed reception inside and outside the country.
- Military operations against criminal groups in the state of Zamfara, in northwestern Nigeria, led to the expansion of their activities to the states of Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Sokoto due to pressure from the security forces.
- The tension around Western Sahara intensified, causing around 30 deaths, while the historic conflict between Morocco and Algeria worsened.
- In Colombia, dozens of people died in the anti-government protests that began in April.
- In Haiti, tension increased after the president was assassinated and armed gangs operating in the country increased their activity.
- In Thailand there were major demonstrations for more democratisation in the country and reform of the monarchy.
- Although tension remained, there was indirect rapprochement between India and Pakistan, which committed to stricter compliance with the ceasefire agreement.
- The situation around Nagorno-Karabakh remained fragile, with frequent violations of the 2020 ceasefire that ended the six-week war.
- The tension around the Iranian nuclear programme was marked by obstacles and deadlock in the negotiations, various security incidents and Tehran's growing breaches of the provisions of the 2015 deal.

The present chapter analyses the socio-political crises that occurred in 2021. 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 2021. 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 2021.

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 2021**

Conflict[1] -beginning-	Type[2]	Main parties	Intensity[3] / Trend[4]
AFRICA			
Algeria[5]	Internal	Government, military, social and political opposition, Hirak movement, armed groups AQIM (former GSPC), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS)	2
	Government, System		=
Benin	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
Burkina Faso	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, army sectors	2
	Government		↑
Central Africa (LRA)	International	Ugandan, CAR, Congolese, Sudanese and South Sudanese Armed Forces, self-defence militias of the countries of the region	1
	Resources		=
Chad	Internal	Government, armed groups (UFR, UFDD), political and social opposition, communitary militias	3
	Government, Identity, Resources, Territory		↑
Côte d'Ivoire	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government, Identity, Resources		=
Djibouti	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed group FRUD-armé	2
	Government		↑
DRC	Internal	Government led by the Union Sacrée coalition (led by Félix Tshisekedi and made up of different political actors, including dissidents of former President Joseph Kabila's Front Commun pour le Congo coalition), political opposition (such as Front Commun pour le Congo and Lamuka) and social groups and armed groups from the eastern part of the country.	2
	Government		↑
DRC – Rwanda	International	Governments of DRC, Rwanda, armed groups FDLR and M23 (former CNDP)	1
	Identity, Government, Resources		=
DRC – Uganda	International	Governments of DRC and Rwanda, ADF, M23 (former CNDP), LRA, armed groups operating in Ituri	1
	Identity, Government, Resources, Territory		=
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	1
	Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Eritrea – Ethiopia	International	Eritrea, Ethiopia	1
	Territory		↓

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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 2021 with 2020, using the ↑ symbol to indicate that the general situation during 2021 is more serious than in the previous one, the ↓ symbol to indicate an improvement in the situation and the = symbol to indicate that no significant changes have taken place.
5. This tension includes the activities of jihadist groups (particularly AQIM), which in previous editions were analyzed separately.

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
Eswatini	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Ethiopia	Internal	Government, 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		↑
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	International	Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan	2
	Resources		↑
Ethiopia – Sudan	International	Government of Ethiopia, Government of Sudan, community militias	2
	Resources		↑
Gambia	Internal	Government, factions of the Armed Forces, political opposition	1
	Government		↑
Guinea	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, political parties in the opposition, trade unions	3
	Government		↑
Guinea-Bissau	Internalised internal	Transitional government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties, international drug trafficking networks	2
	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		↑
Mali	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
Morocco – Western Sahara	International[6]	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front	3
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↑
Mozambique	Internal	Government, RENAMO	1
	Government, System		↓
Niger	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Nigeria	Internal	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, farmers and livestock raisers, community militias, criminal gangs, IMN	3
	Identity, Resources, Government		↑
Nigeria (Biafra)	Internationalised internal	Government, IPOB, MASSOB, armed group ESN	3
	Identity, Self-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	1
	Identity, Resources		=
Rwanda	Internationalised internal	Government, Rwandan armed group FDLR, political opposition, dissident factions of the governing party (RPF), Rwandan diaspora in other African countries and in the West	2
	Government, Identity		=
Rwanda - Burundi	International	Rwanda, Burundi, armed groups	2
	Government		↓

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

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
Rwanda - Uganda	International	Rwanda, 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		↑
Sudan – South Sudan	International	Sudan, South Sudan	1
	Resources, Identity		=
Tanzania	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↓
Tunisia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including the Uqba bin Nafi Battalion and the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades (branch of AQIM), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS	2
	Government, System		↑
Uganda	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Zimbabwe	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
AMERICA			
Bolivia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↓
Chile	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↓
Colombia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
Cuba	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government, System		↑
El Salvador	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, gangs	1
	Government		↓
Guatemala	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, gangs	1
	Government		↓
Haiti	Internalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, BINUH, gangs	3
	Government		↑
Honduras	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, gangs	1
	Government		↓
Mexico	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, cartels, armed opposition groups	3
	Government, Resources		=
Nicaragua	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
AMERICA			
Peru	Internal	Government, armed opposition (Militarised Communist Party of Peru), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)	2
	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)	1
	Government		↑
China (Xinjiang)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition	1
	Self-government, Identity, System		=
China (Tibet)	Internationalised internal	Chinese government, Dalai Lama and Tibetan government-in-exile, political and social opposition in Tibet and in neighbouring provinces and countries	1
	Self-government, Identity, System		=
China (Hong Kong)	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	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	1
	System, Government		↓
India (Assam)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(IKS), KPLT, NSLA, UPLA and KPLT	1
	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 – China	International	India, China	3
	Territory		↓
India – Pakistan	International	India, Pakistan	3
	Identity, Territory		↓
Indonesia (Sulawesi)	Internal	Government, armed group MIT	1
	System, Identity		=
Indonesia (West Papua)	Internal	Government, armed group OPM, political and social opposition, indigenous Papuan groups, Freeport mining company	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
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	2
	System		=
Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea[7]	International	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia	2
	Government		=

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

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
ASIA			
Kyrgyzstan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	2
	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		=
Tajikistan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, former warlords, regional armed groups, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan	2
	Government, System, Resources, Territory		↑
Thailand	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
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, Russia, Turkey	3
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Belarus	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, EU, Poland, US, Russia	2
	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	2
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
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)	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[8]	Serbia, Kosovo, political and social representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo, UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX	1
	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		↑
Turkey – Greece, Cyprus	International	Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, EU, Egypt, Italy, United Arab Emirates, France, Libya Government of National Accord	2
	Territory, Resources, Self-government, Identity		↓

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8. 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.

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity / Trend
MIDDLE EAST			
Bahrain	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government, Identity		=
Egypt	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		=
Iran	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		=
Iran (northwest)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group PJAK and PDKI, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Iran (Sistan and Balochistan)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups Jundullah (Soldiers of God / People's Resistance Movement), Harakat Ansar Iran and Jaish al-Adl, Pakistan	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Iran – USA, Israel[9]	International	Iran, USA, Israel	3
	System, Government		=
Iraq (Kurdistan)	Internationalised internal	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran, PKK	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources, Territory		=
Israel – Syria – Lebanon	International	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah (party and militia)	3
	System, Resources, Territory		=
Lebanon	Internationalised internal	Government, Hezbollah (party and militia), political and social opposition, armed groups ISIS and Jabhat al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Saraya Ahl al-Sham	2
	Government, System		↑
Palestine	Internal	PNA, Fatah, armed group al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Hamas and its armed wing Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Salafist groups	1
	Government		=
Saudi Arabia	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including AQAP and branches of ISIS (Hijaz Province, Najd Province)	1
	Government, Identity		=

1: low intensity; 2: medium intensity; 3: high intensity.
↑: escalation of tension; ↓: decrease of tension; =: no changes.

2.2. Socio-political crises: 2021 trend analysis

This section examines the general trends observed in areas experiencing socio-political crises throughout 2021, at both the global and regional levels.

2.2.1. Global trends

During 2021, 98 socio-political crises were identified around the world, three more than in 2020, confirming the upward trend in the number of socio-political crises that has been recorded in recent years. Compared to 2018, 15 more cases were analysed in 2021. **Africa was once again the region with the greatest number of socio-political crises (40), followed**

During 2021, 98 socio-political crises were recorded, 40 in Africa, 24 in Asia, 12 in America and 11 in Europe and the Middle East

by Asia (24), the Americas (12) and Europe and the Middle East (11 each). As in 2020, although the cases only saw a slight increase (one in 2020 and three in 2021), there was a significant variation in the cases considered socio-political crises. While seven new cases were identified in 2020 (and six cases stopped being considered as such), nine new cases were analysed in 2021 and another six stopped being classified as socio-political crises. Six of these nine cases were concentrated in Africa: Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia-Sudan, Niger and Nigeria (Biafra). This last case is especially noteworthy, where the significant increase in tension and violence between

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

Graph 2.1. **Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2021**
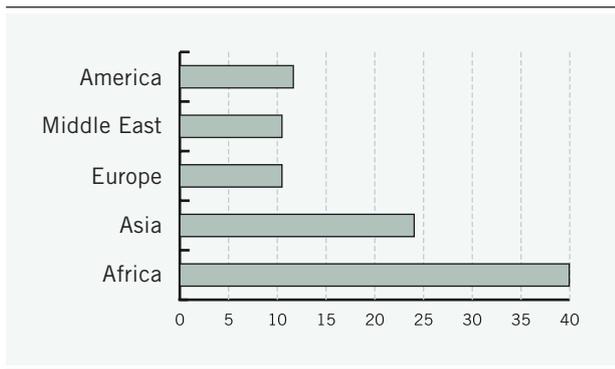
the Nigerian Government and the ESN, the new armed wing of the outlawed independence movement IPOB, caused the deaths of dozens of people and serious human rights violations. In Latin America, the cases of Cuba and Colombia were included due to the notable increase in protests in both countries, with dozens of fatalities in Colombia. Finally, the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh was also classified as a socio-political crisis, which was considered an armed conflict in 2020 but whose intensity during 2021 fell ostensibly compared to the escalation of violence experienced the previous year. There were six cases that were no longer considered socio-political crises due to the significant drop in the levels of violence or demonstrations (Madagascar, Malawi, Togo, Sri Lanka) or due to methodological considerations (Algeria (AQIM) and Iraq).[10]

Half the socio-political crises were of **low intensity**, 31% were of **medium intensity** and 19% were of **high intensity**. Compared to the previous year, the number of low-intensity cases fell slightly (from 57% to 50%), while medium-intensity cases rose from 26% to 31%. **In 2021, three more high-intensity cases were identified than in 2020, for a total of 19**: Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), Sudan, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela, India-China, India -Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon. More than half of the most serious socio-political crises were concentrated in Africa. In addition to the ongoing intercommunity clashes in various parts of **Chad**, the actions of the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region and the rebel offensive of the Front for Change and Concord in Chad in the centre and northern part of the country, there was a coup d'état after the death of the historic President Idriss Déby (in office since 1990) and his son took power. In **Guinea**, the coup d'état orchestrated by Colonel Mamay Doumbouya against the Government headed by Alpha Condé was unanimously condemned by the international community, provoking sanctions, while also unleashing

significant political repression in the country. In **Mali**, the deterioration of the security situation, the crisis in the transitional government and the resignation of the prime minister in mid-May opened the door to a second coup d'état (after a previous one in August 2020) by Colonel Assimi Goïta, which also led to sanctions and increased tension with countries such as France, which temporarily suspended its joint military operations with the Malian Armed Forces. In **Nigeria**, in addition to the violence in regions such as Biafra and the Niger Delta, the intercommunity violence in the centre of the country and the armed actions of Boko Haram in the northern part of the country and Lake Chad, there was a substantial increase in military operations against criminal groups in the northwest, causing the deaths of thousands of people. Clashes also broke out in the Nigerian state of **Biafra** between security forces and the newly created Eastern Security Network (ESN), the military wing of one of Biafra's main independence movements, the IPOB, which continued sporadically throughout the year. In addition, human rights violations and a crackdown on protests and social demonstrations increased, especially after the leader of the IPOB was arrested abroad and extradited to Nigeria.

Ethiopia experienced a serious deterioration of the situation due to recurrent outbreaks of intercommunity violence in different parts of the country caused by the armed activity of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in the **Oromia** region and the consequences for the country as a whole of the war between armed groups from the Tigray region and the federal government, such as a rise in violence by self-defence groups and militias against civilians of the Tigray and Amhara communities. The Oromia region was also the scene of an escalation of social demonstrations for and against the government, in which there were clashes between the protesters and excessive use of force by the security forces that caused dozens of deaths. Meanwhile, there was intercommunity violence and insurgent activity by the OLA against Ethiopia's federal forces and against civilians from other ethnic groups in the region, as well as the counterinsurgent actions of the security forces, which may have claimed hundreds of lives. In **Kenya**, amid growing political polarisation between the supporters of President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga, attacks by al-Shabaab in the east and northeast of the country and intercommunity violence in central Kenya led to the deaths of hundreds of people. In Sudan, the coup d'état in October, preceded by another failed attempt a month earlier, provoked criticism and sanctions from the international community and triggered social protests throughout the country that were harshly repressed by the new authorities. The dispute between **Morocco and Western Sahara** was exacerbated by ongoing armed clashes between the POLISARIO Front and the Moroccan Armed Forces, especially along the barrier that separates Moroccan-controlled

10. As of this edition of the report *Alert!,* the activities of jihadist groups (particularly AQIM) are included in the socio-political crisis called "Algeria". As for Iraq, some of the dynamics that until this edition were analysed in the chapter on Socio-political crises are included in the case of Iraq in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Saharawi territory from land under the administration of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), as well as the rupture of diplomatic relations by Algeria, which accused Rabat of supporting groups that push for self-determination for Kabylia and of carrying out air and drone attacks in the border area.

The political, institutional and social crisis that **Haiti** has been experiencing for years was exacerbated both by the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in the middle of the year and by the unprecedented increase in criminal gang activity. In **Colombia**, several dozen people died and thousands were injured, disappeared or detained as part of the anti-government protests that took place during much of the year. Organisations like the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights criticised the country for what they considered an excessive and disproportionate use of force by the police in containing the protests. In **Mexico**, which continued to be one of the countries in the world with the highest number of intentional homicides (more than 34,000), several drug cartels consolidated their position while political violence and the murder of members of certain groups like journalists and human rights advocates increased in 2021. **Venezuela** not only saw high levels of violence (the country reported the second-highest homicide rate in Latin America) and received many complaints about human rights violations at home and abroad, but the political polarisation between the ruling party and the opposition persisted, as did the precarious economic and humanitarian situation (according to UNHCR, Venezuela ranks second in the world in terms of the amount of people who have been forced to leave their homes).

In the dispute between **India and China**, there were several direct armed clashes in the Sikkim region, as well as military exercises and the deployment of additional troops on the shared border and mutual accusations of non-compliance with the agreements reached to de-escalate tension and reduce militarisation in the border region of the disputed areas. In the historical rivalry between **India and Pakistan**, the number of incidents along the Line of Control dropped substantially after both countries reaffirmed their commitment to the ceasefire agreement they had signed in 2003 earlier in the year, but both sides continued to trade blame about Pakistan's responsibility for the violence still raging in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and India's arrests of Kashmiri activists. In the conflict between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, which experienced a significant military escalation in 2020, there were many violations of the November 2020 ceasefire agreement in 2021, with armed incidents both around the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and on the line of separation between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. The humanitarian situation was also very fragile, with tens of

In 2021, the more serious tensions were Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), Sudan, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela, India-China, India-Pakistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon

thousands of people still displaced and very precarious conditions for their return. Despite the resumption of diplomatic channels in the crisis between **Iran and the US and Israel**, several security incidents were reported between the aforementioned countries, such as naval attacks, acts of sabotage and acts of violence in Iraq and Syria, while concern about the Iranian nuclear programme increased after the International Atomic Energy Agency denounced Tehran's breaches in atomic matters. Regarding the tension between **Israel and Syria and Lebanon**, Israeli attacks on Syrian soil against targets linked to Iran and Hezbollah continued in 2021 and tensions simmered in the area supervised by the United Nations (UNIFIL) on the border between Lebanon and Israel, with an exchange of missiles during the year.

Regarding the **trend** of the socio-political crises, **38% worsened during the year, 42% showed no significant change compared to 2020 and 20% improved somewhat**. Therefore, the number of cases in which conditions worsened in 2021 was practically double the number in which they improved. The areas with the greatest number of escalated socio-political crises were Africa (50%) and Asia (42%). **The crises whose dynamics of conflict escalated in 2021** were found in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Ethiopia-Sudan, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Niger, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, Bangladesh, India (Assam), India (Manipur), India (Nagaland), Indonesia (West Papua), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia-Kosovo, Turkey and Lebanon. The cases that worsened in 2021 to the point of being considered high intensity tensions were Guinea, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), Haiti and Colombia.

72% of the socio-political crises were linked to opposition to internal or international policies of certain governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State as a whole; 41% to demands for self-government and/or identity; and 31% to disputes for control of territories and/or resources. More specifically opposition to internal or international **government** policies was a **causal factor** in 64% of the 98 socio-political crises, although in some regions this factor was present in a higher proportion, such as in Latin America (100%) and Africa (73%). In contrast, in Asia the importance of the opposition to the government (38%) was much lower than the world average. Opposition to the political, social or ideological **system** of the state as a whole was found in 22% of the cases. In Asia, however, this factor was important in half the cases identified, while in Africa it was reduced to 10%. **Identity-related aspirations** were present in 38% of the socio-political crises analysed in this publication and were especially

relevant in Europe (82%) and, to a lesser extent, in Asia and the Middle East (46 % in each region). **Demands for self-determination and self-government** were a determining factor in almost one quarter of the crises worldwide. In Europe, however, such a factor was present in 73% of the cases, while it was not a fundamental cause in any of the cases in Latin America. **Control of resources** was a relevant factor in 22% of the cases, while **control of territory** was an important cause of 14%, although in Asia this percentage was more than double (29%) and in Latin America it did not play an important role in any of the cases.

In line with the trend observed in recent years, approximately half the socio-political crises around the world were **internal in nature (51%)**, a figure similar to that of 2020 (53%). However, this percentage was much higher in regions such as Latin America (100%) and Africa (58%) and much lower in Europe (18%). Only one fifth of the socio-political crises (22%) were international, but some were among the highest in the world, such as India – China, India-Pakistan, Armenia -Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon. Finally, more than one quarter of the socio-political crises were **internationalised internal** (27%), but with significant variations between regions (55% of the cases were of this type in Asia, while none were reported in Latin America).

2.2.2. Regional trends

As in recent years, **Africa** was the region with the highest number of socio-political crises (40), making for a percentage (41%) slightly higher than in 2020. In 2021, six new crises were considered (Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia-Sudan, Burkina Faso, Nigeria (Biafra) and Niger) and four other cases ceased to be classified as socio-political crises (Algeria (AQIM), Madagascar, Malawi and Togo), so in 2021 the total number of crises on the continent increased in two cases compared to the previous year. In addition, over half the high-intensity crises in the world were concentrated in Africa (10 out of 19 cases), a figure similar to that of the previous year but clearly higher than the 35% that it represented in 2019. The high-intensity crises in Africa were in Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra) and Sudan. In 2020, all these crises were already considered to be of high intensity except for Guinea, Sudan and Nigeria (Biafra). Moreover, 50% of the crises in Africa escalated during 2021, representing 54% of the total cases that worsened last year, while the situation only improved to some extent in six cases: Eritrea-Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Rwanda-

Opposition to internal or international government policies was a causal factor in 64% of the 98 socio-political crises

Over half the high-intensity crises in the world were concentrated in Africa (Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco – Western Sahara, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra) and Sudan), as were more than half the cases that escalated in 2021

Graph 2.2. **Intensity of the socio-political crises by region**
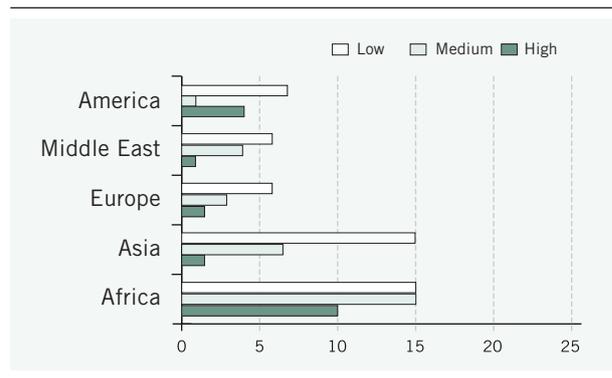
Burundi, Rwanda-Uganda and Tanzania. The cases that escalated in 2021 were Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Ethiopia-Sudan, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Niger, Nigeria, Nigeria (Biafra), the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, Tunisia and Uganda. Although tension between Eritrea and Ethiopia eased in 2021, there were four other socio-political crises in which Ethiopia was involved: Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan and Ethiopia-Sudan. It should be noted that 2021 was a year of setbacks in terms of democratic governance in Africa, as it suffered four effective military coups in Chad (April), Mali (May), Guinea (September) and Sudan (October), in addition to another attempt that failed in Niger in March. Not since 1999 have there been as many coups in a single year on the continent. The reasons behind the outbreak of the phenomenon are complex and multi-causal, but two factors have recently been observed that the military used as justification: the deterioration of the security situation and political instability.

Almost 60% of the crises in Africa were internal, a figure that has remained at similar levels in recent years. Except for the Latin American region, where all the cases were of an internal nature, Africa was the region with the highest proportion of this type of crisis. A quarter of the crises in Africa were international (Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Ethiopia-Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC-Rwanda, the DRC-Uganda, Rwanda-Burundi, Rwanda-Uganda and Sudan-South Sudan), but they accounted for almost half of all international socio-political crises worldwide. Most of the international socio-political crises were located in the Great Lakes and Central Africa regions, with a prominent role played by countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Sudan. The remaining 17% of the crises were internationalised internal ones, the lowest percentage in the world if we exclude Latin America (a region in which no such crisis was reported). Opposition to the government was a causal factor in

almost three quarters of the cases in Africa, making it the region in the world with the second-highest prevalence of this type of crisis. Opposition to the system was also a root cause of four other crises (Mozambique, Kenya, Tunisia and Algeria). Identity issues were a deciding factor in 30% of the crises in Africa, the second-most frequent on the continent after opposition to the government. In proportions similar to identity, control or access to resources were major factors in 28% of the cases. Demands for self-government or self-determination were important in six cases, while control of territory was important in three others. Finally, several countries were involved in various different crises, such as Ethiopia (five cases), Sudan and Rwanda (four cases) and the DRC, Nigeria and Uganda (three cases).

All the socio-political crises in Latin America were internal and linked to opposition to government policies

Twelve socio-political crises were reported in the **Americas**, accounting for 12% of the total. Compared to 2020, the significant increase in protests in Colombia and Cuba led to the inclusion of these two new cases. One third of the cases were of high intensity (Colombia, Haiti, Mexico and Venezuela), the highest percentage in the world. However, most of the crises (58%) were of low intensity and there was only one medium-intensity crisis. Regarding the overall trend, 50% of the crises fell in intensity. Particularly noteworthy is the significant reduction in homicides in Central America, in protests in Chile and in political and social conflict in Bolivia and Venezuela. One quarter of the cases analysed in Latin America did not witness significant changes compared to the previous year and another quarter experienced an increase in tension (Colombia, Cuba and Haiti). All the crises in the region were internal, which contrasts with the average percentage worldwide (53%). Regarding the causal factors, all the crises in the region were linked to opposition to government policies, two were motivated by access or control of resources (Mexico and Peru) and one was caused by opposition to the system (Cuba). Other factors such as demands linked to self-government, identity issues and control of territory were much less important than in other regions of the world.

Asia was the region of the world with a higher percentage of tensions linked to opposition to the political, social, economic and ideological system of the State

Twenty-four socio-political crises were counted in **Asia**, one fourth of the total and one less than last year. Sri Lanka ceased to be considered a crisis due to the sustained reduction in the levels of conflict in recent years. Eight of the crises were in South Asia (Bangladesh, India, India (Assam), India (Manipur), India (Nagaland), India-China, India-Pakistan and Pakistan), another eight were in East Asia (China (Xinjiang), China (Tibet), China (Hong Kong), China-Japan, China-Taiwan, North Korea-USA, Japan, South Korea and South China Sea), four were in Southeast Asia (Indonesia (Sulawesi), Indonesia (West Papua)) and another four were in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). As in previous years, there were some countries that were involved in

several socio-political crises, such as China (seven), India (six), Indonesia (three) and Japan, North Korea and South Korea (two each).

Most socio-political crises (63%) were of low intensity, 29% were of medium intensity and the remaining 8% were of high intensity (India-China and India-Pakistan). Despite having the highest proportion of low intensity crises in the world, a significant proportion of the crises in Asia (42%) escalated in 2021 compared to the previous year: Bangladesh, India (Assam), India (Manipur), India (Nagaland), Indonesia (West Papua), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Tensions rose in several cases in India and in the four Central Asian countries analysed in this chapter. However, 42% of the crises did not undergo significant changes compared to the previous year and 16% improved to a certain extent. One third of the crises were internationalised internal, 38% were internal and 29% were international, making Asia the region with the highest percentage of international crises. Most of them are located 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. As mentioned above, the other two international crises involved disputes between India and China and India and Pakistan.

Opposition to the government was an underlying cause of 38% of the cases, making Asia the region of the world with the lowest incidence of this factor by far. In contrast, opposition to the system or the state was an important cause of 50% of the crises, clearly making Asia the region with the highest number of disputes (12) linked to this issue: China (Xinjiang), China (Tibet), China (Hong Kong), North Korea -South Korea, India, Indonesia (Sulawesi), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The importance of this factor in China and Central Asia is noteworthy. Asia was also the region in which crises linked to identity (11) was the most prominent across the world: in China, the regions of Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong; in India, the states of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland, as well as the historical dispute itself between India and Pakistan; in Indonesia, the Sulawesi and West Papua regions; and also the cases of Kyrgyzstan and Laos. Demands for self-determination or self-governance were a cause of 29% of the crises in Asia. Finally, control of resources was a factor in 25% of the crises and control of territory in 29% of them.

Eleven crises were observed in **Europe**, one more than the previous year due to the inclusion of Armenia -Azerbaijan

(Nagorno-Karabakh), a case that was considered an armed conflict in 2020 due to the restart of the war in September and a previous escalation of hostilities in July on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border that resulted in the deaths of around 5,000 people and forcibly displaced tens of thousands more (mostly Armenian). Indeed, the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan was the only high-intensity crisis in the region (in 2020, no other crisis of this type was reported), while six were of low intensity and another four were of medium intensity. In four crises there was a certain improvement in the situation, in another four there were no relevant changes compared to 2020 and in three the situation deteriorated (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia-Kosovo and Turkey). Europe was the region with the highest percentage of internationalised internal crises (55%), while 18% of its crises were internal and 27% were international (Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Turkey-Greece, Cyprus and Serbia -Kosovo). Identity issues were a casual factor in 82% of the crises, more than double the world average. The nine crises in which this factor was important were Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey-Greece, Cyprus, Spain (Catalonia), Georgia (Abkhazia), Georgia (South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria), Russia (North Caucasus) and Serbia – Kosovo. The second-most common factor in the region's crises were demands related to self-government and self-determination, present in 73% of all crises. This percentage was also the highest in the world, almost three times higher than the global average. Opposition to the government was found in 55% of the crises, while opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of the state was behind 18% of the crises, figures similar to those of the previous year. Finally, control of resources was an important factor in one case (Turkey-Greece, Cyprus), while control of territory was significant in two: Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Turkey-Greece, Cyprus.

Finally, 11 socio-political crises were identified in the **Middle East**, one less than the previous year. Although the region had the highest percentage of high-intensity crises in 2020 (one third of the total), in 2021 they accounted for 18% (Iran-USA, Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon). Most of the crises (55%) were of low intensity, while 27% were of medium intensity. Practically none of them underwent any important changes compared to 2020, but in Lebanon the situation deteriorated due to tensions and disagreements between Prime Minister Saad Hariri and President Michel Aoun on the formation of the government, armed clashes that took place during the Amal and Hezbollah protests in Beirut in which several people died and dozens were injured and the protests (and clashes between demonstrators and police) that took place during the year in several cities across the country due to the serious worsening of the economic situation and the lack of supplies. Of the 11 cases that were reported in the Middle East, four were internal crises, five were

Over 80% of the crises in Europe were linked to identity issues and demands for self-government or self-determination were important in nearly three out of every four crises

internationalised internal and two were international. The two international crises (Iran – USA, Israel and Israel – Syria – Lebanon) were the ones with the greatest intensity in the region. The most common cause of the crises in the region was opposition to the government (64%), followed by identity issues (46%), demands for self-determination and self-government and opposition to the state system (27% in both cases) and control of resources and territory (18% in both cases). Iran was directly or indirectly linked to six socio-political crises in the region, while the United States was involved in two.

2.3. Socio-political crises: annual evolution

2.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Chad	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, Resources, Territory, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Transitional Military Council, political and social opposition (such as the Wakit Tama coalition, which includes the Les Transformateurs party, among others), Chadian armed groups (such as FACT, CCMSR, UFR and others), Nigerian armed group Boko Haram, community militias, private 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, which worsened ahead of the 2021 elections with the repression of social demonstrations and persecution of the political opposition. 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 situation in Chad deteriorated considerably as a result of the death of President Idriss Déby and the seizure of state institutions by a military junta led by his son, supplanting the current government, which led to a coup d'état. The coup took place in a seriously unstable atmosphere linked to the rebel offensive by the armed group Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) in the centre and north of the country, which took place on the same day that the presidential election was held (11 April), amid repression and political persecution of the opposition.[11] This situation of instability had worsened during 2020 due to the political exploitation of the exceptional situation involving restrictions to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of repressing the political opposition. Moreover, intercommunity clashes continued in various parts of the country and the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH) remained active in the Lake Chad region.[12]

The situation in Chad deteriorated as a result of the death of President Idriss Déby and the seizure of power by a military junta supplanting the current government, which involved a coup

On 19 April, the president of Chad died, allegedly from injuries in combat against the FACT rebels in the town of Mao, in the north of the country, as announced by the Chadian Army the following day. A military junta suspended the Constitution, imposed a curfew, created the Transitional Military Council (CMT), made up of 14 generals, and appointed General Mahamat Idriss Déby, son of the deceased president, as the new president of the CMT for the next 18 months.[13] Mahamat "Kaka" had held the powerful position of commander-in-chief of the presidential guard (the general directorate of security services or DGSSIE, the elite body of the Chadian Armed Forces). On 21 April, the CMT published a Transitional Letter that established that the Government and Parliament would continue to function until a national transitional council and a transitional government were formed. On 26 April, the CMT appointed the presidential candidate for the 11 April election, Albert Pahimi Padacké, as the new interim prime minister, and on 2 May, the CMT appointed a transitional government made

up of 40 members and chaired by Pahimi Padacké. Most actors in the international community called for a return to constitutional order but did not condemn the coup. For instance, on 22 April the AU urged the military junta to restore political power to civilian authorities. The same day, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves le Brian, whose country has been a traditional ally of Idriss Déby's Chad, recognised the CMT on the grounds of exceptional security concerns. Many states, led by France, as well as the AU and the UN, mourned Déby's death and described him as one of the pillars in the construction of the architecture of peace and security on the continent and especially in the Sahel, as well as a key ally in efforts to fight terrorism. Déby had come to power in 1990 at the head of an armed rebellion that overthrew the previous president, Hissène Habré.

Déby's death coincided with the publication of the provisional results of the 11 April election, in which Idriss Déby was re-elected for a sixth term, after winning with 79.32% of the votes. This election had taken place in the midst of a climate of repression and political persecution against the opposition, activists and human rights defenders. It had been boycotted by several opponents, including the historic leader Saleh Kebzabo, due to the atmosphere of insecurity against their campaign events and demonstrations calling for a peaceful and democratic transition. Succès Masra, the leader of the emerging opposition party Les Transformateurs, whose candidacy had been rejected by the Supreme Court, had asked to postpone the election to facilitate the necessary political dialogue. Thus, many civil society actors, including various opposition parties, unions and youth groups, had launched the "Wakit Tama" ("Now Is the Time") campaign against Déby's sixth term. The home of opposition candidate Yaya Dillo Djerou, a former rebel leader and nephew of Idriss Déby, had been attacked in February by security forces. Of the same ethnicity as the president (the Zaghawa community, 4% of the population, which controls an army that is not very cohesive and affected by community tensions, such as the ethnic balance of the Chadian Army and problems of indiscipline and lack of professionalism, as the International Crisis Group[14] reported in January), he had criticised and accused the president's wife, Hinda Déby Itno, and her entourage, of corruption and embezzlement.

In the weeks that followed, many in the international community called for dialogue, such as the AU Peace and Security Council, which called for a civilian-led transition not to last more than 18 months on 14 May, in addition to holding an inclusive national dialogue.

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11. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.
12. See the summary on Lake Chad (Boko Haram) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
13. See Royo, Josep Maria, Golpe de Estado en Chad, *Africaye*, 22 April 2021.
14. International Crisis Group, *Les défis de l'Armée Tchadiene*, ICG, 22 January 2021.

On 4 June, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) adopted the Brazzaville Declaration, urging Chadian actors to promote dialogue and reconciliation and the CMT to organise the elections within 18 months. Although at first there was a wave of repression and persecution against the political and social opposition, demonstrations and actions against the coup d'état and the CMT, with many arrests and injuries in the protests, the transitional authorities later opened the political space in a limited way. Moreover, different political and social figures in the country made calls to promote an inclusive dialogue and the transitional authorities expressed their willingness to carry it out. In the months that followed, the transitional authorities took steps to hold a national dialogue, and the Organising Committee for the Inclusive National Dialogue (CODNI) was established in July. However, the disagreements regarding the members of the CODNI, the inclusiveness of the national dialogue, the interference of the CMT, the participation of the different insurgencies and the agenda of topics of the dialogue, among other issues, was delayed, after being scheduled for 2022. In August, the president of the CMT, Mahamat Déby, called on the different armed groups (FACT, UFR, CCMSR) to join the dialogue process. In November he announced a general amnesty for the armed and political opposition to facilitate their participation in the national dialogue, which led to various civil and armed opposition figures announcing their willingness to participate in the national dialogue in December. Several key actors agreed to participate in the process and meetings took place between representatives of the Chadian insurgency and the Chadian Government in Egypt and France. On 30 December, transitional President Mahamat Déby promulgated amnesty laws covering more than 300 opponents and rebels.

DRC	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Governance Internal
Main parties:	Government led by the Union Sacrée coalition (led by Félix Tshisekedi and made up of different political actors, including dissidents from former president Joseph Kabila's Front Commun pour le Congo coalition), political and social opposition (among others, Front Commun pour le Congo and Lamuka)

Summary:
The DRC is immersed in a cycle of instability and violence that has its origins in colonial times under the tutelage first of Belgian King Leopold II and later of Belgium. The country did not escape the international dynamics of the Cold War, so the crisis persisted after its independence in 1965, following the coup d'état and subsequent dictatorship of

Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-1997). It was also affected by the regional dynamics of conflict in neighbouring countries during the 1980s and 1990s, especially the 1994 Rwandan genocide and its interference in the DRC. The 1996 Rwandan-backed rebellion against the Mobutu regime led to the fall of the regime in 1997, followed by the "First African World War" (1998-2003) in which a dozen countries in the region participated. The transition between 2003 and 2006 helped to secure Joseph Kabila in power, who through control of the state apparatus, fraud and irregularities in the 2006 and 2011 elections, managed to prolong his 2016 term (when a new election was to be held) to 2018. The deep and persistent crisis affecting the country combines frustrated promises of democratisation, a high climate of corruption and patronage, omnipresent poverty and chronic violence. Control of the government is exercised through the recurrent excessive use of force and serious violations of human rights by the security forces. In 2018, new elections were held that marked the first peaceful transition in the country and led to the controversial rise to power of Félix Tshisekedi, son of the historical opposition Étienne Tshisekedi, through a fragile coalition in which the supporters of Joseph Kabila (the FCC coalition) continued to exert their determining influence. This climate of political instability coexists with the ongoing conflict in eastern DRC, affected by local, regional and international dynamics. The coalition collapsed at the end of 2020, opening a new stage of change while political instability and violence continued in the east of the country.

The DRC continued to be affected by a climate of violence and political instability stemming from tensions within the new government coalition and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this was added persistent instability and violence as a result of the actions of the many armed groups in the eastern part of the country, as well as the counter-insurgency operations by the security forces, a situation aggravated by the establishment of the state of siege in the eastern provinces.[15] The coalition government led by Félix Tshisekedi that emerged from the controversial 2018 elections had been affected by many tensions and obstacles that led to it breaking at the end of 2020. This led to the formation of a new government coalition joined by Kabila's former allies between the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, as the Constitutional Court allowed MPs to leave their old political groups and join new alliances without the risk of being expelled from their original parties and consequently losing their seats. In this way, Tshisekedi convinced many MPs from Kabila's coalition, the FCC, to join the new majority, the Sacred Union (Union Sacrée), along with opposition heavyweights Moïse Katumbi and Jean-Pierre Bemba. Tshisekedi secured a series of additional political victories over Kabila in early 2021, shifting the balance of power in his favour.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, the MPs of the new government majority replaced the presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate, as well as Prime Minister Ilunga and his government, by successive motions. On 15 February, after negotiations between different factions of the Union, Tshisekedi appointed

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15. See the summary on DRC (east) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde as the new prime minister. Originally from Grand Katanga and former CEO of the country's largest mining company, Gécamines, Lukonde belonged to a small political party without a single seat in the National Assembly, called Avenir du Congo. Lukonde had no real political influence or ambitions for the 2023 elections, making him an ally during the last two years of Tshisekedi's presidency, according to analysts. After two months of wrangling over ministerial posts within the new majority, the 57-member government was barely made smaller than its predecessor. However, 80% of its ministers were new, unlike the previous government, where some ministers had already served under the Governments of Laurent and Joseph Kabila, and even during Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorship. Tshisekedi tried to control the various forces within his new coalition. The difficult negotiations to form the government of the Sacred Union revealed the precariousness of a majority that came together to displace Kabila but lacked a shared political agenda, according to analysts. Cracks began to appear in the coalition almost as soon as the government was proclaimed on 12 April. Nearly 200 of the MPs who had defected from Kabila's FCC formed a "coalition of revolutionary MPs" to protest the imbalance in the new government. Some provinces had several ministries, while others had none. This coalition accused Lukonde of failing to reward its "change of allegiance" with a government post and threatened to block the investiture of the Lukonde government. On 26 April, after the prime minister and Tshisekedi met with MPs, the National Assembly expressed confidence in the new government and approved its programme. Despite the changes and limited progress in the political sphere with regard to improving governance and respect for human rights, violence and insecurity persisted in the east, which at times was aggravated by social protests in the east demanding improvement in the security situation and an end to the state of emergency. These were harshly repressed by the security forces, causing various fatalities during the year.

In addition, the fragility of the Sacred Union coalition and the accusations levelled against Tshisekedi for trying to cling to power were evidenced by the preparations for the 2023 elections, through the law approved on 3 July that establishes the organisation and operation of the independent electoral commission (CENI), with two-thirds of its members coming from political parties, like its predecessor. The opposition and religious leaders had called for depoliticising the CENI by composing it of members of civil society and electoral experts. The appointment of Tshisekedi's ally, electoral expert Denis Kadima, as head of the CENI in August was rejected by the opposition led by Lamuka and various parties in the ruling coalition, as well as religious organisations, especially the Catholic Church, and other parts of civil society. Nevertheless, the CENI was formed in October with Kadima at its head. The decision was boycotted by the opposition, which refused to send its delegates, and in November various demonstrations were organised by the opposition and religious leaders to reject his

appointment and demand the neutrality of the CENI. Some activists at these protests were arrested. The introduction of the controversial nationality law in July, which prohibited the right to vote for any citizen with a non-Congolese parent, was rejected both locally and internationally. The Archbishop of Kinshasa denounced it as an instrument of exclusion and division and the head of the UN mission in the country warned the UN Security Council of the potentially dangerous consequences of a divisive debate around nationality. The leader of the Together for the Republic party, Moïse Katumbi, a member of the ruling coalition, whose father is of Greek origin, denounced an attempt to exclude him as a candidate. Moreover, the Court of Cassation ordered the release of Vital Kamerhe from prison for medical reasons, who had been sentenced for corruption and embezzlement under the Tshisekedi government. His party, the UNC, had described his imprisonment as a politically motivated ploy to remove him from power. His release could also be politically motivated with the aim of preparing alliances for the 2023 national elections, according to analysts.

Sudan	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Governance 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 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 and the opening of a transitional process.

The year was marked by a new national political crisis due to the increase in social tensions, as well as strain between the civil and military parts of the Transitional Government, which led to a new coup d'état, triggering popular demonstrations throughout the country that were harshly repressed. During the year, the country continued to face a major economic crisis that was exacerbated by the increase in the prices of basic

products due to the application of structural adjustment policies recommended by the International Monetary Fund, all of which led to major protests in various parts of the country. On 10 May, the IMF announced a financing plan for the country to settle its debt with the organisation, which included the adoption of different measures as a counterpart, including the end of fuel subsidies, which caused a sharp hike in prices. This sparked protests and demonstrations against the Government in Khartoum in June, demanding the president's resignation. Alongside the social crisis, there was also an increase in political tension in June between the civil and military components of the Transitional Government, due to the refusal of the military part of the government and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to integrate the latter into the National Army, as stipulated in the reform of the security sector provided for in the October 2020 peace agreement. The government crisis led to **a failed coup attempt on 21 September, which served as a prelude to a new military coup on 25 October, which overthrew the civilian part of the government**. The failed coup in September had caused the civilian part of the government to stress the need to reform the military and security apparatus, while the military part, headed by the president of the Sovereign Council, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and his deputy, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as "Hemedti"), commander of the paramilitary forces of the RSF, accused the civilian part of trying to create conditions to destabilise the country, which was followed by the new coup d'état in October. On 25 October, al-Burhan declared a state of emergency, dissolved the Sovereign Council and the Transitional Government and arrested the prime minister, several other ministers, civil servants and political leaders. He also dissolved the Transitional Legislative Council, which had not yet been formed, fired state governors and established a Transitional Military Council. The coup was criticised by the international community, which pressed for a return to constitutional order. On 27 October, the AU cancelled Sudan's membership in the organisation, while the World Bank suspended its aid to the country. Domestically, the coup triggered many demonstrations and protests in various parts of the country that were put down by the security forces.

During the weeks that followed, talks began between the military junta, the ousted civilian part of the government and other political actors to seek a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis. On 11 November, Al-Burhan announced the formation of a reconstituted Sovereign Council in which he would hold the presidency and Hamdan Dagalo would be the vice president. In addition, the same representatives of the military and the rebel coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) remained on the dissolved Council, although the civilian members were replaced. As a result of the coup, there was significant fragmentation in the civilian component of the Transitional Government, the Forces for Freedom and

The military part of the Transitional Government of Sudan carried out a new coup d'état

Change (FFC) coalition. Internal and external pressures led to the announcement of a political agreement in the country on 21 November, which **restored the civilian Prime Minister Hamdok, although it consolidated military control over the government**. Although the international community welcomed the move, it prompted resistance domestically. Several Sudanese political parties, armed organisations and civil society groups, including the FFC, condemned the attempt to legitimise the coup and demanded that the coup plotters leave the government, so 12 FFC ministers resigned. The agreement also gave rise to a significant popular protest against it in various parts of the country, as well as a civil disobedience campaign that was harshly repressed by the security forces until the end of the year. Amid a growing climate of popular discontent, reinstated Prime Minister Hamdok replaced most acting deputy ministers and all serving military-appointed state governors since the coup in a bid to reform a government of his own. However, tensions with the military part of the government continued, increasing rumours at the end of the year about Hamdok's possible resignation.

Finally, no significant progress was made in the talks between Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt on the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, in part due to the rising tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia that led to armed clashes between their armies along the shared border. At the beginning of the year, the Sudanese government officially repealed the boycott law against Israel, paving the way for the normalisation of relations between the two countries. This took place as part of the agreement that the country had reached in January with Washington, which included a US loan to settle arrears in the payments of Sudanese debt with the World Bank.

Horn of Africa

Etiopía	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Governance 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 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. However, the changes introduced by the government of Abiy Ahmed caused tension in the federation, especially between the federal government and the TPLF, which culminated in the outbreak of an armed conflict between the Ethiopian security forces and the security forces of the Tigray region. The conflict then took on regional dimensions due to the involvement of Eritrea.

The situation in the country as a whole seriously deteriorated due to the impacts of the war between armed actors in the Tigray region and the federal government[16] and the recurring outbreaks of intercommunity violence in different parts of the country, as well as the action of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) at various times of the year. There were acts of violence by civil self-defence groups and militias against civilians of the Tigray community as a result of the conflict and also against civilians of the Amhara community, the largest in the country, spread across different regions, forcibly displacing tens of thousands of people in different regions. The OLA and the security forces clashed in the Oromia region, causing hundreds of deaths. There was an increase in tension and sporadic clashes between the Ethiopian and Sudanese security forces and militias on their shared border, which caused dozens of deaths during the year, and Sudan occupied the disputed territories. Sudan and Ethiopia maintain a dispute over the al-Fashaga border region (an area of Sudan east of the Atbara River and south of the Tekeze River). Since 2008, Ethiopia had abandoned all claims to al-Fashaga as long as Sudan allowed armed and unarmed Ethiopian farmers and activists to remain in the area. With the outbreak of the Tigray war, the Sudanese forces were able to penetrate the region due to an agreement with Ethiopia. When armed Amhara activists left the disputed area to help the Ethiopian federal government in the Tigray war, Sudanese forces began expelling Ethiopian farmers, including Amhara ones, effectively

breaking the 2008 compromise. Ethiopia also accused Sudan of killing civilians in the area. Clashes first began in the Abu Tyour area along the Ethiopia-Sudan border on 15 December 2020, when armed Amhara activists reportedly backed by the Ethiopian government ambushed several Sudanese military officers, killing four of them. Since then, Sudan has regained most of the disputed border. Although it is still legally Sudanese territory, the Amhara region called the Sudanese deployment an invasion and claimed that al-Fashaga belonged to the Amhara region of Ethiopia. Abiy Ahmed supported the statement. Because Sudan expelled the Amhara militants, Sudanese farmers started farming their land for the first time in 25 years. Amhara militants have also been harassing Sudanese farmers, causing some outbreaks of violence and fatalities.

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. Starting in 2002, the client process to succeed the autocratic Daniel Arap Moi (in power for 24 years) was interrupted by the victory of Mwai Kibaki. Since then, different ethno-political conflicts have emerged in the country, which has produced a climate of political violence during the different electoral cycles. 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. After this election, a fragile national unity government was formed between Mwai Kibabi and Raila Odinga. 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. In addition, Kenya's military intervention in Somalia triggered attacks by the Somali armed group al-Shabaab in Kenya, subsequent animosity towards the Somali population in Kenya and tensions between Kenya and Somalia over their different political agendas, posing added challenges to the stability of the country.

The climate of political violence and polarisation between the supporters of current President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga on the

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16. See the summary on Ethiopia (Tigray) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

one hand and the supporters of Vice President William Ruto on the other, who is running for the presidency, was on the rise, while the armed group al-Shabaab continued its attacks in the east and northeast and intercommunity violence increased in various parts of the country. The curfew imposed to control the COVID-19 pandemic, in force since March 2020, was lifted in October. The year 2021 was marked by the political manoeuvring of President Uhuru Kenyatta and his de facto ally, opposition leader Raila Odinga, against Vice President William Ruto ahead of the general elections in August 2022. In March, Kenyatta created the One Kenya Alliance (OKA) coalition with four opposition parties, which had not chosen their presidential candidate by the end of December 2021. In May, the Kenyan High Court ruled that an attempt to reform the Constitution by President Kenyatta and his ally Raila Odinga was illegal. This decision was seen as support for the position of Vice President William Ruto, who was opposed to constitutional reform. Kenyatta, the leader of the Jubilee Party, lost support during the year to groups in the party that backed Ruto. The leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and President Kenyatta's preferred candidate, Raila Odinga, officially launched his fifth presidential candidacy before the August 2022 elections on 10 December. On 22 December, Vice President Ruto described Odinga as a "state project" and accused the government in recent weeks of using state mechanisms to support Odinga's candidacy. On 29 December, lawmakers clashed in Parliament over proposed changes to the law governing the conduct of political parties and coalition formations, a key aspect ahead of the 2022 elections.

Meanwhile, the Somali armed group al-Shabaab continued to carry out attacks against the security forces and the civilian population, detonating improvised explosive devices throughout the year, mainly in the northeastern and eastern counties (Mandera, Wahir, Garissa and Lamu), causing dozens of fatalities. Al-Shabaab stepped up attacks ahead of the Christian Christmas season. However, al-Shabaab also claimed responsibility for sporadic attacks in other parts of the country far from the Somali border, such as the detonation of an explosive device in December in the western town of Kamloma (Kisumu county) that claimed three lives, including a militant of the armed group. The northern counties reported persistent intercommunity violence, fuelled in part by the severe drought affecting the country, which has forced herding communities to move in search of water and pasture, as well as the upcoming general elections of 2022, which political parties traditionally use for their own benefit. Livestock thefts, community militia attacks and reprisals were constant throughout the year

among the Gabra, Degodia and Borana communities, mainly in Marsabit county, and to a lesser extent in Wajir (northeast), Turkana (northwest) and Samburu (central-north, bordering with Marsabit). Laikipia County (centre) was also the scene of intercommunity violence and cattle rustling beginning in September, causing dozens of deaths. ACLED reported a death toll of 383 for the country as a whole due to the actions of the security forces, al-Shabaab and intercommunity violence, as well as other acts of violence such as social protests and police repression. As revealed by Deadly Force, there was a drop in the number of deaths at the hands of the police compared to the figures of previous years.[17] In 2015, 143 people died at the hands of the police. This number rose to 205 people in 2016, 256 in 2017 and 250 in 2018, before dropping to 122 in 2019, 128 in 2020 and 97 in 2021. The escalation of police violence in 2017 coincided with the electoral cycle that the country experienced, so a new escalation in violence is expected over the next year as a result of the pre-electoral atmosphere ahead of the August 2022 elections.

Finally, relations improved between Kenya and Somalia following mediation by Qatar. On 6 May, both countries re-established their diplomatic relations. This decision had been preceded by a serious deterioration in the situation between both countries caused by Somalia's breaking of diplomatic relations in December 2020, in addition to Somalia's accusations that Kenya was providing military support to Somali militias in the Somali state of Jubaland, with which the Somali Federal Government has various disputes. However, in October, the verdict of International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague regarding the territorial dispute between both countries was favourable to Somalia (Nairobi claimed an area oil-rich in the disputed territorial waters), which led to Kenya's rejection of the ICJ's ruling and jurisdiction.

North Africa – Maghreb

Argelia	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Governance, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, military power, political and social opposition, Hirak movement, armed groups AQIM (formerly GSPC), Jund al-Khialafa (branch of ISIS)

Summary:
Having held the presidency of Algeria since 1999, Abdelaziz Bouteflika had remained in office despite suffering from

17. Deadly Force is a database of murders committed by the police. The Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation's* project, Nation Newsplex, seeks to record all 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 configured from the compilation of information from the media, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority, other government agencies and body counts kept by human rights organisations.

a serious illness that had 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. At the same time, Algeria continues to be the scene of incidents between the security forces and armed jihadist groups, mainly al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), formerly the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GPSC), which in recent years has centred its activities in countries in the Sahel.

Throughout 2021, Algeria continued to suffer a multidimensional socio-political crisis. Two years after the massive protests that led to the departure of Abdelaziz Bouteflika after decades in power, the protests and demands for reforms persisted, as did accusations against the authorities for persecuting dissidents. Faced with the protest movement that continued to demand regime change and the end of military dominance in Algerian politics, the authorities reacted with attempts to co-opt the opposition, targeting divisions within the opposition forces and using repressive measures. Local and international NGOs denounced the closure of organisations and the arrest of protesters, politicians, journalists and human rights defenders critical of the regime. Some of these people were sentenced to prison for charges such as "offending the president", "insulting state institutions" and "circulating publications that affect public order". An Algerian organisation called the National Committee for the Release of Detainees (CNLD) documented the detention of more than 230 people for political reasons in 2021. Most of the prisoners of conscience were linked to the Hirak opposition movement, which called for the release of political prisoners in their regular demonstrations. In June, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune approved a decree that broadened the definition of "acts of terrorism". The new definition includes actions targeting state security, national unity or the stability and normal functioning of institutions, as well as actions or incitement seeking to change the governance system by non-constitutional means or undermine the integrity of national territory. Human rights organisations expressed concern about the possible use of the law to persecute opposition activists and political groups that want regime change.[18]

During 2021, the persecution of the opposition group Rachad, in which former members of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) participate, and the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylia (MAK) also increased. In May, both groups were declared "terrorist organizations" by the High Security Council after the government announced the dismantling of a MAK cell that was allegedly preparing an attack during Hirak demonstrations. Both Rachad (created in 2017) and the MAK (formed in 2001 to gain autonomy and subsequently independence for Kabylia) declare that they seek their objectives through peaceful means and deny being involved in acts of violence. In the following months, dozens of people were arrested, including several journalists, for their alleged links with these organisations. In August, following devastating fires that killed 90 people (at least 57 civilians and 33 soldiers) in the province of Tizi Ouzu (Kabylia), Tebboune's office blamed Rachad and the MAK and accused Morocco of supporting the MAK. Days later, Algiers broke off diplomatic relations with Rabat, accusing it of "hostile actions" in the midst of growing bilateral tension that was influenced by the issue of Western Sahara in 2021, but also by other variables (suspicions of Moroccan espionage in Algeria, the management of hydrocarbons in North Africa and security incidents).[19]

In terms of political developments, in February Tebboune announced early legislative elections and partially reshuffled his government, although he kept some prominent figures in the persecution of the Hirak movement in their positions. The crackdown on the protest movement intensified on the eve of the elections, which were held in June amid calls for a boycott and which had the lowest turnout since the country's independence. After the elections, Tebboune resumed partially reforming his government and granted pardons and amnesties to more than one hundred imprisoned Hirak members. Local elections in November also had a low turnout of 35% and resulted in a narrow victory for the ruling party. Some sporadic incidents involving the security forces and alleged members of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) continued to be reported in 2021. The most prominent took place in January, in the Tipaza region (west of Algiers), when a military operation resulted in the deaths of six presumed combatants of the armed group. According to data from the ACLED research centre, a total of 22 people died in clashes and explosions in Algeria in 2021. The official count of the Algerian Ministry of Defence, meanwhile, reported nine deaths, six people who surrendered, the "neutralisation" of more than 200 people linked to groups considered terrorists and the seizure of weapons, ammunition and explosives.[20]

18. Human Rights Watch, "Algeria: Events of 2021", *HRW World Report 2022*, January 2022.
19. See the summary on Morocco – Western Sahara in this chapter.
20. People's Democratic Republic of Algeria – Ministry of National Defence, *PNA operational report for the year 2021*, 1 January 2022.

Morocco – Western Sahara	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International[21]
Main parties:	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front

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

The tension around the issue of Western Sahara continued to intensify throughout 2021, in a context marked by the end of the ceasefire the previous year, persistent deadlock in the UN-backed negotiating process[22], a worsening of the historic rivalry between Morocco and Algeria, various events reflecting the international impact of the dispute and an increase in repression in the Moroccan-occupied Saharawi territories, among other factors. After the incidents in Guerguerat in November 2020 and the POLISARIO Front's decision to abandon the ceasefire in force since 1991, various violent events took place during the year, although their scope is difficult to determine due to the contradictory versions provided by the sources. Nevertheless, **some estimates indicate that 30 people were killed in hostilities**. The UN Secretary-General's report on Western Sahara confirmed the significant deterioration of the situation and highlighted the parties' conflicting accounts, since while the POLISARIO Front considers the entire territory a war zone, Morocco insists that there is no armed conflict. The UN mission, MINURSO, was unable to verify most of the incidents on the ground.[23] In 2021, the POLISARIO Front continued to attack Moroccan military positions along the barrier that separates Moroccan-controlled Saharawi territory from land under the administration of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Rabat acknowledged that between November 2020 and August 2021, more

than one thousand remote attacks had been reported near the berm, 83% in the Mahbas area. In February, for the first time since the truce went into force in the area three decades ago, the POLISARIO Front claimed that it had killed three Moroccan soldiers in the area of Ouarkziz, though Rabat denied this and described it as war propaganda. In April, media reports indicated that Morocco had used drones for the first time in an attack in the Western Sahara area (specifically in Tifariti, in the separation area), causing the death of a military leader of the POLISARIO Front. The most serious incidents occurred at the end of the year, in mid-November, when another Moroccan air strike killed 11 civilians in Miyek, an area controlled by the SADR. Days earlier, on 3 November, Algeria had blamed Morocco for the death of three Algerian truck drivers in another drone attack in the area of Western Sahara controlled by the POLISARIO Front. Algiers called it a "terrorist" act and warned of retaliation.

This latest incident aggravated tensions between Algiers and Rabat, whose relations seriously deteriorated in 2021 and led to the most serious bilateral crisis since 1994, according to analysts. **At the end of August, Algeria announced that it was breaking diplomatic relations with Morocco, denouncing a series of "hostile acts" by the neighbouring country, including its policies in Western Sahara**. Relations had already become tense in 2020 after the end of the ceasefire and the Trump administration's support for Moroccan claims over Western Sahara in exchange for re-establishing relations between Morocco and Israel. In early 2021, Algeria carried out large-scale military exercises in Tindouf, near the border with Morocco in what was interpreted as a warning to Rabat not to enter its territory. Bilateral tension was also heightened by Rabat's statements at a UN meeting on the demands of the peoples of the Algerian region of Kabylia (Algiers accused Morocco of supporting two groups it describes as "terrorists", the Movement for Self-Determination of Kabylia (MAK) and RACHAD); by the information on the "Pegasus scandal", according to which Morocco used the Israeli espionage programme to intercept communications of thousands of Algerians, including high-ranking political and military officials; and by disputes linked to the flow of hydrocarbons from North Africa to Europe. In this context, the Algerian authorities intensified surveillance of the western border. In September, they announced the closure of Algerian airspace to all Moroccan aircraft, both civil and military.

US support for the Moroccan position, which was not reversed by the new Biden administration, motivated Morocco to maintain a more defiant international attitude and intensify pressure on other countries to take sides on the Saharawi issue.[24] In this context, Rabat was

21. Although Western Sahara is not an internationally recognised state, the tensions between Morocco and Western Sahara are classified as "international" and not internal as this is a territory which is awaiting decolonisation and which is not recognised as belonging to Morocco either under international law or in any United Nations resolution.
22. See the summary on Morocco – Western Sahara in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Scenarios and Trends*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.
23. UNSC, Situation concerning Western Sahara - Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/843, 1 October 2021.
24. International Crisis Group, *Relaunching Negotiations Over Western Sahara*, Middle East and North Africa Report no.227, 14 October 2021.

involved in diplomatic tensions with Germany due to Berlin's decision to promote a meeting on the Saharawi issue in the UN Security Council at the end of 2020, and also with Spain. In retaliation for the entry of POLISARIO Front leader Brahim Ghali into Spain to be treated for COVID-19, Morocco allowed the entry of more than 9,000 migrants and refugees into Ceuta in May. The crisis provoked criticism of Morocco for cynically using the migration issue, but it also highlighted the consequences of European border externalisation and militarisation policies. Later, **in September, the European Court of Justice again rejected (for the fifth time) the EU's agricultural and fisheries agreement with Morocco for including territories of Western Sahara**. In contrast, in 2021 Jordan, Senegal, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Suriname joined the list of countries that announced or opened diplomatic headquarters in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara, amid criticism from the POLISARIO Front. The Arab League ordered the use of maps of Morocco that included Western Sahara in the organisation's official events, though this was rejected by Algeria.

In terms of human rights, the office of the UN High Commissioner, which was still unable to verify the situation on the ground, and other organisations, expressed **concern about the reports of the intensification of the restrictions imposed by Morocco since November 2020 on the freedoms of expression, demonstration and association in Western Sahara and on the disproportionate use of force by the Moroccan security forces** in breaking up protests, conducting searches and arbitrary arrests and intimidating pro-independence activists and human rights defenders.[25] Media outlets and organisations such as Human Rights Watch highlighted the harassment and attacks on activists such as Sultana Khaya and Hassana Duihi.[26] Finally, at the end of the year, the appointment of the Italian-Swedish diplomat Staffan de Mistura as the new special envoy for Western Sahara generated certain expectations for resuming the negotiating process under the auspices of the UN.

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

Summary:
From its independence in 1956 until early 2011, Tunisia was governed by only two presidents. For three decades Habib Bourghiba laid the foundations for the authoritarian regime in the country, which Zine Abidine Ben Ali then continued

after a coup d'état in 1987. The concentration of power, the persecution of the secular and Islamist political opposition and the iron grip on society that characterised the country's internal situation stood in contrast to its international image of stability. Despite allegations of corruption, electoral fraud and human rights violations, Tunisia was a privileged ally of the West for years. In December 2010, the outbreak of a popular revolt exposed the contradictions of Ben Ali's government, led to its fall in early 2011 and inspired protests against authoritarian governments throughout the Arab world. Since then, Tunisia has been immersed in a bumpy transition that has laid bare the tensions between secular and Islamist groups in the country. At the same time, Tunisia has been the scene of increased activity from armed groups, including branches of AQIM and ISIS.

During 2021, Tunisia experienced the greatest crisis since the overthrow of the Zine el Abidine Ben Ali regime in 2011, in a context marked by a significant concentration of power by the president, political tensions, growing polarisation, complaints of human rights violations and a serious economic crisis aggravated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first half of the year, the periodic demonstrations continued due to the deterioration of economic and social conditions in different parts of the country. The clashes with the police and the crackdowns on these protests by the security forces resulted in the deaths of at least three protesters in incidents that occurred in the towns of Sbeitla, Sfax and Sidi Hassine. Local and international human rights organisations warned of the excessive use of violence to quell the protests and the arrest of hundreds of people. There were also demonstrations to denounce police violence. Moreover, during the first months of the year the political deadlock and power struggle between President Kais Saïed and Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi intensified. In January, Mechichi reshuffled his cabinet and dismissed several ministers, including the interior minister (a close ally of Saïed), after which the president refused to ratify the new members of the government. In the following months, the dispute also included a struggle over who had authority over the security forces. In April, Saïed also refused to ratify the changes promoted by Parliament to lower the two-thirds majority necessary to select the members of the Constitutional Court, conceived as an independent body to ensure respect for the Constitution, which could not be formed since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2014. The president also dismissed calls by some actors, including the powerful UGTT union, for a national dialogue.

In this context of political impasse and in the midst of growing social discontent with the authorities' handling of the economic and health crisis in the country, with one of the worst death rates from COVID-19 in Africa and a very low level of vaccination (7% of the population), on 24 July the president extended the state of emergency until early 2022. A day later, he invoked Article 80 of

25. UNSC (2021), op.cit, par.74; ICG (2021), op.cit.
26. Human Rights Watch, "Morocco: Events of 2021", *HRW World Report 2022*, January 2022.

the Constitution to arrogate exceptional powers. **Saïed dismissed the prime minister, dissolved Parliament, stripped members of the legislature of immunity, removed many senior officials from office and assumed oversight of the state prosecutor's office**. The president's measures prompted demonstrations of support that gathered tens of thousands of people and were backed by some groups, while others, such as the Islamist Ennahda party, denounced his intervention as a coup. In the weeks that followed, new measures announced by Saïed aimed to consolidate his dominance of the Tunisian political scene. The dissolution of Parliament was extended indefinitely, the president assumed powers to govern by decree and he appointed a new cabinet headed by Najla Bouden Romdhane, a geophysicist with no previous political profile who became the first Tunisian woman to hold this position. Locally, the political and social opposition figures drifting away from Saïed grew, and starting in September, protests against the president began. In the following months, there were periodic demonstrations for and against the president. At the international level, Saïed's actions received the support of countries such as Egypt, while other actors, such as the G7 countries and the EU, called for a restoration of the constitutional order. Amid local and international actors' calls for Saïed to define a timetable and end the state of emergency, the Tunisian president announced a roadmap in December. This roadmap lays out an online consultation on political and constitutional reforms from January 2022, a review and summary of the proposals by a committee of experts in March, a referendum on the proposed modifications in July and the holding of elections in December 2022. The announcement, which includes a one-year extension of the state of emergency and the suspension of Parliament and grants Saïed greater power at a key moment of political reform, was widely criticised by the opposition political forces, divided between Islamist and non-Islamist groups, and by social actors such as the UGTT, which questioned its legality and legitimacy. Analysts warned of the authoritarian drift in the North African country and the risks of growing polarisation. Human rights organisations have also warned of increased repression, political persecution and attempts to silence critics in the country since July 2021. Dozens of people were placed under house arrest or subjected to foreign travel bans, while others were being persecuted in civil and military courts for accusations of insulting the president or the Tunisian Army. After denouncing Saïed's actions as a coup, former President Moncef Marzouki was tried in absentia and sentenced to four years in prison for undermining the external security of the state.

Meanwhile, **sporadic incidents between the security forces and alleged jihadist combatants continued to occur during the year**. The most notable such events, all of which occurred in the border area with Algeria, include the detonation of an explosive device that killed

In a context of political tension and a serious economic and social crisis, the president of Tunisia dismissed the prime minister and dissolved Parliament

four soldiers in February; an action by the security forces in which three alleged militiamen linked to the Jund al-Khilafa group died in April; and an anti-terrorist operation in which five other suspected jihadists were killed in May. According to the ACLED think tank, 18 people died in Tunisia due to clashes and the detonation of explosives in 2021. Finally, more than one year after the publication of the final report of the Truth and Dignity Commission, established to investigate the human rights abuses committed in the country in the last five decades, its recommendations remained unimplemented.

West Africa

Guinea	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties, unions

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

The political tension in the country increased notably after the presidential election that gave President Alpha Condé his third term in office (which the opposition described as unconstitutional), leading to a coup that overthrew the government. The year began with significant political tensions in the country that arose after the electoral victory of President Alpha Condé in the October 2020 election, which was characterised by repression and violence. His re-election to a third term caused a national crisis, as it was denounced by the opposition as a violation of the constitutional limit of two presidential terms, which Condé avoided through a questionable constitutional amendment approved in a March 2020 referendum. Since then, the government's response has led to an increase in crackdowns on dissent throughout the country, closing the headquarters of the main opposition party, the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), and imprisoning opposition leaders of the UFDG, the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC) and members of civil society. In February 2021, Amnesty International and Human

Rights Watch reported that at least 400 members of the opposition and civil society throughout the country were imprisoned after being arrested during the March 2020 referendum and the October 2020 presidential election, and that at least four of them had died in prison. International actors complained, demanding an investigation and the end of the repression and persecution of the opposition.

After months of political crisis in the country, **on 5 September, members of the Guinean Army led by Colonel Mamay Doumbouya staged a coup d'état that toppled the government presided over by Condé**. The coup, which was the third in the country since it gained its independence in 1958, left a death toll of 10. Doumbouya proclaimed himself president of the transition, dissolved the government, arrested President Condé, suspended the Constitution and put the military junta, called the National Committee for Regrouping and Development (CNRD), at the head of the country, which appointed military governors, prohibited government officials from leaving the country, arrested several politicians and released 80 political prisoners. A transition roadmap was also announced, although without determining a date for holding elections, stipulating that the members of the National Transitional Council would not be able to run when they are held. The coup prompted disparate reactions inside and outside the country. There were demonstrations in support of the coup plotters in various parts of the country and UFDG leader Cellou Dalein Diallo described it as a "patriotic act". However, it was widely condemned abroad, with the AU, ECOWAS, USA, EU, France, China, Turkey and others demanding a return to constitutional order and Condé's release. The AU and ECOWAS suspended Guinea's membership from their organisations and ECOWAS sent a diplomatic mission to the country led by Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo and Ivoirian President Alassane Ouattara. ECOWAS subsequently imposed sanctions on CNRD members, including travel bans and asset freezes, and demanded that presidential and legislative elections be held within six months, given the junta's refusal.

Tensions between the military junta, which appointed **civilian Mohamed Béavogui as prime minister on 6 October, and ECOWAS and international partners continued until the end of the year and increased due to rumours** that Doumbouya was contemplating a three-year transition. In a new move to apply pressure for the holding of elections and the release of Condé, who was finally authorised to leave the country for a month due to medical reasons on 31 December, ECOWAS confirmed that it was upholding the sanctions on the members of the junta on 7 November and appointed the former head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, as its special envoy to Guinea.

Moreover, **Guinea suffered a new outbreak of Ebola during the year**, the first since the 2013-2016 epidemic

Guinea suffered a third coup d'état since gaining its independence

that caused more than 2,500 deaths in the country and 11,300 across the West African region. Identified on 13 February, the outbreak was finally contained on 19 June, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), and claimed 12 lives, a figure much lower than that of the previous epidemic, largely thanks to the experience accumulated by the health authorities.

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

Summary:
Since its independence from France in 1960, Mali has lived through several periods of instability, including the coup d'état in 1968, a popular and military rebellion in 1991 and the Tuareg insurgency and uprisings since independence, demanding greater political participation and the development of the north of the country. Mali held its first multi-party elections in 1992, although since then several elections have taken place amid opposition criticism concerning the lack of democratic guarantees. The army's influence was apparent in a new attempted coup d'état of 2000, which was foiled. The instability increased once again in 2012 when control of the north was seized by Tuareg and Islamist groups and the government was ousted by a coup d'état. From that moment on, the country's successive governments have faced multiple political, economic and security challenges, with violence persisting in the northern part of the country and spreading to the central region. There was a significant increase in popular protests and demonstrations in 2019, which were followed in 2020 by a coup d'état and the formation of a new transitional government in the country.

For another year, political tensions increased in the country due to the deterioration of the security situation, the crisis in the transitional government and the increase in popular discontent, giving rise to a new coup d'état. After various strikes called by the National Union of Workers of Mali (UNTM) that created a crisis in the government, Colonel Assimi Goïta, the interim vice president and leader of the coup that overthrew the government of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in August 2020, led a new military coup on 25 May, arresting transitional President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, whom he accused of having violated the Transitional Charter by renewing the government without the approval of the vice president. The political crisis had begun on 14 May, when Prime Minister Ouane presented his resignation. This was rejected by President N'Daw, who commissioned him to form a more inclusive government in which politicians would have more influence at the expense of the military. The proposed new government excluded the defence minister, General Sadio Camara, and the security minister, General Modibo Koné, whose offices depended

on the military wing of the Transitional Government, which led to the military coup. N'Daw and Ouane were detained by the Malian Army at the Kati military base and were subsequently released once they announced their forced resignations. Subsequently, former Vice President Assimi Goïta was declared president of the country. This was validated by the Malian Constitutional Court under the mandate to lead the 18-month transition agreed in August 2020 ahead of the elections scheduled for late February 2022. Goïta appointed Choguel Kokalla Maïga to be the new prime minister.

Mali suffered a second coup d'état in less than nine months

The coup set off a new political crisis in Mali, triggering different reactions inside and outside the country. Domestically, the coup was welcomed with high popular support, with demonstrations in support of the military, expressing frustration with the previous government due to its inability to tackle insecurity and poverty in the country. Abroad, it ramped up tensions between the new military junta and the international community, the effects of which were transferred to the military security complex. Mali's main international partners, including the regional bloc of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the AU, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the EU, France, the USA, the UK and Germany signed a joint declaration condemning the unconstitutional change of government and demanded the release of the high officials and their detained collaborators. The AU and ECOWAS, which sent a diplomatic mission to the country to mediate, suspended Mali from their respective bodies and threatened sanctions if a civilian-led government was not restored. France threatened to impose sanctions via the EU and withdraw the French troops in the country involved in Operation Barkhane. On 3 June, Paris temporarily suspended all its joint military operations with Malian troops, which resumed a month later. The UN Security Council issued a unanimous condemnation, but it did not include coercive measures after Russia and China's veto, while the World Bank froze payments to the country.

In an attempt to pressure the military junta to speed up the transition to a civilian government, ECOWAS imposed the first sanctions on 16 September, which sparked protests in the country. Subsequently, following Goïta's announcement that the election deadline would not be met, on 7 November ECOWAS imposed further sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes on 149 state officials (excluding Goïta in an apparent attempt to keep the line of communication open). On 15 November, the EU also announced the imposition of sanctions on "those who obstruct" Mali's transition.

Amid growing tensions with France and European partners, the Malian government announced an **agreement with Russia for the deployment of Russian forces in the country**, which according to press reports would come from the private security company Wagner Group, although both the Malian and Russian governments denied it. The announcement prompted a joint condemnation in late December from 16 European countries and Canada, which said that the Wagner group's deployment of mercenaries would be "incompatible" with their presence. Earlier, on 13 December, the EU had imposed sanctions on the Wagner Group for allegedly committing serious human rights abuses in several countries, including torture and extrajudicial executions. Several demonstrations took place in the country in support of the agreement with Russia.

Nigeria	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Resources, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, livestock and farming communities, community militias, criminal gangs, IMN

Summary:
After gaining its independence in 1960, the inability of the country's successive governments to address issues associated with citizenship, ethnicity, religion and resource distribution has aggravated perceptions of grievances and discontent, leading to the rise of separatist demands in various regions. Moreover, 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. At the same time, the actions of criminal groups in the northwestern part of the country, caused by different factors, have multiplied since 2018.

There was an increase in violence and instability in different parts of Nigeria during 2021 beyond the serious armed conflict linked to the actions of Boko Haram that affects the three states in northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin.[27] In the northwestern part of the country, there was an increase in violence committed by criminal gangs that began in 2018, as well as a permanent atmosphere of intercommunity

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27. See the summary on Lake Chad (Boko Haram) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

violence in the middle belt of the country and a rise in clashes and insurgent activity in the state of Biafra.[28] Armed activity also resurged against oil facilities in the Niger Delta.

The atmosphere of criminal violence, looting, attacks and kidnapping of hundreds of people in the northwestern part of the country increased during the year, following the trend of previous years. Land and air military operations against the bases of these criminal groups in remote forests, mainly in the state of Zamfara, led to an expansion of their activities to the states of Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Sokoto, where the security forces also carried out major military actions. The government also imposed a telecommunications blackout, restricted access to fuel and the supply of food, limited cattle movements and slashed market hours to pressure the criminal groups. In these five northwestern states (Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger), the violence caused 4,162 fatalities according to ACLED, a figure that must be viewed as relative given the difficulties in distinguishing the actions of these groups from other dynamics of violence due to the many different actors, including criminal groups, security forces, jihadist armed actors, groups linked to livestock communities and civil self-defence militias. This violence is rooted in competition for resources between Fulani herding communities and Hausa farming communities and has escalated through the involvement of criminal gangs dedicated to cattle theft, kidnapping for ransom and the looting and burning of various localities, a situation that jihadist groups have also exploited. According to the Nigerian Security Tracker, in 2021 there were 3,948 fatalities in these five northwestern Nigerian states. To understand the increase in violence, in the states of Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara there were 2,634 fatalities, a figure higher than the 2,481 deaths in 2020 and the 1,988 people killed in 2019. Given the seriousness of the situation, the Federal Supreme Court classified the groups of thieves and criminal militias as terrorists in November. On 14 December, youth groups mobilised in the federal capital, Abuja, and in most northwestern states to protest the serious climate of insecurity. Intercommunity violence between ranching and farming communities also affected other states in the country's middle belt, causing hundreds of deaths during the year.

The Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry concluded its investigation into police brutality and human rights abuses committed during the massive demonstrations that took place in October 2020 as a consequence of the exceptional measures imposed by the government to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and social protests against the excessive use of force by security forces and particularly the

Military operations against criminal groups in the state of Zamfara, in northwestern Nigeria, led to the expansion of their activities to the states of Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Sokoto

Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).[29] The investigation ended on 18 October, establishing compensation for 70 victims of police violence. On 20 October, thousands of people demonstrated throughout the country to commemorate the victims of the brutal repression against the #ENDSARS movement.

Nigeria (Biafra)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, MASSOB separatist organisations, IPOB (which has an armed wing, the ESN)

Summary:
After winning its independence in 1960, Nigeria has faced the challenge of bringing together the different ethnic nationalities. The most paradigmatic example was the civil war between the government and the self-proclaimed Republic of Biafra (1967-1970), in which between one and three million people died. After three decades of military rule, the advent of democracy in 1999 gave rise to new expectations that the various identities could be accommodated and demands for political restructuring that have not come true, fuelling separatist grievances. In this context, demands for self-determination have resurfaced in Biafra through nonviolent organisations, mainly with the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), created in 1999, and later by other secessionist movements including the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), created in 2012. The rise to power of Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, perceived as a threat in the southern regions, has contributed to a rise in tension. The imprisonment in 2015 of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu caused an increase in demonstrations that were harshly repressed by the Nigerian security forces, which have since launched a campaign of violence and extrajudicial executions. This situation worsened with the banning of the IPOB in 2017 and the increase in violence in the second half of 2020, especially in light of the IPOB ban.

The historic tension between Nigeria and the separatist movements in the southern region of Biafra was on the rise in the second half of 2020 and especially in 2021, when there was a rise in armed violence. The increased persecution of the pro-independence mobilisation and growing insecurity contributed to the establishment of a Biafran paramilitary group, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of the IPOB, in December 2020. Initially, the ESN presented itself as a regional force to expel criminals and illegal herders (commonly associated with northern Fulani communities) who traditionally compete for resources with farming communities in Biafra. Shortly thereafter, the Nigerian Army was deployed to locate the ESN camps, and on

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28. See the summary on Nigeria (Biafra) in this chapter.
29. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

22 January 2021, it carried out military actions in the town of Orlu, which triggered ESN insurgent actions. This situation led IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu to call for the ESN to observe a ceasefire and withdraw from the town, which eased tensions. However, the actions of the ESN and the security forces in pursuit of the group continued during the year, causing dozens of fatalities. In April, the IPOB and Cameroon's opposition coalition, the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), announced an alliance. Cameroon and Nigeria responded to this in August by announcing that their respective security forces would collaborate against both insurgencies.[30] In June 2021, the leader of the IPOB was arrested abroad by Interpol and extradited to Nigeria, where he was charged with sedition, incitement to ethnic hatred and treason. Since then, there has been an intensification of protests and social demonstrations, as well as multiple complaints of human rights violations committed by the Nigerian Security Forces (NSF). Amnesty International reported serious human rights violations in August, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and torture committed by security forces in their response to violence in the southeastern part of the country between January and June. The IPOB leader's trial was postponed in October and December 2021, so protests continued in the southeast demanding his release.

2.3.2. America

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

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.

Alongside an unprecedented increase in criminal gang activity and a notable rise in the number of kidnappings and homicides, the political, institutional and social crisis in the country worsened, especially after Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in July. Since the beginning of the year, there had been massive protests encouraged by the opposition, which thought that Moïse's five-year presidential term would end on 7 February, accusing him of having postponed the legislative elections to rule by decree and of wanting to establish a dictatorship in the country. As soon as Moïse took office in 2017, his term ended in February 2022, for which he proposed an electoral calendar for 2021 that included holding a constitutional referendum in late June, and legislative, presidential, local and municipal elections in September and November. Although both the United Nations and the OAS validated Moïse's electoral calendar, thereby confirming that his term would end in 2022, in early February the opposition established a parallel government (with a Supreme Court magistrate as interim president) and throughout the month massive protests ensued, in which several people were injured. In early February, the government declared that it had aborted a coup and an assassination attempt against Moïse, arresting 23 people. In the months that followed, Joseph Jouthe resigned as prime minister and Claude Joseph was appointed to replace him, the sixth under Moïse's presidency. Meanwhile, both the EU and the Haitian Contact Group (made up of the OAS, the United Nations, the US, France, Germany, Canada, Brazil and Spain) expressed their disagreement with the government's intention to hold the aforementioned constitutional referendum, alleging a lack of transparency and democratic guarantees. On 7 July, Moïse was assassinated and his wife was injured after an attack on the presidential residence by a heavily armed group. In the hours after the attack, three of the assailants were killed and another 20 were arrested, while in the following days several arrest warrants were issued against several people accused of having orchestrated the attack. In the days after the assassination, in which a state of emergency was declared and the country's main airport was closed, there was some institutional confusion and a power struggle between Claude Joseph and Ariel Henry, who had been appointed by Moïse as the new prime minister in early July, but who had not yet been sworn in or taken office at the time of the attack. After several weeks of tension, finally Henry took over as acting prime minister and president. In September, it transpired that on the same day as the attack on the presidential residence, Henry had spoken on the phone with one of the main suspects in Moïse's murder, for which the state prosecutor asked him to testify in the investigation and the Office for the Protection of Citizenship (OPC), an institution comparable to the Ombudsman in other countries, demanded his resignation. Faced with Henry's refusal, the OPC said that Henry was a serious obstacle to the investigation and urged the United Nations Special Commission of

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30. See the summary on Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest Southwest) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Inquiry to support the judge investigating the case. In mid-August, the magistrate who had been assigned to the investigation resigned from the case after his court clerk was murdered. The state prosecutor had also been removed after he urged Henry to testify. Moïse's wife filed a complaint against Henry and other government officials for their participation in the murder of the former president. By the end of the year, around 40 people had been arrested in connection with the murder, but the investigation had not been concluded. In September, after the committee in charge of drawing up a new Constitution presented its draft, the government indicated that the referendum would take place in February 2022 and that, without specifying a specific date, the presidential, legislative, regional and local elections would take place in the following months.

Furthermore, the government, the United Nations and civil society organisations pointed out that throughout the year, but especially after Moïse's assassination, there had been an unprecedented rise in the criminal activity of armed gangs operating in some of the most densely populated neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince and other cities in the country. Thus, throughout the year there were demonstrations and even a nationwide strike to protest the widespread insecurity. According to data from the United Nations, by September around 19,000 people had had to leave their homes due to the violence linked to these gangs, more than 13,000 in the month of April alone. According to the Centre of Analysis and Research in Human Rights, between January and September there had been more than 600 kidnappings for ransom, a figure clearly higher than the 231 that occurred in the same period in 2020 or the 78 in 2019. According to the research centre, 90% of these cases (43% in Port-au-Prince, 22% in Croix-des Bouquets, 19% in Carrefour and 16% in Delmas) were concentrated in the metropolitan region of the country. Other civil society organisations indicated that kidnappings had increased by approximately 150% compared to the previous year. For example, the armed group 400 Mawozo, which on several occasions carjacked entire vehicles with all their passengers, kidnapped 17 religious people (16 of them from the US and one from Canada) in October, then released them gradually until December. Although figures on the number of homicides linked to the activity of armed gangs did not come out, it is estimated that they have increased substantially compared to the previous year, in which the United Nations reported 1,380 murders, 20% more than in 2019. The Centre of Analysis and Research in Human Rights also indicated that as of mid-October, 37 police officers had been killed, more than the 27 who died in all of 2020. According to the National Network for the Defence of Human Rights (RNDDH), there were around 90 active gangs in 2021, some of which control key

On 7 July, Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated and his wife was wounded following an attack on the presidential residence by a heavily armed group

territories for supplying the city. For example, in October Jimmy Chérizier, a former police officer and leader of the country's largest armed gang, G9, said that he was willing to allow the distribution of gasoline in Haiti if the prime minister resigned. The RNDDH has documented a dozen attacks by these armed groups in which around 600 people have died or disappeared. In addition, human rights organisations have repeatedly denounced the collusion between these gangs and certain sectors of the state, which provide them with weapons and even human resources to control certain neighbourhoods in the metropolitan region politically and electorally. For example, a report published in April by the Harvard University Law School and the Haitian Observatory on Crimes against Humanity reported the government's high-level responsibility and involvement in the preparation, execution and subsequent cover-up of three attacks perpetrated by armed gangs between 2018 and 2020 in which 240 civilians lost their lives. A report published by the US government in December 2020 recounted the collusion between the armed gangs and the Ministry of the Interior and certain MPs from Moïse's party. Finally, in August an earthquake caused the deaths of 2,240 people and the destruction of tens of thousands of houses.

Mexico	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Resources 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.

In 2021, there was a slight dip in intentional homicides compared to the previous year, although other forms of violence increased. High levels of clashes among drug cartels and between them and state security

forces continued to be reported, as well as many attacks against journalists, activists and human rights defenders. According to data revealed by the president in the first days of 2022, **34,410 intentional homicides were reported in 2021, a figure slightly lower than that reported in 2020 (34,554) and 2019 (34,690).** The homicide rate (26 per 100,000 inhabitants) was the seventh highest in both American continents, behind Jamaica, Venezuela, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize and Colombia. More than 50% of the homicides were concentrated in the states of Guanajuato, Michoacán, Baja California, Estado de México, Chihuahua and Jalisco, with the cases of Guanajuato (19%) and Michoacán (13%) being particularly serious. Andrés Manuel López Obrador acknowledged the seriousness of the situation (there have been 102,654 murders during his term), but he emphasised that since his arrival to the presidency in December 2018, a clear upward trend in the number of murders of recent years has been reversed. **In 2016, the number of homicides rose by 26.1% compared to the previous year; in 2017, it increased by 28.1%; in 2018 it grew by 16.8%; in 2019 it rose by 2.81; in 2020 it fell by 0.4%; and in 2021 it decreased by 4.16%.** The government also stated that there had been a 1.3% drop in homicides in the 50 municipalities most affected by violence and considered a priority by the government. There was also a drop in violence in cities traditionally associated with crime, such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. Finally, the government pointed out that other forms of crime were also reduced in 2021, such as kidnapping (44.8%) and robbery (25.3%). The killing of women (femicide) increased slightly compared to previous years (1,004 in 2021 compared to 978 cases in 2020 and 973 cases in 2019).

Despite the slight decrease in the number of intentional murders reported in 2021, other forms of violence and crime increased in 2021 compared to 2020, such as extortion (increase of 12.3%) and rape (21,189 cases, an increase of 28%). Political crimes and violence against journalists and social leaders also increased. Regarding this last issue, a **Reporters Without Borders report issued in mid-December stated that for the third consecutive year, Mexico was the most dangerous and deadliest country for practicing journalism**. Five journalists were murdered in 2021 and 47 were killed in the last five years. Shortly before, in October, the government indicated that since the beginning of the current administration in December 2018, 94 environmental and human rights activists and 47 journalists had been murdered (43% of the responsibility for murders of journalists lay with public officials and 33% with organised crime groups). These figures are consistent with those provided during the year by Global Witness, an organisation according to

In Mexico, 34,410 intentional homicides were reported, a figure slightly lower than in the last two years

which Mexico had the second-highest number of land and environmental activists (30) murdered in 2020. Along the same lines, a report by Red TDT released in April indicated that 45 social, environmental and community activists had been murdered during the term of the current president. Shortly after the legislative, regional, and local elections were held on 5 June, it emerged that **there had been 102 election-related murders, including the assassination of 36 candidates**.

There were very high levels of violence linked to clashes among drug cartels or between them and state security forces during the year. The organisation Semáforo Delictivo indicated during the year that 80% of the violent deaths in the country were related to clashes involving drug cartels. Some of the main episodes of violence and massacres that occurred during the year were the deaths of 16 people in fighting between the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and the United Cartels on the border between Michoacán and Jalisco in January; the killing of 13 people in clashes between the CJNG and the Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL) in Guanajuato in early January; the deaths of 11 people in firefights between the CJNG and the police in the same state in mid-January; the killing of 11 people on the outskirts of Guadalajara in late February; the murder of 13 police officers and public officials from the prosecutor's office by the Familia Michoacana cartel in Estado de México in mid-March; clashes between cartels reported in late June that caused the deaths of 18 people in the US border city of Reynosa (Tamaulipas) and another 18 people in Zacatecas; the deaths of more than 60 people due to fighting between the CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel in the state of Zacatecas in July and August; the killing of around 20 people in Chihuahua in October during clashes between unidentified rival groups; the murder of 11 civilians (seven of them minors) in the town of Tangamandapio (state of Michoacán) in early December; the deaths of 14 people in Zacatecas on 29 and 30 December; and the CJNG's use of drones with explosives against civilians in its attempt to take the border city of Tapalcatepec between Michoacán and Jalisco in September and the town of Chinicuila (Michoacán) in December, killing many people and forcing a significant part of the population to flee. According to the organisation Common Cause, 520 clandestine graves were found with dozens of murdered people between January and October 2021, such as those identified in Jalisco in January with 17 corpses, in Guadalajara in February with 18 and in Guanajuato in May with 26. The organisation also denounced that there were 459 massacres and 4,527 atrocities, including episodes of extreme cruelty such as torture, mutilation and dismemberment.

South America

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

Summary:

The mass protests that took place in recent years are closely linked to the rejection by part of the population of the Government action of President Ivan 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, the slowdown in the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement between the Government and the FARC or the increase in murders against former combatants and social leaders. 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 Ivan 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; the so-called "Lantern March" in January 2019, and the subsequent protests between April and May 2019 -in which hundreds of people were injured-; or the protests led by the National Strike Committee in 2020 and 2021, in which dozens of people died and thousands more were injured or detained.

The anti-government protests staged almost continuously throughout the year were especially intense in April and May, causing the deaths of several dozen people and injuring, disappearing and detaining thousands. Mortality figures associated with social demonstrations vary considerably depending on the sources. **The government officially acknowledged that less than one month after the protests began, 47 people had died and 2,145 had been injured.** Along the same lines, the Ombudsman's Office pointed out that in the first two weeks of the demonstrations, 42 deaths had been reported, 41 of them civilians, and 168 cases of disappearance. According to the government, until late May there had been 4,973 demonstrations, 1,897 marches, 2,426 blockades, 522 demonstrations and 1,130 riots. However, the number of victims in the context of the protests was much higher. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights received information on 63 deaths between 28 April and 31 July, of which it verified 46 (28 of which were the responsibility of the police). Human Rights Watch declared that it had received 81 credible complaints of deaths that occurred during the demonstrations, while the NGOs Temblores and Indepaz reported that between late April and late June the number

The National Unemployment Committee denounced 77 deaths during the social demonstrations in Colombia since April

of fatalities rose to 75, of which 44 were allegedly caused by the Public Force. These organisations also reported 3,789 cases of police violence, including 28 cases of sexual assault and 83 eye injuries, and 1,264 arbitrary arrests. Moreover, **the National Unemployment Committee denounced 77 deaths during the social demonstrations in Colombia**. Although the protests were initially focused on opposition to the tax reform promoted by the government of Iván Duque, there were also other sources of discontent, as is evident in the list of demands and proposals presented in early May by the National Unemployment Committee, the organisation that has promoted and convened the major demonstrations that have taken place in Colombia since 2019 against the Duque administration (previously, between October and December 2018, important social protests known as the Paro Universitario were also reported). These demands include opposition to health and pension system reforms, the failure to comply with the 2016 peace agreements and the increase in killings of social leaders (18 in July alone) and former FARC combatants (almost 300 since 2016), the mismanagement of the pandemic (with accusations of corruption, incompetence and a lack of resources), the economic situation (poverty increased by more than 6% to reach 42% of the population), racial and gender discrimination, complaints of police brutality and demands for police reform.

The start of the protests in many cities on 28 April, especially in Cali and other parts of Valle del Cauca, led to the deployment of the police and the declaration of a curfew in many cities. In the face of many international voices calling for an end to the violence and a dialogue to resolve the crisis, in early May the government announced that it was scrapping the tax reform, that the Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance were resigning and that it would start negotiations with the National Unemployment Committee and meetings with 11 political, social and economic groups. **On 10 May, the first meeting between Iván Duque and the National Unemployment Committee was held, though no results were made public**. In the days that followed, regular meetings were held until 23 May, the date when High Commissioner for Peace Miguel Ceballos resigned. In mid-May, the government authorised the deployment of military personnel in support tasks for the police. At the end of the month, some 7,000 soldiers were deployed in Cali and Valle del Cauca shortly after people had been killed during riots and clashes between protesters and police officers. At the end of May, the political and social instability meant that the America Cup football tournament could not be held in the country. In early June, coinciding with the visit to the country by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the National Unemployment Committee unilaterally suspended the dialogue on the grounds that the government had no political will and was prolonging the negotiations. In early July, **the IACHR presented a report that strongly criticised the**

government's management of the protests, denouncing the excessive and disproportionate use of force by the police, disappearances and attacks against journalists and medical assistance services. It also recommended separating the police from the Ministry of Defence (and transferring it to the Ministry of the Interior). The report's recommendations were supported by many national and international human rights organisations (which also demanded the dissolution of the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad), but President Duque rejected the report and even questioned the Commission's mandate. In mid-June, the National Unemployment Committee suspended its regular protests to focus on building consensus, but announced new demonstrations for the end of July, which had a massive turnout. In the second half of the year, new protests were reported, but they had a much lower turnout than those between April and June. Similarly, there was no public record of new meetings between the government and the National Unemployment Committee since June.

Peru	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed opposition (Militarised Communist Party of Peru), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)

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

The main sources of tension in the country were the protests that took place after the presidential and legislative elections and the attack by the Militarised Communist Party of Peru (MPCP) two weeks before the second round of the elections, in which 16 people died, including four minors. Several media outlets indicated that at the scene of the MPCP's attack, in the town of San Miguel del Ene, in the region known as the Valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers (VRAEM), leaflets were found criticising presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori and urging the population to boycott the elections by abstaining, voting blank or null. Both Fujimori and the other candidate, Pedro Castillo, condemned the attack, but given both candidates' insinuations about its political benefit, the government called not to make partisan use of the MPCP's attack. This is not the first time that remnant factions of the Shining Path carry out an armed attack a few days before an election. In 2016, for example, 10 people died in the VRAEM in an attack attributed to the MPCP a few hours before the first round of the presidential election. Previously, in 2011, five people died in the Cusco region in an ambush by the MPCP, the day before the second round of the presidential election. In 2020, at least 16 people (half of them policemen or soldiers) were killed and several others were injured in various episodes of violence in the VRAEM region, most of them ambushes by the MPCP.

Throughout the month of June, there were protests and clashes between supporters of the two main presidential candidates (Pedro Castillo and Keiko Fujimori) following the release of the results of the presidential and legislative elections held in April (first round) and June (second round). Although the exit polls handed victory to Fujimori, in the end the electoral authorities declared Castillo the winner by a narrow margin of votes (50.13% for Castillo and 49.87% for Fujimori). In the days that followed, demonstrations and protests were staged by supporters of Fujimori, who denounced the irregularities and fraud, challenged more than 200,000 votes and even called for revoking the elections. After Fujimori's appeals were dismissed and Castillo's definitive victory was proclaimed, hundreds of former military officers sent a letter to the leaders of the Peruvian Armed Forces asking them not to recognise Castillo's victory and support accusations of fraud by Fujimori. Finally, during various times of the year there were **expressions of social unrest due to the management and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**. In late May, the Peruvian government presented a report updating the registry of people who died from coronavirus (going from 69,342 to 180,764), making Peru the country in the world with the highest mortality from COVID-19 in relation to the size of its population and one of the countries in the region with the lowest vaccination rates.

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 government and the opposition resumed political negotiations, this time in Mexico, and there were no massive demonstrations, but high levels of political and social polarisation and many complaints about the human rights situation in the country continued to be reported. Indeed, in November the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, announced **the start of a formal investigation for crimes against humanity committed since 2017, including the crackdown on the protests that took place between April and July 2017, in which more than 130 people died**. President Nicolás Maduro expressed his opposition the decision, but at the same time showed his government's willingness to cooperate with the investigation, the first of its kind in a Latin American country. In March, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission declared before the United Nations Human Rights Council that in the first three months of 2021 it had reported more than 200 murders committed by police forces and was committed to investigate their circumstances. In another report made public in September, the mission denounced that the country's judicial system does not offer protection to victims and is a fundamental pillar of the state's repression against the opposition. Along the same lines, throughout the year several NGOs and even the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights denounced the state authorities' harassment of certain civil society organisations, NGOs and media outlets. In June, **UNHCR declared that Venezuela is the country with the second-highest number of displaced people in the world, at more than five million**. According to data from the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence, **in 2021 there was a homicide rate of 40.9 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, the second-highest in Latin America and the Caribbean** (only behind Jamaica, with a rate of 49.4). However, this rate was lower than that of last year and clearly lower than that reached in 2018 (91 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants).

Moreover, a major political, social and institutional crisis continued to be observed in the country. In January, the new National Assembly emerged from the parliamentary elections of 6 December 2020, which had a turnout of 30.1% (16%, according to the opposition) and whose legitimacy and validity was rejected or questioned by the opposition (which mostly boycotted the elections) and by many governments and international organisations, such as the OAS, the EU and the United Nations. Nevertheless, a significant part of the international community stopped recognising the National Assembly, which was active between 2016 and 2021 (majority controlled by the opposition), as the legitimate legislative power of the country, and Juan Guaidó as the president. Despite continuing to enjoy support and recognition from the US, some of the main opposition parties did not support Guaidó's attempt to keep the National Assembly operating. At various times during the year, certain representatives of the opposition denounced the government's repression and harassment. In January, for example, the new National Assembly asked the Venezuelan Prosecutor's Office to prevent Guaidó and 20 other political representatives from leaving the country. In July, following an operation by the security forces against various organised criminal gangs that controlled some neighbourhoods in Caracas (and during which 26 people were killed and around 40 were injured), arrest warrants were issued against several leaders of the Popular Will party (led by Guaidó), accused of being involved with said gangs. Freddy Guevara, one of Guaidó's main collaborators, was arrested on charges of terrorism and treason, while Guaidó denounced an attempted arrest in his own home. In January, another operation by special police forces against a criminal gang in a Caracas neighbourhood ended with the deaths of 23 people. In September, the Prosecutor's Office declared that Guaidó had 25 cases pending with the justice system, to which he added crimes of rebellion, trafficking in weapons of war, treason and conspiracy to commit crimes.

The tension between the government and the opposition increased again as a result of the regional and local elections on 21 November, which had a turnout of 41.8% and in which the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela won 19 of the 23 states and 205 of the 322 races for city mayor. Even though a more inclusive National Electoral Council had been established in May and a large part of the opposition decided to participate in the elections for the first time since 2017, it denounced irregularities and abuses. In the state of Apure, the opposition candidate did not recognise the results, while in the state of Barinas, the Supreme Court ordered a repeat of the elections in January 2022 when the opposition candidate was leading the vote. The US government denounced that the elections were not free or credible, citing arbitrary arrest, the harassment of civil society organisations, the criminalisation of opposition parties, vetoes of candidacies and the manipulation of voter registration. The EU reported irregularities and the United Nations Secretary-General urged the government to investigate isolated episodes of violence on election day, such as an incident in the state of Zulia in which one person died and two others were injured.

2.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

Central Asia

Kyrgyzstan	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government, Identity, Resources, Territory Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

Summary:

Since its emergence as an independent state in August 1991, the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan has experienced several periods of instability and socio-political conflict. The presidency of Askar Akayev (1991-2005) began with reformist momentum but gradually drifted towards authoritarianism and corruption. In March 2005 a series of demonstrations denouncing fraud in that year's elections led to a social uprising that forced the collapse of the regime. The promises of change made by the new president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, soon came to nothing, giving way to a regime of authoritarian presidentialism in which corruption and nepotism were rife, especially from the end of 2007. All of this took place in a scenario involving economic difficulties for the population, latent tension between the north and south of the country, and the exclusion of ethnic minorities from political decision-making processes. Five years later, in April 2010, a new popular uprising led to the overthrow of the regime, with clashes that claimed 85 lives and left hundreds injured. This was followed in June by a wave of violence with an inter-ethnic dimension, claiming more than 400 lives. The country experiences a new political crisis in 2020, with post-election protests and a controversial transfer of power. Other sources of tension in Kyrgyzstan are related to the presence of regional armed groups with Islamist tendencies in the Fergana Valley (an area between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and border disputes with the neighbouring countries.

A year after the post-election crisis of 2020, new elections were held and a constitutional referendum was approved that expanded presidential powers; meanwhile, border tension escalated, with the deadliest incidents in years in the border area with Tajikistan. Sadyr Japarov won the elections on 10 January, with 79.2% of the votes. During the post-election protests of the previous year, Japarov was released from prison and appointed prime minister, then as president after the resignation of Sooronbay Jeenbekov, offices that he later left to be able to run in the new elections. The turnout was 39%. The OSCE's electoral observation mission concluded that fundamental freedoms had generally been respected, but that it had not been a completely fair vote due to an unequal scenario and the improper use of administrative resources by the candidate Japarov, among other factors. On the same day, **the change from a parliamentary to a presidential**

In 2021, the most serious incidents in years occurred on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with 50 fatalities and tens of thousands of civilians evacuated

system was approved in a referendum, as part of the reforms promoted by Japarov in 2020. With a turnout of 38.4%, it was approved with 85.2% of the votes. In February, the new government was appointed and the draft constitutional reform was presented. The new Constitution shrank Parliament from 120 to 90 members and expanded the president's previous single six-year term to two five-year terms, along with new presidential powers to appoint judges and heads of police services. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) expressed concern about the new text, including the preponderant role of the presidency and its powers, the weakened role of Parliament, the risks of interference with judicial independence, the lack of respect for the principles of law and legality in relation to the calendar and procedures for its adoption and the lack of inclusive and substantive public consultation and parliamentary debate. The reform was finally passed in a referendum in April, with 85.2% of the votes and 36.6% turnout.

Furthermore, parliamentary elections took place on 28 November. The four parties with the highest levels of support were Ata-Zhurt, with 17.3% of the vote; Ishenim, with 13.6%; Yntymak, with 12%; and Alliance, with 8.3%. Analysts indicated that the results strengthened Japarov. Only one of the parties that entered the new Parliament was considered to be in opposition (Butun Kyrgyzstan). Opposition parties protested against the elections and results, which they considered fraudulent. **Two days before the elections, the State Committee for National Security announced the arrest of 15 people, including MPs and former high-ranking officials who were allegedly planning an attempted coup by organising protests**. In the first half of the year there were various public protests, limited in scope, around issues such as corruption (February) and the approval of a law to protect honour that local activists and international organisations warned could be instrumentalized for censorship.

Another fault line during the year was border disputes. **At the end of April, the most serious incidents in years took place on the border with Tajikistan, as over half of it is not demarcated**. Intercommunity incidents around water infrastructure in the town of Kök-Tash (Kyrgyzstan) devolved into hostilities between the security forces of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan accused Tajikistan of using mortars and machine gun fire. The tension spread to more than 15 towns in the Batken region, bordering Tajikistan. It was reported that Tajikistan took over the road connecting to the Tajik enclave of Vorukh and Kyrgyzstan blamed Tajikistan for destroying some border posts. **Altogether, 50 people died, including civilians and security forces, and around 200 were injured. Around 24,000 people were evacuated from the Batken region, according to**

Kyrgyz authorities, and around 15,000 from the Sughd region (Tajikistan). There was destruction and burning of houses, stores, vehicles and a school. A ceasefire was agreed on 29 April. In June there was a new escalation of military tension around a non-demarcated area of the border in the Chon-Alay district (Osh region). Both parties reached a nine-point agreement in which they undertook to withdraw border posts from the disputed area and to initiate steps to delimit the border area through working groups. New incidents of violence occurred in subsequent months. In contrast to the tension on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan took steps to reduce their border disputes. In March, both countries agreed on a protocol to delimit and demarcate the border. After negotiations between the two delegations, headed in Kyrgyzstan by the head of the State Committee for National Security, Kamchybek Tashiev, and in Uzbekistan by its prime minister, Abdulla Aripov, all border disputes were resolved, according to Kyrgyzstan. The negotiations followed a meeting between the two presidents that same month in which they also addressed the border issue, among other matters. The agreement included several exchanges of territory and allowed Uzbekistan to use water reserves in exchange for more territory for Kyrgyzstan. It also contained measures to simplify transit between Uzbekistan and its Sokh enclave, surrounded by Kyrgyz territory.

East Asia

Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	System
	International
Main parties:	Korea, DPR Rep. of Korea

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

Important progress was made during the year in the improvement of bilateral relations, such as the resumption of communication between both countries and the mutual willingness to discuss a statement that would end the Korean War (1950-53), but both sides continued to trade accusations and threats and carried out ballistic tests at various times of the year. Regarding this last issue, South Korea and the US decided to put an end to the limitations that both countries agreed in 1979 on the range (180 kilometres) and load (500 kilos) of North Korea's missiles. Even though these restrictions had been modified and extended four times (1997, 2012, 2017 and 2020), the new agreement reached by Seoul and Washington could usher in a new stage of development of space and ballistics capabilities, as the South Korean president himself recognised. Thus, in mid-September, after South Korea tested the launch of ballistic missiles from a submarine, the first non-nuclear country to do so, President Moon Jae-in declared that this type of test increases South Korea's deterrence capacity. North Korea declared that such actions could destabilise the peninsula and lead to the complete destruction of bilateral relations. Along the same lines, South Korea launched its first self-made rocket into space in October, although in the end it failed to go into orbit. According to some analysts, South Korea has already developed and tested intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles with payloads of up to 2,000 kilos, but in the future, it could develop longer-range ballistic missiles capable of hitting targets beyond the Korean peninsula, submarine-launched long-range ballistic missiles and hypersonic weapons. These same analysts also suggest that the US government's willingness to put an end to the aforementioned restrictions on South Korea not only responds to the need to counteract the development of North Korea's weapons programme in recent years but could also be linked to its strategy to contain and deter China in the region. **North Korea conducted over a dozen ballistic tests during the year** that various countries criticised for violating UN Security Council resolutions. Particularly noteworthy is the launch in mid-September of ballistic missiles from a train, which penetrated Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone and was considered a major threat by several countries as it may indicate Pyongyang's willingness to diversify its missile launch options and make it more difficult to identify and track their arsenal.

Another aspect that produced great tension between both countries was the joint military exercises that South Korea and the US carry out every year, which were held between 8 and 16 March and 16 and 23 August 2021. Although these exercises were smaller than those of previous years (and the August exercises did not involve ground troops), North Korea strongly criticised them and even cut off communications with South Korea in August a few weeks after having resumed them. Finally, there continued to be many serious complaints about the human rights situation in North Korea during the

year. In February, a United Nations report denounced the possible commission of crimes against humanity in the North Korean penal system, pointing out that political prisoners are subjected to extreme forms of cruelty, detailing cases of sexual violence, torture, forced labour, forced starvation and denial of medical care and urging the UN Security Council to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. In July, another report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group of the United Kingdom (APPG) was published, which also recounts the commission of crimes against humanity and denounces that the human rights situation in the country has not improved since 2014, when the UN Commission of Inquiry published a report indicating that the nature, seriousness and scale of the human rights violations committed by North Korea had no comparison with any other case in the contemporary world. Regarding the humanitarian situation, various reports detailed several cases of death due to starvation and warned of severe food shortages in the country. Thus, the United Nations' human rights rapporteur in the country warned of the impact that international sanctions are having on the civilian population, while **the FAO pointed out that North Korea urgently needed 860,000 tonnes of food in 2021**. In addition to the impact of COVID-19, which led to the closure of borders in a country that is highly dependent on China for several essential products, the FAO director general also warned that extreme weather linked to climate change, which has recently been reflected in droughts and floods in the country, was also having a serious impact on the country's food security, for which he called for international cooperation to mitigate its effects on the North Korean population.

DPR Korea - USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea[31]	
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.

Although the new US government offered North Korea a resumption of dialogue and diplomatic channels to deal with the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula at various moments of the year, several lines of tension persisted between the two countries, such as the holding of military exercises between the US and South Korea, the deployment of more than 28,000 US soldiers on South Korean territory, Washington's imposition of economic sanctions on North Korea, the development of new weapons, the conduct of ballistic tests by North Korea and the continuation of Pyongyang's weapons programme. In March, **the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated that he was extremely concerned that North Korea had continued to develop its nuclear programme despite international sanctions and the commitments that the North Korean government had made as part of the presidential summits held by Kim Jong-un and former US President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019**. In 2017, North Korea carried out its last nuclear test, while in 2018 it declared that it had disabled the tunnels of the country's main nuclear test facility at Punggye-ri. A few weeks before these IAEA warnings, the United Nations panel of experts that oversees the application of sanctions on North Korea issued a confidential report addressed to the Security Council (but leaked to some media outlets) that North Korea had continued to expand its nuclear and missile programme during 2020, mainly through around $316 million obtained in various cyberattacks in 2019 and 2020. In August, both the IAEA and the UN Secretary-General voiced concern about the reactivation of the Yongbyong reactor (the largest in the country, in which the plutonium necessary to develop North Korea's nuclear programme would have been produced), which was presumed inactive since December 2018. The United Nations and the IAEA, whose observers were expelled from the country in 2009, urged Pyongyang to observe both UN Security Council resolutions and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and called for the resumption of diplomatic channels as the only option to denuclearise the Korean peninsula.

In addition to the progress in the North Korean atomic programme, **two other developments that caused concern in the US and other governments were the high number of ballistic tests conducted by Pyongyang, especially in March, September and October, and the development of new weaponry throughout the year**. This weaponry includes new ballistic missiles launched from a submarine that were unveiled during one of the largest military parades in recent years in January and a railway with the capacity to launch ballistic missiles, as well as some of the sophisticated weapons that Kim Jong-un exhibited in October, such as a hypersonic missile, low-altitude cruise missiles and one of the largest intercontinental ballistic missiles manufactured to date. Regarding political developments, North Korea

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

repeatedly rejected Washington's offer of dialogue, alleging that it was trying to hide and legitimise its hostile policies towards the country. Even if Kim Jong-un showed a certain willingness to resume diplomatic contacts with the Biden administration on occasion, Pyongyang declared that the US remains its main enemy and strongly criticised the joint military exercises between the US and South Korea carried out in March and August, the permanent and massive presence of US soldiers in South Korea and the economic sanctions imposed by Washington. Biden declared before Congress that the North Korean nuclear programme remains one of the main threats to the United States and called on Pyongyang not to indulge in provocations or actions that violate UN Security Council resolutions. At the end of the year, the commander of the US military contingent in South Korea warned that any declaration of the end of the Korean War, suggested in September by the South Korean president, could lead to the end of the role played by the US and United Nations on the Korean peninsula since the 1950s.

South Asia

India - China	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	Territory International
Main parties:	India, China

Summary:

The border shared by China and India has been disputed since the 1950s, after the partition of India and Pakistan and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. This border has never been formally delimited by an agreement between the two countries and there are several areas whose demarcation is a source of conflict. In the western part of the border, the dispute revolves around the uninhabited Aksai Chin area, whose territory is claimed by India, which considers it part of the Ladakh region (part of Jammu and Kashmir) and is administered by China as part of the Xinjiang region. China's announcement of the construction of a highway linking Xinjiang with Tibet through the Aksai Chin region increased tension with India, which was exacerbated after the Dalai Lama was granted asylum in India in 1959. In the years that followed, there were troop movements by both countries in the area. In 1962, a war began that ended with India's military defeat, but the issue of demarcation was left unresolved and continued to shape relations between both powers and with other countries in the region, especially Pakistan. In 1988, both governments agreed to resolve the dispute peacefully. However, since then no progress has been made in the negotiations and the military tension in the disputed areas has persisted.

Tension between the two countries continued, with ups and downs during the year and some partial results in the bilateral negotiations. The year had begun with a new clash between the Indian Army and the Chinese Army in the Sikkim area that allegedly left 20 Chinese soldiers and four Indians wounded, according to Indian media reports, but which was described as "minor". In addition, the Indian security forces handed a detained soldier over to China, who may have crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the name for the *de facto* border between both countries. In February, an agreement was announced for the military withdrawal from the Pangong Lake area and for the first time the Chinese authorities officially admitted that four of their soldiers had died during the clashes that took place during 2020. Despite the initial agreement, there were difficulties in finalising it in the following months and disagreements resurged between the two countries. In addition, China continued to provide equipment to its troops deployed on the border, increasing its military capacity, to which India responded by stating that it would also boost its military situation on the border. The military build-up posed an obstacle to the agreement, which was to be aimed at the withdrawal of troops and the border military infrastructure. It was also learned that India had increased its deployment on the border with 50,000 additional soldiers and had opened 12 roads in Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. Analysts said that this infrastructure should improve border security and facilitate the movement of security forces. In August, however, China and India agreed to a military withdrawal from the Gogra area in eastern Ladakh. The agreement entailed the removal of all temporary and other structures and the restoration of relief to the situation prior to the outbreak of the crisis. Both sides ended their troop deployments, noting that both armies were at their permanent bases. The agreement came after the 12th round of negotiations that took place on 31 July on the Chinese side of the LAC. In addition, a demilitarised zone of separation was established in which neither of the two countries' armies would patrol. Withdrawals were also completed from the Pangong Lake and Galwan Valley areas, the scene of the most serious fighting between the two countries, which took place in 2020. Despite the agreement, India subsequently carried out military exercises in areas close to the border and in October there was a new escalation of tension when troops from both countries met face to face in the Tawang East sector, in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, in an area claimed by China. Despite the incident, there were no clashes. Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar pointed out that relations between India and China were at a low point and accused Beijing of having carried out actions that violated the agreements reached.

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

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

The tension between India and Pakistan continued, despite the announcement of a ceasefire in February. **In a joint statement, they indicated that both countries were committed to strictly observing the agreements and the ceasefire along the Line of Control and other areas**. In 2003, India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement that had been constantly breached in recent years despite being in force, with exchanges of fire by both armies, which had caused many civilian and military fatalities. The announcement came in a context of growing regional tension due to the military escalation between India and China stemming from border disputes during 2020, the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of state status for Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 by the Indian government, which worsened relations with Pakistan. In April, the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* revealed that India may have made an offer to Pakistan in December 2020 to reduce tension between the two countries and start indirect talks on all the issues facing them, including the dispute over Kashmir. This proposal allegedly elicited a favourable response from Pakistan. In fact, after the announcement of the commitment to the 2003 ceasefire agreement, violence around the Line of Control decreased, although armed clashes continued in Jammu and Kashmir. According to *Dawn,* the rapprochements were carried out by the intelligence chiefs of the two countries at the suggestion of India, which did not want the talks to take place between political interlocutors. The meetings took place in the United Arab Emirates, as confirmed by a diplomat from the country, which carried out initiatives to promote rapprochement, although India indicated that both parties agreed not to incorporate a third party into the dialogue. Pakistan's priority was the return of state status to Jammu and Kashmir. India's priority was rapprochement with Pakistan in an attempt to reduce

tension so it could devote more military resources to the tension with China and increase its military deployment on the Sino-Indian border. The talks did not bear fruit and relations between the two countries deteriorated again as of April with mutual accusations, although no violations of the ceasefire agreement were verified. In September, the Indian security forces indicated that there had been no incident on the Line of Control since February, although violence persisted in Jammu and Kashmir, with insurgents infiltrating from Pakistan, according to the Indian government. Meanwhile, Pakistan denounced arrests of Kashmiri activists by the Indian authorities.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Indonesia (West Papua)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, OPM armed group, political and social opposition, 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.

Very frequent clashes were reported between the Indonesian Armed Forces and the armed group OPM and some warned that the government's military offensive, considered one of the largest in recent decades, may have forcibly displaced thousands of people. According to calculations made from media reports, around 30 people died throughout the year, although some say that there may have been many more victims. **At the end of the year, the West Papua Council of Churches noted that according to its investigations, more than 400 people had died in the provinces of Papua and West Papua as a result of the conflict in the region since December 2018**. According to the Association of West Papua Baptist Churches, at least 60,000 people have fled their homes, most settling in surrounding regions and many others crossing the border into Papua New Guinea. In addition to the district of Puncak, the epicentre of hostilities

in recent years, other districts in which episodes of violence have occurred include Nduga, Yahukimo, Intan Jaya, Maybrat and Pegunungan Bintang. Benni Wanda, the leader of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) and president of the government in exile, established abroad in December 2020, denounced that the Indonesian military offensive in the region is the largest since the 1970s and may include the additional deployment of many troops, the regular use of air support, the shutdown of the Internet in certain regions and massive displacement of the local population. Some of the most significant episodes of violence in the year were an OPM attack on a military post in the Maybrat district, in which four soldiers died and two others were wounded, attacks on construction workers in Puncak in June, in which several people were killed (19 construction workers were killed in an OPM attack in December 2019) and the assassination of a general and head of regional military intelligence in Puncak in April. After this latest episode, the government declared the OPM and the rest of the armed groups operating in the region to be terrorists. This decision was criticised by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International. According to some analysts, it could trigger an escalation of violence in the region and demonstrate the government's intention to try to manage the conflict with military means.

Regarding political developments, **in July Parliament approved extending the 2001 Special Autonomy Law for another 20 years, provoking much criticism and sparking many protests**. According to some, the reform of the law (which includes the amendment of 18 articles and the inclusion of two others) has been carried out without any type of local consultation or participation, increases the central government's control over the region and does not foresee the formation of regional political parties. The government declared that reforming the law will speed up development in the region. However, according to Benni Wanda, resolving the conflict requires recognising the Papuan people's right to self-determination and repeating the 1969 referendum, which Papuan nationalism and part of the international community do not recognise as legitimate. In fact, Wanda complained that the activities of multinational mining companies (such as Rio Tinto, Freeport-McRoran and BP) have exacerbated the conflict in the region since the 1960s. In April, Greenpeace published a report denouncing the collusion between some multinationals and certain parts of the government, detailing many irregularities in the process of awarding concessions for exploiting natural resources in West Papua. In July, more than 120 people were arrested in demonstrations against the extension of the Special Autonomy Law in Jakarta, Jayapura, Sorong and other cities in the region. Finally, the ULMWP representative in Vanuatu asked for the ULMWP to be admitted as a full member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, a regional group made up of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front, representing the Kanak people of New Caledonia, of which it is currently an observer.

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

Summary:
Since Thaksin Shinawatra's began his term in office in 2001, he had been criticised by several sectors for his authoritarian style, his campaign against drug trafficking (which claimed over 2,000 lives) and his militaristic approach to the conflict in the south. However, the socio-political crisis affecting Thailand over the last few years escalated in 2006. That year, after a case of corruption was made public, mass demonstrations took place demanding Shinawatra's resignation and in September a military junta staged a coup that forced him into exile. Although a new Constitution was voted in August 2017, the new Government was unable to bring down the political and social polarisation and there continued to be regular mass demonstrations encouraged by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (a movement also receiving the name of "red shirts", supporting the return of former prime-minister Thaksin Shinawatra) and by the People's Alliance for Democracy -also known as the "yellow shirts". This instability gave place to many violent acts, the resignation of several governments, and the overthrowing of the Government led by Yingluck Shinawatra –Thaksin Shinawatra's sister– with a military coup in May 2014. Since then the country is governed by a military government called the National Council for Peace and Order, which has been repeatedly accused of prohibiting the action of parties, retraining fundamental rights and freedoms and wanting to institutionalize and perpetuate a constitutional and democratic exceptionality situation.

During the year there were protests of considerable magnitude demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha, reform of the Constitution to make it more democratic and reform of the monarchy to make it more transparent. Although no official data were released on the impact of such demonstrations, it is estimated that hundreds of people were injured and many more were arrested in the protests, during which many clashes took place between demonstrators and state security forces and bodies. For example, over 600 people were arrested between July and September alone. **The especially massive protests in February, March, July and August were also motivated by opposition to legislation regulating lese-majesty crimes**. In August, it emerged that over 150 people had been detained since November 2020 on such charges. In February,

the United Nations had expressed its concern about the increasing use of Article 112 of the Penal Code (which prohibits defamation against the monarchy and is punishable by between three and 15 years in prison). Previously, in November 2020, the United Nations had demanded its amendment on the grounds that it was not compatible with international law. In October, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Thai Lawyers for Human Rights and Internet Law Reform Dialogue had published a report on how the government had used such legislation to curtail both participation in pro-democracy demonstrations and the expression of political ideas on the Internet. Shortly thereafter, in November, during the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, 12 countries requested the reform of Article 112. However, also in November, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling stating that the demonstrations calling for reform of the monarchy were a seditious attempt to subvert the system of government in Thailand, whose head of state is the king. This sentence was of a general nature and did not apply solely to three social leaders who had been arrested in February, which is why some analysts thought that it opened the door for pro-democracy protesters to be tried for revolt or rebellion, crimes that can be punished with life imprisonment. In political developments, a no-confidence motion was presented in September against Prayuth Chan-o-cha and five of his ministers for corruption and mismanagement of the pandemic. The motion ultimately failed.

2.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Belarus	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, EU, Poland, USA, Russia

Summary:
The former Soviet republic of Belarus achieved its independence in 1991 and became a presidential republic. Since 1994 it has been governed by Alexander Lukashenko, whose presidential powers and term limits were extended in referenda in 1996 and 2004. With a centralised economy inherited from the Soviet era and energy-dependent on Russia, Belarus has oscillated between a strategic alliance with Russia and a policy of affirmation of its national sovereignty that has brought it through stages of crisis with its large neighbour. The Lukashenko regime's political authoritarianism and violation of human rights has left little
room for political and social opposition, while driving low-intensity tension at the same time. In 2020, Lukashenko's re-election sparked massive anti-government protests. The regime's massive crackdown on the demonstrations set off a serious political and social crisis.

The socio-political crisis continued in Belarus, with systematic repression by the regime against the political opposition, human rights activists, independent journalists and other groups. The crisis began in 2020 during the presidential election due to the regime's restrictions on opposition candidates, the re-election of Lukashenko and massive protests by the opposition against results they considered fraudulent, which were met with government repression. In 2021, the crisis took the form of serious persecution in all spheres and at all levels. There were mass arrests, closures of civil society organisations (including some with a long history, such as the Viasna Human Rights Centre and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee), constant raids on offices and homes, closures of news channels (traditional media, Internet and social networks) and persecution of its subscribers, prison sentences (for fabricated crimes, according to organisations such as Amnesty International) and obstruction of legal defence work. Groups such as students, healthcare staff and athletes were also affected by intimidation and repression. Legislative amendments were approved for various laws and for the Penal Code to protect repressive practices and human rights violations and to increase penalties. Troops and military vehicles were deployed along with police in response to protests. **In July, the High Commissioner for Human Rights warned of massive human rights violations that were unprecedented in scope and severity and estimated that 35,000 people had been detained since the start of the crisis in 2020.[32]** By mid-2021, over 200 civil society organisations had been closed or were facing closure, according to Amnesty International.[33] Organisations specialising in investigations into torture and providing care to victims pointed to a "coordinated policy of systematic torture".[34] Protests took place during the year, and despite the attempt to revive larger-scale demonstrations in March, they were limited in size and duration (including flashmobs), given the degree of repression and as a strategy to prevent arrests. The protests remained peaceful and were staged in the capital, Minsk, and in dozens of towns.

Opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, in exile in Lithuania, as well as other members of the opposition, called for an inclusive national dialogue as a solution and urged actors such as the OSCE to promote it. The government, which viewed the crisis as a problem of "extremism" and "terrorism" and as a foreign-backed attempt at destabilisation, ruled out any

32. ACNUDH, "Belarus: Massive human rights violations unprecedented in scope and gravity, says UN expert", *ACNUD*, 5 July 2021.
33. Amnesty International, "Belarus: International human rights groups demand release of Viasna members on first anniversary of crackdown", *AI*, 17 September 2021.
34. IRCT, "Belarus: Support to Torture Survivors Imperative in Absence of Accountability", IRCT, 17 September 2021.

dialogue. Instead, it promoted a constitutional reform without public participation aimed at strengthening the continuity of the regime. The draft changes, announced in December, included lifetime immunity for Lukashenko; the institutional creation of a parallel body to Parliament, the Popular Assembly, which was inaugurated in February as a space for figures loyal to the president, with the participation of the president and former presidents and officials involved in foreign and security policy, among others; and limits on the presidency to two terms, though not retroactively. A referendum was scheduled for approval in February 2022.

The serious internal crisis had an international dimension. It produced an international response in the form of calls of warning and sanctions. Thirty-five OSCE members activated the Vienna Mechanism to demand explanations about human rights violations. International actors such as the EU, the US, Canada and others prolonged and expanded the sanctions at various times of the year. For example, a Belarusian jet fighter intercepted a commercial airliner *en route* from Greece to Lithuania as it passed through Belarusian airspace in May, forcing it to land. After a Belarusian journalist and his partner on board the plane were arrested, trade sanctions affecting the airline sector were imposed. In the months that followed, restrictions were extended on potash (a key export for Belarus), tobacco, oil, petrochemical products and other goods. Relations between the West and Belarus worsened and diplomats from various countries were expelled (France, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland). Belarus and Russia signed various integration agreements in November, as part of their decades-long negotiation process. In turn, the deteriorating situation surrounding the Ukraine conflict, with the massive deployment of Russian troops near the Ukrainian border and US and Ukrainian intelligence alerts of a possible invasion from November on, added uncertainty to the tensions in Eastern Europe.

In what was considered a response to the sanctions, Belarus launched a policy of pressure against neighbouring EU countries, facilitating the transit of migrants from Belarus to Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. Neighbouring governments declared states of emergency, deployed armed forces to the border and approved the construction of barbed-wire fences. Several thousand people were left in limbo, stuck on the border between Poland and Belarus, in a serious humanitarian emergency. On the Polish side, an access restriction zone was imposed. Based on interviews it conducted, OHCHR denounced the lack of or limitations on access to food, drinking water and shelter faced by the migrants, as well as the Belarusian security forces' use of force and threats and the expulsions and arrests by Poland.[35] The EU accused Belarus of turning migrants into a weapon of pressure, while maintaining its migration policy of prioritising deportations and promoting agreements with countries of origin to facilitate expulsion, as was

the case with Iraq. In mid-November, Minsk began transferring migrants to deportation flights.

Russia and the Caucasus

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

Summary:
The conflict 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 involved sporadic violations of the ceasefire. Since the 1994 ceasefire there have been several escalations of violence, such as the one in 2016 which led to several hundred fatalities. The war resumed in September 2020. Around 6,800 military personnel from both countries were killed or missing, several hundred civilians were killed and around 91,000 Armenians and 84,000 Azerbaijanis were displaced. In November of that year, the parties reached an agreement that put an end to the war and represented a complete change of the status quo (Azerbaijani control of the districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh and part of Nagorno-Karabakh and the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces), but left Nagorno-Karabakh's political status unresolved.

Following the six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and its adjacent districts in 2020, the situation in 2021 turned into one of militarised tension, with a fragile ceasefire and many humanitarian challenges. Frequent ceasefire violations were reached in November 2020. The ACLED database recorded 57 fatalities during 2021 in just over 300 incidents of violence. The 2020 war had resulted in Azerbaijan's military takeover of a part of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the districts around the enclave, with shifting front lines. In this new scenario in 2021, the Armenian and Azerbaijani military forces kept a short distance between them and were closer to civilian settlements. As noted by the research centre International Crisis Group, Azerbaijan established new

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35. OHCHR, *Press briefing notes on Poland/Belarus border*, ACNUDH, 21 December 2021.

military positions and the Armenian forces of Nagorno-Karabakh set up defensive positions on the new line of separation.[36] Russian peacekeepers who had been deployed in 2020 as part of the deal patrolled inside Nagorno-Karabakh and in Lachin corridor, but not on the front lines.[37] Amid the militarisation and fragile implementation and supervision of the ceasefire, **there were incidents both around the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and along the line of separation between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan during the year**. There were shootings, reports of incursions, mine explosions, arrests and other incidents for which both sides traded blame. Hostilities in November, causing six Armenian deaths and seven Azerbaijani deaths, in addition to wounding various people, increased alerts and led to a new truce mediated by Russia. There were various fatalities and injuries during the year due to mine explosions, as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone continued to be one of the regions in the world with the most mines and explosive devices. Issues such as the location of mines, the release of prisoners, the delimitation and demarcation of the border and the establishment of transport and economic links were on the agenda of the talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which was marked by antagonism and disagreement.[38] In September, both countries filed complaints against each other before the International Criminal Court for their actions in the 2020 war. The limited progress included an agreement by both sides to establish a channel of direct communication between their defence ministers as an incident prevention mechanism.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, many of the tens of thousands of Armenians who had been displaced by the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War (around 91,000 Armenians and 84,000 Azerbaijanis, according to a Council of Europe report)[39] returned in the months after the November 2020 agreement. As reported by UNHCR in November 2021, around 37,000 people from Nagorno-Karabakh remained in Armenia, mostly women and minors, with updated figures from July. Both the population displaced to Armenia and the population returned to Nagorno-Karabakh were in need of decent housing conditions and access to livelihoods. The government of Azerbaijan stated that 70% of the approximately 500,000 Azerbaijanis displaced in the war of the 1990s wanted to return to the areas around Nagorno-Karabakh from which they had fled and that had returned to Baku's control in the 2020 war, although the Azerbaijani authorities estimated that it could take a decade to clear the area. Disagreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan blocked UNHCR's access to Nagorno-Karabakh, which had been provided for in the 2020 ceasefire agreement. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan demanded that the disputed region only

be accessible from their own territory to support the position that each side defends: Nagorno-Karabakh's annexation by Azerbaijan, in the case of Baku; and self-determination for the region, in the case of Yerevan.

The conflict was affected by internal tension in Armenia, which accompanied the political and social discontent over the military defeat in 2020. The political opposition staged anti-government demonstrations in the first months of the year, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian. The protests shut down Parliament in March. That month, the government and opposition reached an agreement to hold early elections in June and lift the martial law imposed at the outbreak of the 2020 war as ways to de-escalate the crisis. Pashinian resigned in April but remained the acting prime minister. Despite the protests and polls, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian's Civil Contract party won the early elections in June with 53.9% of the vote and 71 seats.

South-east Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Central government, government of the Republika Srpska, government of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation, high representative of the international community

Summary:
The former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inhabited by Bosnians, Serbs and Croats, was caught up in a war between 1992 and 1995 (during the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation) in which the country's Serbian political elite, with support from Serbia, as well as Bosniak and Croatian political figures, mobilised their respective populations and forces on the basis of ethnic issues and political plans for self determination that were mutually incompatible. The Dayton peace agreement led to the creation of a fragile state divided into two entities: the Republika Srpska (with a Serb majority and 49% of the territory); and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (with a Bosniak and Croatian population and 51% of the territory), both of which enjoyed wide-ranging powers. Political tension among the elites of the three communities, and between these elites and the international bodies with the mandate of overseeing the implementation of the agreements, along with the legacy of the impact of the conflict on the population and country, remain active sources of conflict. Others included corruption and inequality. In 2014, more than 30 towns in the Bosnian-Croatian federation were the scene of protests against the political management and the socioeconomic situation.

36. International Crisis Group, *Post-war prospects for Nagorno-Karabakh*, Europe Report no. 264, 9 June 2021.
37. Ibid.
38. For further information on the negotiating process, see the summary on Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2022.
39. Gavan Paul, *Humanitarian consequences of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan*, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, Doc. 15363, 13 September 2021.

Tension in the country increased, with the authorities of the Republika Srpksa warning and taking steps to withdraw from state institutions and bodies such as the Bosnian Army and the fiscal and judicial system and create their own institutions. The crisis that broke out in 2021 was described by Christian Schmidt, the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the greatest existential risk faced by the country since the post-war period. Political tensions in the country heightened in the second half of the year. In July, Bosnian Serb representatives in state institutions launched a boycott against the tripartite presidency, Parliamentary Assembly and Council of Ministers in response to the introduction by former High Representative Valentin Inzko (who left office in July) of amendments to the criminal code that criminalised the denial of genocide and war crimes committed in the war of the 1990s and the glorification of convicted war criminals. As Schmidt explained in his November report, Inzko's decision came amid increased denialism by the Bosnian Serb authorities. The long-standing rejection by the Bosnian Serb regime of the Office of the High Representative and his extensive executive powers also continued, despite being considered a form of interference. The boycott included both non-participation and obstruction in various votes. In October, the Bosnian Serb member of the country's shared presidency and leader of the Union of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) party, Milorad Dodik, announced that the Republika Srpska would withdraw from the Bosnian Armed Forces, the Indirect Taxation Authority and the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and would create its own institutions in these areas, rejecting all the High Representative's decisions. He also announced that groups of experts would draw up a new Constitution, in which the new defence and tax institutions and the judicial system would be included.

Dodik's position prompted international alarm. **In his November report to the UN Secretary-General, the High Representative warned that if the Bosnian Serb authorities carried out what Dodik had announced, it would mean a departure from the country's current constitutional order and from the framework established by the Dayton peace accords. In practice, it would also involve secession of the territory, even if independence were not formally declared**. US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Gabriel Escobar, held meetings with Bosnia's tripartite presidency, including Dodik, to address the crisis. Escobar stressed that the main message included the agreement of all the interlocutors that there would be no armed conflict and added that Dodik could halt the plans to withdraw from the state institutions. The US and Germany also warned of possible sanctions if there were any unilateral withdrawals. Turkey offered to mediate the crisis. Faced with support for the institutional boycott in July by all the Bosnian

Tension increased in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Bosnian Serb Parliament passed an agreement for the Republika Srpska to withdraw from the Bosnian Army and state tax and judicial systems

Serb parties, some Bosnian Serb groups questioned Dodik's announcements to create their own institutions. The president of the Bosnian Serb opposition, Mirko Sarovic, of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), expressed concern about the plans of Dodik, the SNSD and the parties in coalition with it and warned of the risk of economic collapse. **On 10 December, with 48 votes out of a total of 83 in the chamber, the Parliament of the Republika Srpska passed a non-binding agreement to start the Republika Srpska's withdrawal from the Bosnian Army, tax and judicial systems and to draft legislation for parallel institutions.** The opposition abandoned the vote and Bosnian Serb opposition groups qualified the steps of the electoral campaign (before the elections scheduled for 2022) and warned of risks that the withdrawal could lead to an armed conflict. The vote triggered reactions from the OSCE, the EU and the G7, among others. Hungary warned that it would veto any EU attempt at sanctions against Dodik. Russia downplayed the steps taken by the Republika Srpska and repeated that it was in favour of abolishing the Office of the High Representative. During the year, this was reflected by Russia and China's failed attempt to eliminate it, as well as a threat to veto the renewal of the EU military force in Bosnia, EUFOR, if it included references to the High Representative. EUFOR was renewed in November, without mention of the Office of the High Representative. Throughout the year, the tension associated with the pending electoral reform continued. Before the elections scheduled for 2022, the delay in an agreement on the new reform increased the risks of disputes, including the possibility of an electoral boycott by Croatian parties, in line with their demand for their own electoral district.

2.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

Egypt	
Intensity:	2
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.

During 2021, **the Egyptian government continued to be singled out for its persecution of dissent and many human rights violations**. International organisations, United Nations experts and third countries warned about the situation in the country, highlighting various abuses and violations such as the arbitrary arrest of dozens of activists, the torture and mistreatment of detainees, the intimidation of dissidents' relatives, the abusive use of military courts to judge opponents and severe restrictions imposed on NGOs, among other practices. Amnesty International accused the National Security Agency of harassing and threatening human rights activists to silence them and denounced the convictions of journalists accused of spreading fake news for publications critical of the situation in prisons, the management of the pandemic and other issues.[40] United Nations experts also warned of the torture, detention and arrest of human rights activists in Egypt, stressing that prolonged pre-trial detentions entailed serious and unnecessary exposure to COVID-19.[41] Human rights organisations also denounced the extra-judicial killing of alleged terrorists. A Human Rights Watch report warned of the killing of alleged combatants when they were in custody or did not pose a threat. The government reported the deaths of 755 people in 143 suspected shootings between January 2015 and December 2020, but only identified 144. According to the authorities, everyone killed was wanted for terrorism, most had ties to the Muslim Brotherhood (an organisation outlawed and harshly persecuted since the 2013 coup) and in all cases it was reported that the security forces had returned fire after being shot at by the militants first. However, HRW, which in 2020 had already documented extrajudicial executions in Sinai,[42] analysed various cases that occurred in the rest of the country in 2021. All the dead bodies had indications that they had been arrested or forcibly disappeared prior to their death.

In this context, an unusual international declaration critical of Egypt was issued in March. **As part of the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, 31 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, signed this joint declaration expressing deep concern about the human rights situation in Egypt.**[43] The restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, the limitation on civil society's space for action and the application of anti-terrorist laws against critics, including human rights activists, LGTBI people and journalists, were denounced in an extraordinary way, while calling for a reversal of these practices. However, many of the countries that signed the declaration maintained their cooperative relations with Cairo. Thus, in 2021, the new US government decided to only partially suspend military aid to Egypt and transferred 170 million dollars for counterterrorism, border control and non-proliferation activities. Another 130 million dollars were blocked pending human rights requirements, though activists criticised the motion, which they considered more symbolic than substantive. In an apparent response to pressure from Washington, the government took some action, such as the release of some journalists in April. However, Egyptian courts ratified life sentences for leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, Parliament discussed a law allowing public officials suspected of sympathising with the Islamist group to be removed from their positions (described as persecution by various NGOs) and the president issued a decree allowing the Supreme Constitutional Court to decide on the applicability of international agreements in Egypt, which could allow the country to evade its human rights commitments.

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

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

40. Amnesty International, *Egypt: "This will only end when you die": National Security Agency harassment of activists in Egypt*, 16 September 2021.
41. UN OHCHR, *Imprisoned human rights defenders in Egypt at grave risk of COVID-19, say UN human rights experts*, 24 August 2021.
42. See the summary on Egypt (Sinai) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
43. Issued by Finland and published on 12 March 2021, the declaration was supported by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Macedonia, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the US.

in a major Israeli offensive in July 2006. Meanwhile, the 1967 war led to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, which together with Syria's support of Hezbollah explains the tension between Israel and Syria. Since 2011, the outbreak of the armed conflict in Syria has had a direct impact on the dynamics of this tension and on the positions adopted by the actors involved in this conflict.

The decades-long tension between Israel, Syria and Lebanon, which in recent years has been influenced by the armed conflict in Syria and has seen the increasingly prominent involvement of Iran and the United States, continued to motivate periodic acts of violence. Calculating the death toll is complex given the ambiguous information about the deadly impact of some incidents and the difficulties in attributing responsibility for some attacks, which are not always claimed. Even so, based on counts of different identified acts of violence, it seems possible that at least 40 people lost their lives. As in previous years, **throughout 2021 there were reports of Israeli attacks on Syrian soil that targeted forces linked to Iran and also caused casualties among government forces, Hezbollah militiamen and some civilians**. Israel also attacked Syrian missile batteries in April after an "errant" projectile from Syria landed near Israel's Dimona nuclear facility. Israel also launched attacks against weapons depots. The air raids attributed to Israel occurred mainly in the outskirts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, Latakia, Quneitra, Golan and Deir ez-Zor. The latter region of Syria also suffered US strikes against Iranian-backed militias, in retaliation for attacks against its interests in Iraq.[44]

Meanwhile, tension continued in the border area between Lebanon and Israel throughout 2021, particularly along the Blue Line, in the area supervised by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, UNIFIL. In his regular reports on the situation in the area and on the mission's activities, the UN Secretary-General noted various exchanges of projectiles throughout the year and warned of the increase in tension at certain times, such as in May, concurrently with the escalation of violence in Gaza.[45] No fatalities resulting from these events were reported. Moreover, the UN repeated complaints about the continuous violations of Lebanese airspace by Israel (more than 600 episodes until October 2021), the failure to disarm groups such as Hezbollah and transfers to non-state armed groups in violation of UNSC Resolution 1701 (2006). Unlike the previous year, in which several meetings were held, only one meeting was reported during 2021. It took place in May and involved representatives of the governments of Israel and Lebanon to address differences over the demarcation of the maritime boundary as part of discussions mediated by the US and sponsored by the United Nations Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon.

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.

The situation in Lebanon continued to deteriorate in 2021 due to the persistent political impasse, progressively hostile rhetoric between the different actors, a very serious economic decline and various acts of violence. During the first half of the year, tensions and disagreements continued between Prime Minister Saad Hariri and President Michel Aoun on the formation of a government, without a cabinet being approved despite attempts at facilitation and international pressure, especially from France. Hariri ended up resigning in July after nine months of unsuccessful efforts to form a government, while trading blame with Aoun. Hariri said that the president, the leader of the Christian-Maronite community and an ally of Hezbollah, had been captured by the interests of his son-in-law Jibril Bassil, leader of the Christian Free Patriotic Movement party. Meanwhile, Aoun accused Hariri, the leader of the Sunni community, of evading responsibility. Parliament then appointed the billionaire Najib Mikati as the new prime minister, who negotiated the composition of the new government with Aoun. The new cabinet (consisting of 24 members, with only one female minister) took office in September, in what seemed to be an end to the impasse since the resignation of former Prime Minister Hassan Diab after the devastating explosion in the port of Beirut in August 2020. However, the political arena became tense again a few weeks later, in October, due to the differences between the different political actors regarding the investigation of the deflagration in the Lebanese capital. Reticence about the progress of the investigation and disagreement with some action taken by the investigating judge, Tariq Bitar,

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44. See the summary on Iraq in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
45. See the summary on Israel – Palestine in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

caused organisations such as Hezbollah, Amal and the Marada Movement to demand Bitar's resignation amid accusations of politicisation. Shia government ministers threatened to resign if the judge was not removed from office. Until the end of the year, cabinet meetings remained suspended. **The dispute over the judicial investigation also led to Amal and Hezbollah's protests in October at the Palace of Justice, located in a Christian neighbourhood adjacent to a Shia area, which led to several hours of armed clashes in which seven people died, most of them Hezbollah supporters,** and 30 others were injured. The episode, which recalled the civil war in the country (1975-1990), was not the only act of political and sectarian violence. In February, the assassination of a Shia activist critical of Hezbollah, Lokman Slim, also fuelled fears of a return to political assassination. Other sectarian clashes linked to revenge for the killing of a teenager during clashes between Hezbollah and Sunni groups in 2020 led to the deaths of another six people in August. Demonstrations by the victims of the explosion in the port of Beirut demanding justice also led to clashes with the security forces.

This context of political instability and security incidents occurred alongside a serious deterioration of the economic situation in the country. The World Bank called the crisis in Lebanon one of the most serious in modern history and accused the authorities of contributing to an economic depression through their inaction. At the end of the year, the Lebanese pound had lost 90% of its value compared to October 2019 and continued to fall. More than half the population lived below the poverty line. The measures to cut subsidies for basic products and medicines and the increase in fuel prices had an impact on the critical situation facing the population, also affected by COVID-19. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch warned that 80% of the population did not have access to basic rights such as health, education or adequate housing. UNICEF also warned of the dramatic deterioration in living conditions and the effects on children and the World Food Programme warned of the high levels of food insecurity in the country, which affected 22% of the Lebanese population, 50% of the Syrian refugee population and 33% of the refugee population of other nationalities in Lebanon. Starting in the second half of the year, the lack of fuel supplies caused electricity cuts of up to 23 hours a day. As such, **there were periodic protests against the political and social crisis throughout 2021. These protests were concentrated in Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon and sometimes led to clashes with the security forces** that injured hundreds of people and left at least two dead in different incidents. There were also incidents and altercations around fuel stations that left more than one hundred people injured and many dead and prompted intervention by the security forces. Some of this fighting was between residents of Shia and Christian neighbourhoods. In August, incidents in the Akkar area (north) around a fuel depot led to an explosion that killed 36 people. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also warned of abuses by the security forces, including the torture and forced disappearance of protesters and abuses against the Syrian refugee population. Some analysts said that the internal situation in the country was also shaped by regional disputes (mainly between Iran and Israel and Saudi Arabia) and expressed doubts about the current Lebanese elites' will or capacity to overcome the critical situation facing the country. There were also some incidents resulting from tension with Israel in 2021.[46]

The Gulf

Iran	
Intensity:	2
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 2021, Iran continued to experience various dynamics of internal tension that added to the international tension related to its nuclear programme.[47] **The authorities continued with their policies to repress and persecute dissidents, although the levels of protest were significantly lower than in 2019**, the year of massive demonstrations against the regime. International human rights organisations continued to denounce the harassment of human rights activists, the persistent impunity of previous violations, the restriction of freedoms and rights such as the freedom of expression and assembly, the imprisonment and conviction of activists for peaceful activities, the use of forced confessions obtained under torture as evidence in court proceedings and the detention of people with dual

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46. See the summary on Israel – Syria – Lebanon in this chapter.
47. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in this chapter.

nationality on vague charges of cooperation with states hostile to the Islamic Republic. Iran also continued to be one of the countries with the highest incidence of the death penalty. Between January and November 2021, the regime is estimated to have executed at least 254 people.[48] The 2021 presidential election in Iran was won by Ebrahim Raisi, an ultra-conservative figure with a track record in the judiciary, who is also accused of being part of a committee responsible for the mass execution of prisoners for political reasons in 1988. The election was also questioned by critics for excluding women, minorities and dissidents and for taking place in a highly repressive atmosphere. Discrimination against minorities and security incidents were reported in some regions with high proportions of these populations. Other events during the year included incidents in the eastern province of Sistan Baluchistan between the security forces and people trying to reopen a connection route with Pakistan that resulted in the deaths of at least 10 people; protests over the lack of access to drinking water in various towns in the provinces of Khuzestan and Lorestan, where a significant percentage of the population belongs to the Arab minority, which were repressed and resulted in the deaths of at least nine people; and repression against Kurdish activists and politicians, in addition to some attacks on bases of Kurdish opposition groups in the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq, with no information on possible casualties.

There were a series of security incidents that contributed to the tension between the actors involved in the dispute over the Iranian nuclear programme throughout the year

Iran – USA, Israel[49]	
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.

The dispute over the Iranian nuclear programme continued during the year. **Despite the resumption of the diplomatic process in 2021, this crisis was shaped by the obstacles and deadlock of the negotiations[50], many security incidents with the potential for an escalation of violence and Iran's increasing breaches of the terms agreed in the 2015 deal**. At the beginning of the year, certain expectations were created about the possible impact that the change of government in the US could have on the dynamics of the crisis, especially due to the Biden administration's stated willingness to return to the nuclear agreement from which Donald Trump disassociated the country in 2018. However, both Washington and Tehran demanded mutual measures to re-establish the negotiations. Diplomatic contacts resumed formally and in person in the sixth round of the negotiating process in Vienna in May between Iran and the countries known as the P4+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and Germany), with the indirect participation of the United States. However, the talks were suspended until the presidential election was held in Iran in June, which handed victory to the ultra-conservative Ebrahim Raisi. Negotiations over the Iranian nuclear programme did not resume until the end of the year.

Meanwhile, **a series of security incidents strained the atmosphere between the actors involved in this dispute throughout the year**. It was not clear who was responsible for some of these attacks. Some of these incidents occurred at sea: an explosion that damaged an Israeli ship in the Gulf of Oman in February, which was blamed on Iran; a deflagration that affected an Iranian ship in the Mediterranean in March; another explosive attack on an Iranian ship blamed on Israel in April; several altercations between US and Iranian ships in the Strait of Hormuz in April, May and November; and an attack on a cargo ship off the Omani coast for which Tehran was also blamed. At the same time, acts of violence continued to be reported in third countries as part of an indirect confrontation between the US and Iran, mainly in Iraq and Syria. They included US strikes against Tehran-backed militias in both countries and attacks against US targets in Iraq that were blamed

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48. Human Rights Watch, "Iran: Events of 2021", *HRW World Report 2022*, 2022.
49. This international socio-political crisis affects other countries that have not been mentioned, but which are involved to varying degrees.
50. See the summary on Iran (nuclear) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2022.

on Iran. **During 2021, sabotage was also observed against Iranian nuclear facilities, specifically against those in Natanz (April) and Busher (June), in attacks that were attributed to Israel.** The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) continuous denunciation of the Iranian authorities' non-compliance regarding its nuclear programme also contributed to the atmosphere. The agency warned of various activities carried out by Tehran, including uranium enrichment to 20% (above what was stipulated and at a level similar to what it had before signing the 2015 agreement), the resumption of uranium production activities that were prohibited until 2031 and the stockpiling of uranium enriched to levels 14 times higher than stipulated in the 2015 agreement. The IAEA also drew attention to the difficulties in accessing and supervising some nuclear facilities. At the end of the year, faced with the possibility that the IAEA might censure Iran, the agency and the Tehran authorities reached an agreement to restore surveillance cameras in key facilities (Karaj).

In this context, **both the European countries involved in the negotiations and the United States expressed their concern about the activities associated with the Iranian atomic programme and warned of retaliatory measures if the negotiations remained at an impasse**. After five months of deadlock, the seventh round of the negotiations began in Vienna in late November, although no progress was made. After Tehran demanded that some sanctions imposed by the Biden administration not linked to the nuclear programme be lifted, both the US and Western countries warned that they would abandon the talks. Amid pressure from Russia and China, Iran agreed to resume negotiations based on what was agreed in the previous round. In late December, a new eighth round took place, although Iran also conducted tests with missiles, unmanned aircraft and space devices that generated suspicion and provoked criticism from Western governments.

Map 3.1. **Gender, peace and security**
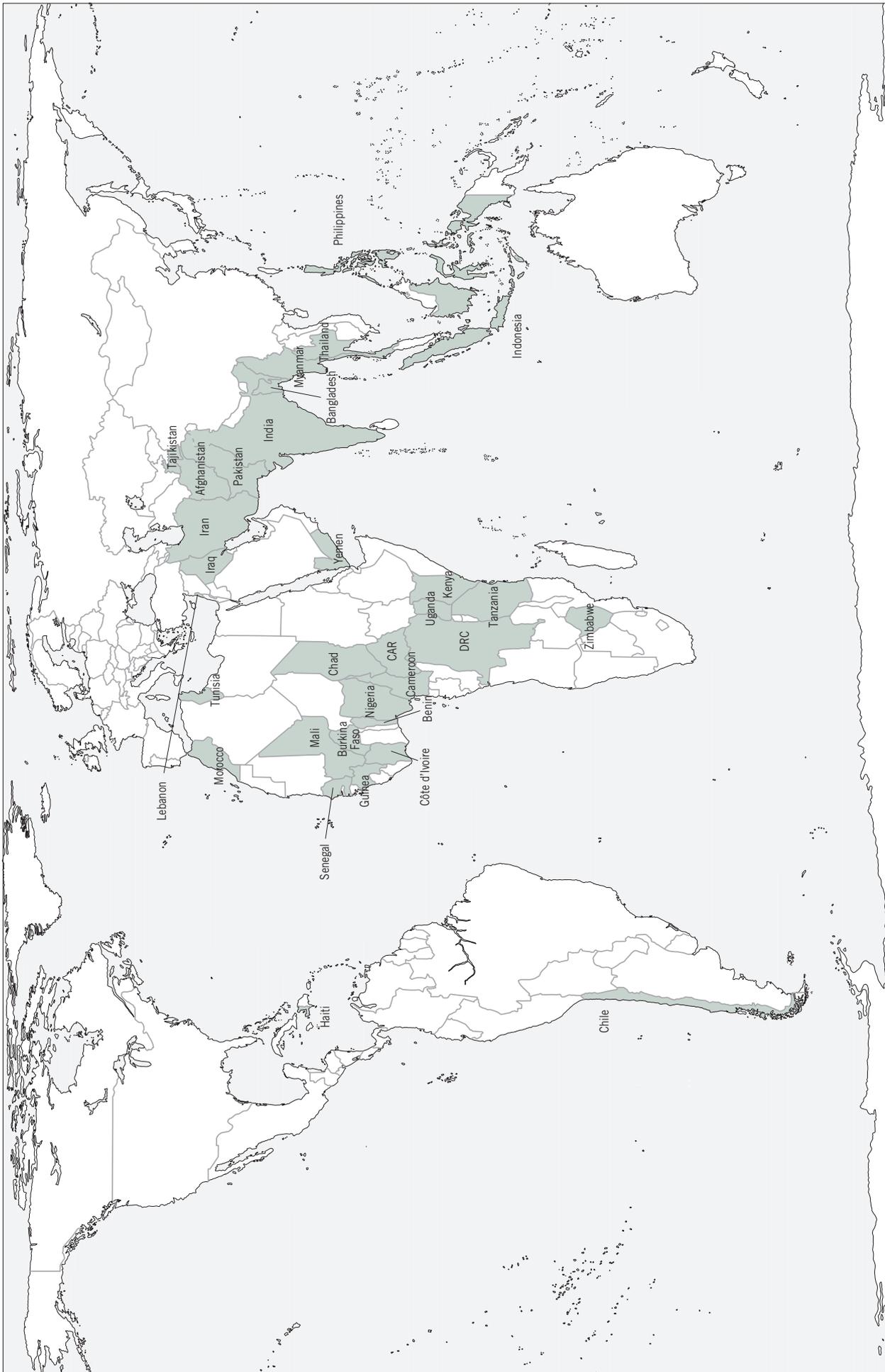
Countries with armed conflict and/or socio-political crises and high or very high levels of gender discrimination 2021

3. Gender, peace and security

- Eighteen of the 32 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2021 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities, with medium, high or very high levels of discrimination.

- The media and human rights organisations reported the serious levels of sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia.

- Seventy-two million children living in situations of conflict faced a serious risk of sexual violence, according to Save the Children.

- The International Criminal Court found LRA leader Dominic Ongwen guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in a sentence that was pioneering for including forced marriage as a crime against humanity and for prosecuting forced pregnancy for the first time.

- The UN Secretary General's annual report on women, peace and security confirmed the close relationship between militarisation and gender inequality.

- In 2021, 20 countries that were involved in peace negotiations had a National Action Plan on women, peace and security, which should promote women's participation in these processes.

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	Burkina Faso[4] India (2) Thailand DRC (2)	Chad[5] Mali (2) Myanmar Nigeria[6] CAR	Afghanistan Philippines (2) Cameroon (2)[7] Iraq Pakistan (2) Yemen	Burundi Egypt Israel[8] Libia Niger[9] Palestina[10] Siria Somalia Sudan (2) South Sudan
Socio-political crises	Benin Burkina Faso Chile Haiti India (6)[11] Kenia DRC (4)[12] Senegal Thailand Tajikistan Zimbabwe	Chad Costa de Marfil Indonesia (2) Mali Nigeria (3) CAR[13] Tanzania Tunisia Uganda (4)[14]	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Iraq Lebanon (2)[15] Morocco Pakistan (2)	Saudi Arabia Algeria Bahrein Brunei Darussalam Burundi China (7) Korea,DPR (2) Cuba Djibouti Egypt (2) Eritrea (2) Eswatini Gambia Guinea Bissau Equatorial Guinea Israel (2) Kosovo Niger Malaysia Palestine[16] Syria Somalia Sudan (5)[17] South Sudan (2)[18] Taiwan Uzbekistan Venezuela Western Sahara

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 13 of the 32 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2020 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 9 armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data in this regard –Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger Palestine,[19] Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan. Similarly, in four other countries where there were one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with low

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3. Table prepared from levels of gender discrimination in the OECD's SIGI as indicated in the latest available report (2019) and Escola de Cultura de Pau's classifications of armed conflict and socio-political crisis (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. The number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in which that country is involved is given between parentheses.
4. Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali are scenes of the same armed conflict, called the Western Sahel Region.
5. Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are scenes of the same armed conflict, called the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram).
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. Cameroon is also the scene of another armed conflict called Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West).
8. Israel and Palestine are scenes of the same conflict.
9. See note 5.
10. In the SIGI, Palestine is known as Gaza and the West Bank.
11. One of the socio-political crises in India deals with Pakistan and another deals with China.
12. One of the socio-political crises in the DRC is the international one called Central Africa (LRA), which involves the Congolese Armed Forces. See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
13. The socio-political crisis in the CAR refers to the one called Central Africa (LRA). See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
14. One of the socio-political crises in Uganda refers to the one called Central Africa (LRA). See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
15. One of the socio-political crises in Lebanon refers to the one maintained with Israel and Syria.
16. See note 11.
17. One of the socio-political crises in Sudan refers to the one called Central Africa (LRA). See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
18. One of the socio-political crises in South Sudan refers to the one called Central Africa (LRA). See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
19. See note 10.

levels (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low levels (Colombia) of discrimination, according to the SIGI. As regards socio-political crises, at least 43 of the 98 active cases of socio-political crisis during 2021 took place in countries where there are severe gender inequalities (medium, high or very high levels according to the SIGI). 30 socio-political crises took place in countries for which no data are available (Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, China, DPR Korea, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gambia, Gaza and the West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Kosovo, Western Sahara, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Taiwan, Uzbekistan and Venezuela).

18 of the 32 armed conflicts that took place in 2021 were in countries with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

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 2021 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts.[20] 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 its yearly open discussion on sexual violence in armed conflict** and the UN Secretary-General presented his annual report on the issue. The discussion was held online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and focused on issues such as comprehensive support services for survivors of violence,

including health services and the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights; the funding and provision of resources to prevent and respond to sexual violence; the establishment of mechanisms for accountability; and sexual violence in conflict in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) pointed out that despite the role that militarisation and the arms trade play in exacerbating gender-based violence in armed conflict, the Security Council has not spoken about the issue in the discussions on sexual violence and highlighted the calls made by civil society to the members of the Security Council to stop providing arms to actors in conflict, since some of the main arms-exporting countries are members of the Security Council. In his report on sexual violence in conflict, the Secretary-General recommended to the Security Council that cases of sexual violence in Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Libya and Somalia be referred to the International Criminal Court. In addition, the Secretary-General's special representative for sexual violence in conflicts, Pramila Patten, repeated that sexual violence was being perpetrated in the Ethiopian region of Tigray.

Twelve of the 18 armed conflicts[21] that were analysed in the UN Secretary-General's report experienced high levels of intensity in 2020 –Mali, CAR, DRC (East), DRC (East-ADF), the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen–, topping 1,000 fatalities during the year and producing serious impacts on people and the territory, including conflict-related sexual violence. Seven of these also saw an escalation of violence during 2020 compared to the previous year – Western Sahel region, CAR, Sudan Darfur, DRC (East-ADF), Colombia, Afghanistan and Myanmar. 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 situation in **Tigray (Ethiopia)** was especially serious. In the context of the conflict in this region, serious violations of human rights were found that could be

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20. 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 behavior 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.

21. The countries analysed in the 2021 UN Secretary-General report are: Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libia, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Syria, Yemen, BH, Cote d'Ivoire, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Nigeria. 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: Libya, Lake Chad region (Boko Haram) -including Nigeria-, Western Sahel region -including Mali-, CAR, DRC (East), DRC (East-ADF), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Box 3.1. **Armed actors and sexual violence in conflicts**[22]

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.[23]

	STATE ACTORS	NON-STATE ACTORS
Iraq		ISIS
Mali		Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad; Ansar Eddine; Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest; 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 Plateforme des mouvements du 14 juin 2014 d'Alger.
Myanmar	Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated Border Guard.	
CAR		LRA; Ex-Séléka factions: Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique, Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique – Gula faction, Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique – Abdoulaye Hussein faction, Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique; Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique; Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice; Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain– Abdoulaye Miskine; Révolution et justice; Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation; Anti-balaka associated militia.
DRC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Congolese National Police.	Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain Janvier; Allied Democratic Forces; Bana Mura militias; Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda; Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri; Kamuina Nsapu; Lord's Resistance Army; Nduma défense du Congo; Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové faction led by "General" Guidon Shimiray Mwissa and faction led by Commander Gilbert Bwira Shuo and Deputy Commander Fidel Malik Mapenzi; Mai-Mai Kifuafua; Mai-Mai Simba; Nyatura; Mai-Mai Raïa Mutomboki; Mai-Mai Apa na Pale; Mai-Mai Malaika; Mai-Mai Fimbo na Fimbo; Mai-Mai Yakutumba; Coopérative de Développement pour le Congo; All Twa militia; Forces patriotiques populaires, Armées pour le peuple.
Somalia	Somali National Army; Somali Police Force and allied militia; Puntland forces	Al-Shabaab
Sudan	Sudanese Armed Forces; Rapid Support Forces.	Justice and Equality Movement; Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid
South Sudan	South Sudan People's Defence Forces; South Sudan National Police Service	LRA; Justice and Equality Movement; Pro-Riek Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition; Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition forces aligned with VicePresident Taban Deng.
Syria	Syrian Arab Armed Forces; Intelligence services.	LRA; Justice and Equality Movement; Pro-Riek Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition; Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition forces aligned with VicePresident Taban Deng.
Other cases		Boko Haram

considered war crimes and crimes against humanity by all the actors involved in the conflict. Since access to Tigray was allowed at the end of February, international media and human rights organisations have reported and confirmed the serious atrocities committed, including the use of sexual violence by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. Medical centres in Tigray reported 1,288 cases of gender-based violence between February and April 2021. This figure is only part of the violations committed, since many victims had not gone to any medical centre, according to testimonies from Amnesty International.

In August, this organisation denounced the widespread commission of rape and other acts of sexual violence by combatant forces linked to the Ethiopian government (the armies of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Special Police of the Amhara region and Fano, an Amharic militia). Rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war to inflict persistent physical and psychological harm on women and girls in Tigray, with the aim of degrading and dehumanising them, according to Amnesty International. In July, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate end to all

22. 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.
23. UN Security Council, *Sexual violence related to conflicts. Report of the Secretary–General*, S/2021/48312, 30th March 2021.

human rights violations in Tigray, in compliance with international humanitarian law, as well as the verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean troops. The African Union also launched an investigation into human rights violations in the area in July. The resolutions and criticisms of these violations of human rights occur in a context where humanitarian organisations continue to be the target of attacks. Subsequently, in December, given the seriousness of the events, the Council approved another new resolution, supported by 21 countries, with 15 against and 11 abstaining, to establish an international commission of human rights experts on Ethiopia. The committee will have an initial mandate of one year, subject to renewal, and its members will be three experts on fundamental guarantees appointed by the president of the Human Rights Council. Their work will complement the efforts previously carried out by the Joint Investigation Team, involving both the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The commission's first mandate will be to conduct "a thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law and international refugee law in Ethiopia committed since 3 November 2020 by all parties to the conflict."

In **Myanmar**, civil society organisations denounced the use of sexual violence by the security forces against women detained in the context of the protests against the coup carried out by the Burmese Armed Forces in February. Several women reported having been victims of sexual torture during the period they were detained for their opposition to the coup. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported that during 2021, more than 8,000 people were detained for their political and social action in opposition to the military regime, of which more than 2,000 could be women. Several women reported being tortured, sexually harassed and threatened with rape while in detention. The Burmese security forces have been denounced on multiple occasions for having committed sexual violence against civilian women during military operations against the armed groups active in the country. Such complaints were repeated in 2021 during operations against the armed resistance organisations that emerged after the coup, including security operations in which the civilian population was attacked and the use of sexual violence was reported. Human rights organisations also denounced the overcrowding and unhygienic conditions in women's detention centres, where the number of people sometimes doubled the capacity.

Boko Haram continued to conduct sexual violence in attacks against towns in Borno state, in northern **Nigeria**, which also included murders, kidnappings and looting,

as reported in March 2021 by Amnesty International, which conducted around 20 interviews with the inhabitants of small towns between February and March 2021.[24] Specifically, the testimonies claimed that sexual violence occurred in at least five localities of the Magumeri administration, in Borno state, and indicated a lack of support and protection from the authorities. Amnesty International called for the International Criminal Court to open a formal investigation into human rights violations in the conflict in northeastern Nigeria following a preliminary investigation by the state prosecutor that found evidence to launch a full investigation, whose conclusion was announced in December 2020.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virgina Gamba, and his Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, Pramila Patten, addressed the government of **Somalia** to express their concern about the alarming levels of sexual violence in the armed conflict situation there. The representatives pointed out that during 2020 at least 400 people, most of them girls, were victims of different forms of sexual violence committed by all parties to the conflict. This figure represents an increase of 80% compared to the records of the previous year; during the first quarter of 2021, more than 100 cases of sexual violence against girls were reported. In addition, the United Nations representatives highlighted that at least 15% of the cases had been committed by government security forces, although above all violence committed by Al-Shabaab had increased. The increase in sexual violence was linked to the rise in political tension in the run-up to the national elections, inter-community clashes linked to territorial disputes and the increase in Al-Shabaab activity.

A study was published[25] by Save the Children that revealed that at least 72 million of the 426 million children living in areas of armed conflict in the world reside less than 50 kilometres from areas where armed groups and government armed forces have committed **sexual violence against minors**. The study indicates that the risk for a minor to suffer sexual violence in a conflict is 10 times higher today than in 1990. The countries with the highest proportion of children living in conflict zones in which this kind of violence has been reported by armed actors are Colombia (where 24% of children in the country are at risk), Iraq (49%), Somalia (56%), South Sudan (19%), Syria (48%) and Yemen (83%). The report points out that there is research indicating that armed groups that recruit minors tend to commit higher levels of sexual violence, either as a form of socialisation or to create internal cohesion and bonds of loyalty among their members. In addition, armed groups

Human rights activists denounced the use of sexual violence by Burmese security forces in the crackdown on anti-coup protests

24. Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Boko Haram brutality against women and girls needs urgent response – new research", *AI*, 24 March 2021.
25. Ewa Sapiezynska, *Weapon of War: Sexual Violence against Children in Conflict*, Save the Children International, 18 February 2021.

that receive training from states also tend to commit more sexual violence. The study shows that according to United Nations data on violence against children in armed conflicts, 98% of the victims were girls in 2019, although violence against boys was largely invisible and underreported due to social stigma and gender roles, which hinder visibility in the case of male victims of this violence. In addition, the real and perceived sexual orientation of minors, as well as their gender identity and/or expression, were a factor that aggravated their vulnerability to violence, and in recent years there has been an increase in attacks for this reason. Minors with disabilities are three or four times more likely to suffer physical or sexual violence, a situation of vulnerability that increases in contexts of conflict, where there may also be more people with disabilities due to the impacts of violence.

3.2.2. Response to sexual violence in armed conflicts

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

In relation to the **United Nations' response to sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel serving under its mandate**, the strategy promoted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres since 2017 continued to focus on four areas of action: prioritising the rights and dignity of victims; ending impunity by strengthening reporting; collaborating with states, civil society and associated actors; and improving communications. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on special measures to protect against sexual exploitation and abuse, released in February 2021, noted increased commitment from United Nations leadership to implement the strategy.[26] However, he stressed that complaints continued to be received and that the COVID-19 pandemic had aggravated inequalities and exposed vulnerable people to a greater risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. The report identified some progress, such as by improving the response to victims, strengthening the leadership of the United Nations in establishing a regulatory framework for prevention, response and public information about complaints and improving alignment in this area between the humanitarian, development and peace pillars of the United Nations. Regarding the institutionalisation of protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, according to the report, since 2020 the internal structure of protection has been considerably bolstered by the appointment of regional

In 2021, the number of complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peace operations and special political missions increased

coordinators for prevention, the establishment of a "community of practice" of the coordinators' offices and communication between headquarters and regional and field offices. Guterres also highlighted increased efforts by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to establish a harmonised approach, including the deployment of 20 inter-agency coordinator positions for protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the creation of alliances between the United Nations and NGOs in the field of education and training and the adoption of a tool to assess the prevention and response capacity of bodies associated with the United Nations. As part of this promotion of harmonisation, the committee carried out a mission in the DRC in 2020 that supported a new strategic framework to strengthen the prevention and response approach by the United Nations team in the country, enhancing the alignment in this area between the peace, development and humanitarian pillars.

In relation to the complaints received throughout the United Nations system on sexual exploitation and abuse, in 2021 there were 75 complaints related to peace operations and special political missions, compared to 66 in 2020 and 80 in 2019 and compared to an average of 69 in the last 10 years.[27] Forty-five (60%) of these 75 referred to sexual exploitation, 23 (30.6%) to sexual abuse and seven to both. Fifty-two involved military personnel, 14 involved civilian mission personnel and nine involved police personnel. In addition, 25 of the 75 were related to events in 2021, 12 from the previous year, 36 from other years and two from unknown years. In 25 (33.3%) of the 75 complaints, the victim was a minor. In 2020, 46 had been related to exploitation, 19 to abuse and one to both, while 41 of the total referred to military personnel as perpetrators, 18 to civilians and seven to police. Twenty-six of the 46 were related to the year 2020, 13 to the previous year, 24 to other years and three to unknown years. In 13 of the 66 complaints, the victim was a minor. As in previous years, most complaints in 2020 involved personnel from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), with 27 and 19 complaints, respectively, which together accounted for 70% of the total (the same percentage as in 2019; in 2018 it had been 74%).

Furthermore, according to the UN Secretary-General's annual report for 2021, relating to 2020, another 91 complaints were filed involving staff of agencies, funds and programmes in 2020 (107 complaints in 2019), of which 17 were related to sexual abuse and the rest to sexual exploitation. It represented a decrease from

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26. UN Secretary-General, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse,* United Nations General Assembly, A/75/754, 15 February 2021.
27. Data about complaints for 2021 related to peace operations and special political missions can be viewed in the UN's Case Management Tracking System (CMTS).

38 complaints of sexual abuse in 2019 to 17 in 2020. Nineteen of the 91 complaints in 2020 were related to events from 2020, 25 to previous years and in another 47 the year of the reported events was unknown. In 15 of the complaints in 2020, the victims were minors. Likewise, the annual report cited 227 complaints in 2020 that involved personnel from bodies associated with the United Nations for the execution of work but who are not under its authority. It represented an increase in the total number of reported cases (174 in 2019) and in complaints of sexual exploitation (63 in 2020, 39 in 2019).

In June 2021, the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) signed a cooperation framework agreement aimed at promoting the involvement of MPs in preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence. As reported by the OSRSG-SVC, the areas of cooperation include awareness of the importance of legislation with an integrated approach and aligned with international norms and standards to support and empower survivors of sexual violence; the provision of technical support for the creation of new legislation or revision of current legislation to promote accountability; collaboration in the field of research and advocacy as part of the women, peace and security agenda; and awareness-raising about prevention through participation in the IPU and the UN. The IPU has 178 member-state parliaments, as well as associate members that include 12 regional parliamentary assemblies.

In February, the International Criminal Court (ICC) took action against sexual violence in situations of conflict by finding LRA leader Dominic Ongwen guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. His crimes included the murder of civilians, forced marriages, sexual slavery and the recruitment of minors as part of the activity he carried out in northern Uganda in the early 2000s. The attacks were carried out overall against civilians who had taken refuge in camps for internally displaced persons established by the government and whom Ongwen accused of being government collaborators. The sentence, described as a milestone by UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, was 25 years in prison. This was the first time that the ICC prosecuted forced marriage, included in the category of "other inhumane acts" as a crime against humanity,[28] a pioneering sentence in this regard. It was also the first time that forced pregnancy had been prosecuted. Ongwen was also convicted of crimes of gender and sexual violence (forced marriage, torture, rape, sexual slavery and slavery) not directly perpetrated by him, verifying that there was an agreement or a common plan within the leadership of the armed group in relation to other crimes, which were under Ongwen's control.[29]

Moreover, the ICC prosecution launched an investigation into possible crimes committed in the Philippines as part of the so-called "war on drugs", which may have included sexual violence, according to previous complaints considered by the ICC. Although the Philippines withdrew from the ICC in 2019, the international court believes that events that took place prior to the withdrawal can be investigated.[30] Human rights organisations had denounced violence against sex workers in the context of police raids against drug users, for example. During consultations with the victims carried out by the ICC, complaints were filed regarding sexual violence and rape.

One setback in response to sexual violence in 2021 was the decision of the government of Turkey to withdraw from the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The convention is applicable in times of absence of armed conflicts as well as in situations of war, recognises violence against women as a violation of human rights and aims to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women, including sexual violence in its many forms such as rape, harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment, forced abortion, forced sterilisation and crimes allegedly committed in the name of "honour". The decision of the government of Turkey, issued by presidential decree, represented a serious setback for the protection of women's rights in Turkey and set a grave precedent of questioning the international framework of women's rights. Women's organisations and activists in Turkey demonstrated against the decision at various times throughout the year. International organisations such as UN Women and the CEDAW Committee also expressed serious concern about the decision.

The Gambian Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission submitted its final report to the country's president in November 2021. Established in 2017, the body had the mandate to clarify the human rights violations committed between July 1994 and January 2017 during the Yaha Jammeh regime, which came to power by a coup in 1994 and remained in power until late 2016. In addition to other human rights violations (including the murder of 240 people by agents of the regime), the final report establishes that regime security personnel perpetrated widespread sexual violence against women, both as an objective unto itself as well as an instrument of repression, torture and punishment.[31] The report notes that Gambian women were disproportionately affected by human rights violations such as sexual violence. The commission recommends prosecution and reparation measures. Activists and local and international organisations,

28. Tonny R. Kirabira, "Ongwen at the International Criminal Court", *ASIL Insights*, Issue 7, Volume 25, 19 May 2021.
29. Ibid.
30. International Criminal Court, *Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim A. A. Khan QC, following judicial authorisation to commence an investigation into the Situation in the Republic of the Philippines*, 7 October 2021.
31. Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, *Report. Volume 10. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*, 2021.

including Amnesty International[32] and Human Rights Watch,[33] called on the government to implement justice and reparations. The final report was presented days before the presidential election, in which Adama Barrow was re-elected, whose party, the National People's Party (NPP), has allied itself with former President Jammeh's Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC).

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

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and socio-political crisis had other serious gender impacts. Impunity for human rights violations continued to be a recurrent element.

The situation of women in **Afghanistan** deteriorated notably in 2021. In August, the Taliban took power and the government headed by Ashraf Ghani fell after international troops withdrew from the country. The Taliban formed a new government made up entirely of men. The armed clashes during the previous months had a serious impact on the civilian population. Between January and November, almost 700,000 people were internally displaced in the country, of which 21% were adult women, the same proportion as adult men. The first six months of the year saw the highest number of civilian deaths in the last three years: 1,659 civilians died between January and June 2021, according to UNAMA. The United Nations mission in Afghanistan highlighted a notable increase in the impacts of the conflict on girls and women, since during this period there was an 82% rise in the number of female victims compared to the same period in 2020. Women and girls accounted for 14% of civilian casualties, with 219 women killed and 508 injured, according to UNAMA records.

The seizure of power by the Taliban meant a reduction in armed clashes, but it involved the adoption of highly restrictive regulations for women, in clear violation of their political and social rights. Women were prevented from returning to work and travelling without the accompaniment of a male guardian *(mahram).* The prohibition of access to work for women had enormous repercussions for the Afghan population, depriving many families of their only source of income. In addition, access to education was prohibited for girls over 12 years of age. At the university level, severe segregation rules were imposed that in practice hindered and even prevented access to higher education for Afghan women. Some media outlets reported an increase in forced child

marriage and the sale of girls for this practice, given many families' impossibility of obtaining means of sustenance. Humanitarian organisations warned of the serious humanitarian crisis in the country and the risk of it worsening in the winter, given the population's enormous difficulties in accessing the most basic services, including food and health services. The prohibition of access to paid work for women also aggravated their humanitarian situation. In addition, in many provinces, the Taliban prevented women from working in the humanitarian field, making it even more difficult for other women to access aid, especially in households headed by single women. After the Taliban took power and US troops withdrew, many women tried to leave the country, especially those who had played an important role in politics (MPs and government representatives), women's rights and human rights activists, journalists, judges and family members of people who collaborated with the international troops and governments present in the country since the US invasion in 2001. During the following months, there were demonstrations led by women demanding respect for their rights, as well as actions in the face of the humanitarian crisis that was plaguing the country. The demonstrations were repressed by the Taliban, who also prevented the media from covering them.

In **Iraq**, after last quarter's elections and amid political negotiations dominated exclusively by men, Iraqi activists denounced the lack of women in decision-making positions. Amid the commotion over new cases of gender violence, they also warned about the need to pay attention to violence against Iraqi women and girls. In a message to the UN Security Council in November, the Iraqi Women Network, which brings together more than 100 women's organisations, underlined the importance of substantive representation reflected in more ministerial positions for women.

The report of the independent international fact-finding mission on abuse in **Libya** published in October highlighted the disproportionate impacts of the armed conflict and the proliferation of militias on Libyan women. Likewise, it confirmed concern about the continuous manifestations of violence, including sexual violence, against vulnerable groups, including LGTBI people and female refugees, asylum seekers and prisoners.

In **Yemen**, throughout 2021, organisations in the field of gender, peace and security continued to draw attention to the gender impacts of the conflict, especially due to the consequences of the deterioration in the economic situation, the conditions in the camps for internally displaced persons, the difficulties of

32. Amnesty International, "Gambia: Truth and Reconciliation report must lead to justice and reparations for victims", *AI*, 25 November 2021.
33. Human Rights Watch, "The Gambia: Truth Commission Calls for Prosecuting Ex-Officials", *HRW*, 25 November 2021.

Map 3.2. Countries in armed conflict and with discriminatory legislation against the LGBTI population
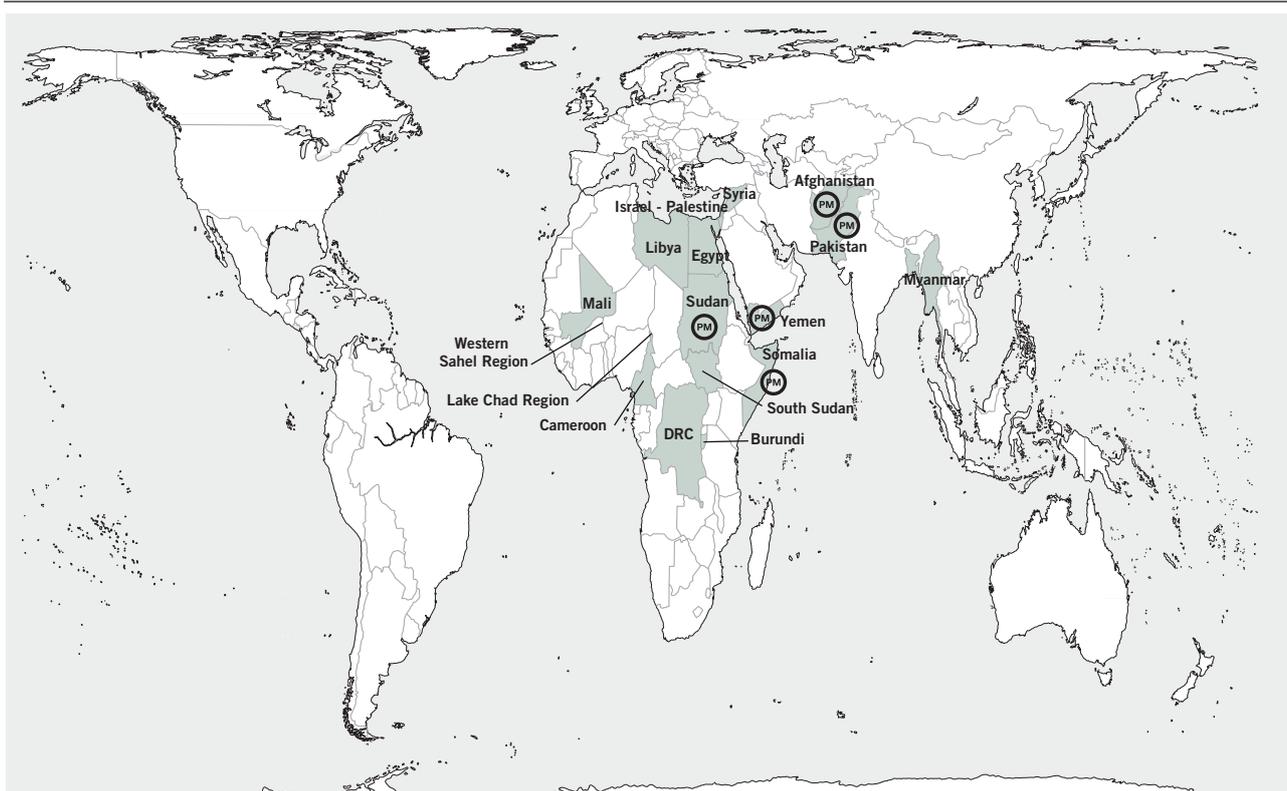
Countries in armed conflict in 2021 with discriminatory legislation against LGBTI population (this includes criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts, legal barriers to freedom of expression on sexual orientation issues and barriers to the establishment of NGOs).

(PM) Countries in armed conflict in 2021 where death penalty for LGTBI population is codified.

Source: Prepared internally with data from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alerta 2022! Informe sobre conflictos, derechos humanos y construcción de paz. (Alerta 2022! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding)*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2022. ILGA World: Lucas Ramón Mendos, Kellyn Botha, Rafael Carrano Lelis, Enrique López de la Peña, Ilia Savelev y Daron Tan, *Homofobia de Estado 2020: Actualización del Panorama Global de la Legislación (State Homophobia 2020: Global Legislation Overview Update)*. Geneva, ILGA, December 2020.

Table 3.3. Armed conflicts in 2019 in countries with discriminatory legislation against the LGBTI population[34]

AFRICA	ASIA	MIDDLE EAST
Burundi Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) Ethiopia Libya Mali Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) Western Sahel Region DRC (East) DRC (East-ADF) Somalia Sudan (Darfur) Sudan (Kordofan South and Blue Nile) South Sudan	Afghanistan Myanmar Pakistan Pakistan (Baluchistan)	Egypt (Sinai) Iraq Israel - Palestine[35] Syria Yemen

34. 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 2020: Actualización del Panorama Global de la Legislación (State Homophobia 2019: Global Legislation Overview Update)*. Geneva; ILGA, December 2020.
35. ILGA report highlights de criminalization and restriction in Gaza (Palestine).

access to basic services, including hygiene products, and the impact of restrictions imposed by armed actors. Indeed, limitations on free movement imposed by the Houthis have particularly affected Yemeni women and their possibilities to work in public spaces, including local female humanitarian workers who must be accompanied by a male relative on their journeys. Warnings also continued about the risks and threats to human rights activists, peacebuilders and journalists affected by arbitrary arrest, disappearance and murder. One particularly notorious case was the murder in November of journalist Rasha Abdullah Harazi, who was pregnant and died after a bomb attack in Aden. In this context, calls were made to the UN Security Council to ensure accountability for the abuses perpetrated by all armed actors in the Yemeni armed conflict.

In the conflict in **Ukraine**, the forced recruitment of men by armed groups in the eastern part of the country increased in 2021. OHCHR warned of the issuance of two decrees by the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk between March and April for the recruitment of 200 men in each. In its September report, it also warned that if they refused, the men risked being prosecuted for a criminal offence based on the regulations in the rebel areas and that those were who recruited faced the risk of persecution and prosecution under Ukrainian law. In its November update, OHCHR noted that rebel forces continued to forcibly recruit men for their armed groups. The increase in forced recruitment occurred in a year when the conflict seriously deteriorated, with massive deployments of Russian troops near the border with Ukraine and warnings from the US and Ukraine about a possible military invasion by Russia.

The seizure of power by the Taliban in 2021 had a serious impact on the situation of women in Afghanistan

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).

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

A new session of the open discussion on women, peace and security was held in October and the UN Secretary-General presented his annual report on the issue. Although the action of the UN Security Council regarding women, peace and security in recent years had been irregular and the consensus between the permanent and non-permanent members on the matter had been broken, some progress was made in 2021. The presidents of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico, which held the presidency of the Council in September, October and November, respectively, jointly announced a series of commitments that would be maintained during those three months: achieving gender balance between the people who appear in the Security Council, as well as an increase in the representation of women speakers from civil society at Security Council meetings; making the women, peace and security agenda be the focus of at least one of the mandatory geographical meetings of the Security Council; ensuring that Security Council texts integrate strong language on women, peace and security; and making media appearances on women, peace and security.[36] Alongside these commitments made by the different presidents, the US representative announced that Washington was renewing its commitment to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services for women in the world, changing the policy promoted by the Trump administration, which led to tensions within the Security Council, by modifying commitments made in resolutions on the agenda. China and Russia also indicated that they would participate in the meetings of the Informal Experts Group on women, peace and security. However, despite this progress, some important differences in approach remained and Russia maintained its position that issues relating to the promotion of the role of women should not be addressed in the framework of discussions on peace and security, but rather the responsibility fell on other United Nations institutions. This meant that, for example, in the renewal of UNAMA's mandate in September, the mentions of the situation of women were vague.

The theme proposed by the president of Kenya for the Security Council discussion was "investing in women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding". In line with the Secretary-General's report, the director of UN Women called to increase funding for the women, peace and security agenda and to reduce military spending at the same time. The annual report confirmed the close relationship between militarisation and gender inequality and how countries with a higher proportion of military spending compared to the total of public

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36. Security Council Report, *In Hindsight: Women, Peace and Security—Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges*, SSecurity Council Report, December 2021.

Table 3.4. Countries with 1325 National Action Plans that participate in negotiations and peace processes

Cameroon (2017)	Azerbaijan (2020)
Mali (2012)	Cyprus (2020)
Mozambique (2019)	Spain (2007)
CAR (2014)	Georgia (2018)
DRC (2010)	Moldova (2018)
Sudan (2020)	Serbia (2017)
South Sudan (2015)	Kosovo (2014)
Afghanistan (2015)	Ukraine (2016)
The Philippines (2009)	Palestine (2015)
Armenia (2019)	Yemen (2019)

* In parentheses, the year that the National Action Plan was approved

spending, were those that had taken the least action to deal with the gender consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, 20 countries that were involved in peace negotiations had an Action Plan, which was supposed to promote women's participation in these processes. Seven of these countries were in Africa (Cameroon, Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan), two were in Asia (Afghanistan, approved prior to the Taliban takeover, and the Philippines), nine were in Europe (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Spain, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, Kosovo and Ukraine) and two were in the Middle East (Palestine and Yemen). Neither of the two countries in the Americas with ongoing negotiations had a National Action Plan on Resolution 1325. Thus, in 21 of the 37 active negotiations during 2021, at least one of the negotiating government actors had a plan of action that was supposed to guide its activity in terms of inclusion of the gender perspective and women's participation. The 21 negotiations and peace processes took place in Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Spain (Basque Country), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria), Serbia-Kosovo, Ukraine (east), Israel-Palestine, Palestine and Yemen. However, even if they had this tool, most peace negotiations continued to exclude women and did not include the gender perspective into their dynamics, calling into question the effectiveness of action plans as inclusive peacebuilding tools.

Regarding funding for the agenda, a tool was presented as part of the Fund for Women, Peace and Humanitarian Action, established to urgently promote the participation of women in peace processes. The new mechanism, called the Rapid Response Window),[37] aims to offer a response to address the technical and logistical obstacles that hinder women's participation in peace negotiations and the implementation of agreements. This mechanism was approved following a recommendation that the UN Secretary-General presented in his report on women, peace and security in 2019, and has been established after having carried out consultations with UN agencies, as well as with civil society organisations and female peacebuilders. After his presentation, the support for several pilot experiences was announced, including one in Afghanistan (promoting women's participation in Track II processes) and in Mali (supporting advocacy initiatives to promote women's participation in implementing peace agreements). This mechanism receives financial contributions from Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Malta, Norway and Sweden.

3.3.2. Gender issues in peace negotiations

Several peace processes were relevant from a gender point of view during the year 2021.[38] 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.

Female civil society activists from the two communities in **Cyprus** supported holding an informal summit between the parties in conflict in April in Geneva and called for women's participation in the dialogue. The summit was held in a 5+1 format (the parties to the conflict, the guarantor countries Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom and the UN), convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to assess the possibilities of resuming formal negotiations to resolve the conflict over the status of the island. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) issued an appeal that not only showed their support for a revival of dialogue, but also pointed out the need for the participation of women from both communities

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37. WPHF, *Global: Dismantling Barriers to Women's Participation in Peace Processes, WPHF Launches New Rapid Financing Tool*, 14/01/2021.
38. For more exhaustive information on the incorporation of a gender perspective in currently active peace processes, see the yearbook of Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2021: Report on Trends and Scenarios*. Icaria editorial, 2021.

in the negotiations. They denounced the lack of a gender perspective in the peace process, including the failure to address a gender equality approach in all the chapters on the negotiating agenda. The MWMN offered to support the UN in increasing women's participation by identifying women from both communities, as well as providing capacity. In his report issued on early July on the mission of good offices in Cyprus, the UN Secretary-General lamented the low participation of women in the informal summit in April. He also urged the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to at least reach the threshold of 30% women in their negotiating delegations. In the report, Guterres urged the parties to the conflict to develop an action plan to promote women's participation and integrate the gender perspective in the dialogue process.

Throughout 2021, the challenges for women's substantive participation in spaces of power and decision became evident again in **Libya**. Although a minimum of 30% female participation had been promised during the negotiations for the unity government, in practice the new government appointed in March only had five women (14%) in a cabinet of 35 ministers. Libyan women denounced their marginalisation and continued to demand a greater presence in other areas within the framework of the negotiating process that is taking place under the auspices of the UN. Thus, during the year the number of women negotiating over the economic component was increased, although still in a limited way, going from four to seven representatives out of a total of 34 members. Intra-Libyan negotiations related to the political component continued to have 23% women. At the same time, various voices highlighted the need to have significant female participation in the negotiations on security and in the follow-up mechanisms of the ceasefire and the importance of introducing the gender perspective in the processes to reform the security sector.

During 2021, the need for an inclusive peace process was stressed in **Yemen**, with substantive participation from diverse Yemeni women (from all regions and political affiliations) at all levels and stages. There was an urgent need to consider some of the priorities indicated by women's groups in dealing with the conflict, such as their call to eradicate military camps and weapons depots in the cities and the importance of a ceasefire in Maarib, one of the areas most affected by the fighting in 2021. Yemeni activists also requested support for the #NoWomenNoGovernment campaign, launched in December 2020, which denounces the exclusion of Yemeni women from the unity government formed under the Riyadh Agreement, signed in 2019. Likewise, Yemenis requested international support for the effective implementation of the Yemeni National Action Plan for Resolution 1325, approved at the end of 2019.

Until the collapse of the peace negotiations in **Afghanistan**, resulting from the Taliban's seizure of power and the withdrawal of international troops from the country in August, the participation of women in the intra-Afghan peace negotiations between the government and the Taliban continued to be very limited and only four women were part of the negotiating delegation representing the government. In March, a meeting was held in Moscow that could only be attended by one of the four women who made up the government delegation, the politician and human rights activist Habiba Sarabi. The rest of the 11 members of the government delegation were men and the Taliban delegation was entirely made up of men. During her appearance at the meeting, Sarabi showed her disagreement with the situation, pointing out that 51% of the population should not be ignored in peacebuilding efforts in the country. The meeting was held a few weeks before the expiration of the deadline agreed between the Taliban and the US for the withdrawal of US troops from the country in an attempt to reach an agreement prior to the foreign military withdrawal. Another member of the government delegation to the negotiations in Doha, Fawzia Koofi, pointed out that international diplomats were negotiating with the same leaders who had led the country 20 years ago. Other prominent leaders of the country, such as Shaharzad Akbar, who heads the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, called it unacceptable that only one woman had been invited to the Moscow meeting. So did Afghan women's organisations, such as the Afghan Women Network, which highlighted how the exclusion of women from negotiations and other areas of political decision-making in the country blurred the differences between the current government and the Taliban regime. In April, the US government announced that the withdrawal of troops would be completed by the deadline of 11 September. Different human rights organisations expressed their concern at that time about the fact that women's rights were excluded from any negotiations between the government and the Taliban. The subsequent seizure of power by the Taliban meant the suppression of formal recognition of women's rights.

3.3.3. Civil society initiatives

Different peacebuilding initiatives led and carried out by women's civil society organisations took place in 2021. This section reviews some of the most important ones.

In **Cameroon**, female civil society activists organised the first National Women's Convention for Peace in July, which brought together more than 1,000 women from all regions of the country, including the 10 regions, 58 divisions and 360 subdivisions. The convention took place in the capital, Yaoundé, in a meeting promoted by a committee of 38 women's organisations and civil society networks aimed at addressing the violence facing the country and promoting a peaceful solution to the conflict. Through the Women's Call for Peace document, the convention called for an immediate and permanent end to hostilities; the celebration of an inclusive and continuous dialogue; guarantees for the participation of

women mediators and negotiators in peace processes at all levels and guarantees for their protection; the strengthening of psychosocial support and trauma healing centres and the creation of additional centres; and the provision of functionality to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration centres. Behind the convention are organisations such as the Cameroon Women's Peace Movement (CAWOPEM), active in the 10 regions of the country and chaired by Yvonne Muma. International experts such as Rosa Emilia Salamanca (CIASE) and high-ranking politicians such as the Minister for Women and Family, Marie Abena Ondoa, participated in the convention.

In an open letter to the UN member states as part of the UN Security Council's open discussion on women, peace and security, **381 civil society organisations from 88 countries** demanded support for women peacebuilders, human rights activists and leaders.[39] They expressed concern about the risks faced by activists and peacebuilders in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia, Yemen, South Sudan and other contexts. They denounced that the threats and attacks against female civil society activists continue and that there is a large protection gap that the member states and the UN must address with civil society. They urged member states to end attacks and reprisals against female human rights defenders and to prevent such violence; to ask the UN Secretary-General to ensure access to rapid, flexible and targeted remedies for women activists at risk and to collaborate with civil society for risk assessment and responses; and to ensure that all peace operations have the resources and power to carry out monitoring, reporting and support for all human rights defenders and peacebuilders at risk.

The first **Indigenous Women of the Amazon Basin Summit** was held in October 2021, with more than 170 women from the 511 indigenous peoples of the entire basin. At the summit, five key points were established for the indigenous women's own agenda. The first point was about the creation of the Fund for Indigenous Women of the Amazon Basin, to support their own economies, food autonomy and the actions of the network of women activists. The second point was about the formation of a network of indigenous female Amazonian land activists to defend the territory of the basin and promote the participation of women in decision-making processes, including by promoting leadership schools

for women. The third point was about the promotion of the movement of indigenous female defenders and protectors of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC). The fourth point demanded parity for women in decision-making at the local, national and regional organisational level, with women participating in the leadership of the organisations, with duality and equality. The fifth point referred to monitoring and supervision of the roadmap. As a whole, the summit participants addressed issues related to the defence of Amazonian territory, which they indicated as threatened by the capitalist economic system and megaprojects associated with it, as well as the situation of human rights, their own economies and the impact of COVID-19.

In October 2021, **over 30 human rights organisations structured around the Feminists for a Binding Treaty coalition** (F4BT) presented their key recommendations on the latest draft of the legally binding instrument for the regulation of the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises under international human rights law.[40] They issued their recommendations prior to the seventh negotiating session of the intergovernmental group for the creation of a legally binding treaty in this area in the Human Rights Council, a negotiating process that began in 2014. The coalition reiterated the importance of feminist analysis to address the issue of transnational corporations and human rights and pointed out fundamental principles such as the incorporation of gender analysis for the recognition, understanding and visibility of the abuses committed by companies, including the differentiated impacts on women, men and the entire gender spectrum, as well as specific abuses against the LGTBIQ+ population, and as a tool for power analysis and understanding the causes of discrimination and inequality. The principles also included participation in the development, implementation and supervision of the regulation of business activities by women and other people and population groups whose rights are violated by transnational companies. Among the recommendations, the coalition urged to maintain the progress made in the negotiating process and to build on it, including further guaranteeing the effectiveness of the instrument for women and affected communities. In addition, they called for clarification of the context, application and scope of the instrument, as well as the establishment of clear expectations in relation to business activities in high-risk contexts, including conflict situations.

39. *2021 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security*, 1 September 2021.
40. Feminists for a Binding Treaty, *Key recommendations on the third revised draft published on 17 August 2021 of the legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises*, 5 October 2021.
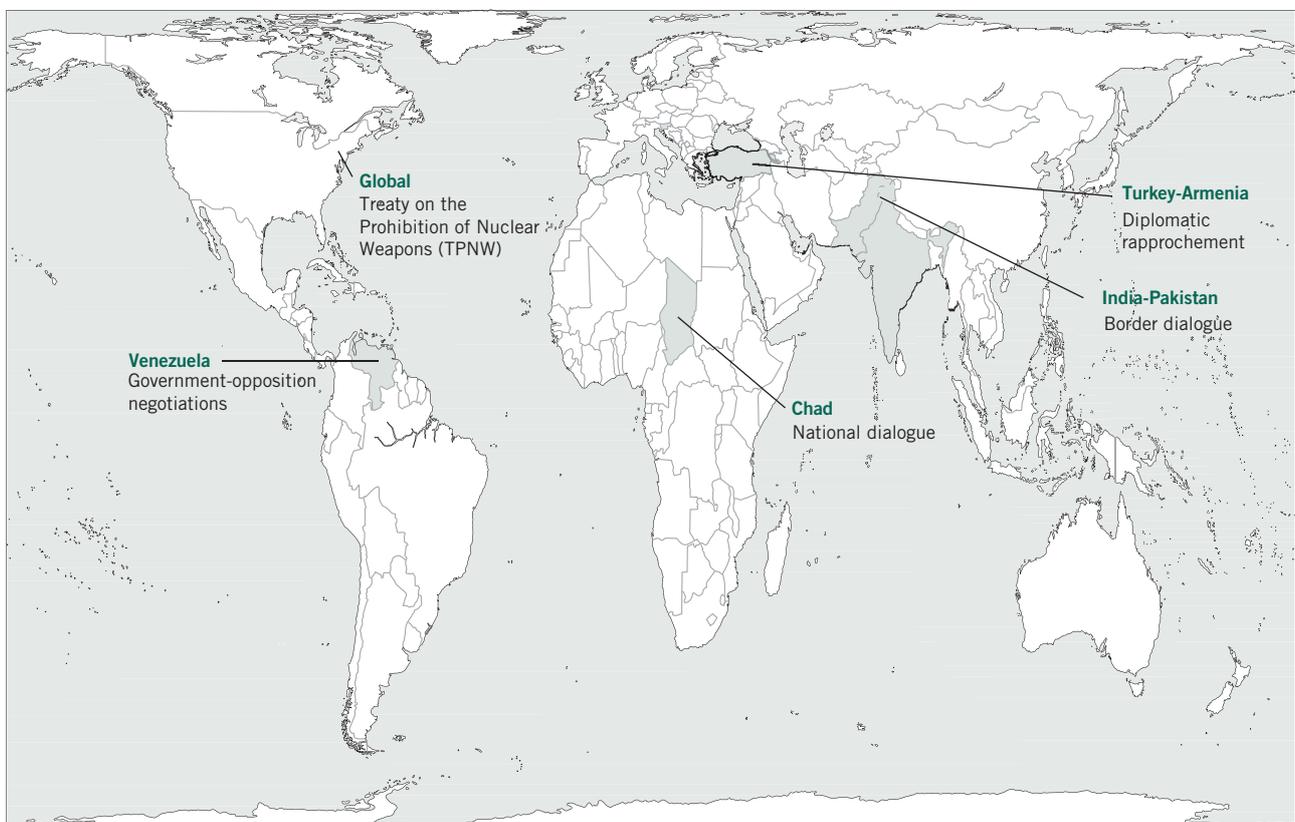
4. Opportunities for peace in 2022

After analysing the year 2021 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 2022. 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 2022 refer to expectations regarding the start of a national dialogue in Chad through which the broad set of challenges facing the country can be addressed; the resumption of political talks between the government and opposition in Venezuela in order to attempt to resolve the country's institutional and humanitarian crisis; the resumption of the dialogue between India and Pakistan over the Line of Control, in order to consolidate the ceasefire in the border area; the signs pointing to an improvement in the relations between Turkey and Armenia; and the coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), approved in 2017, which has now become legally binding for all ratifying states.

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 2022**

Global
Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

Turkey-Armenia
Diplomatic rapprochement

India-Pakistan
Border dialogue

Venezuela
Government-opposition negotiations

Chad
National dialogue

4.1. National dialogue, a fragile window of opportunity for peace in Chad

Often ranked as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, Chad faces a broad, complex and interrelated range of challenges, along with elements of fragility and instability that have become compounded in recent decades. This climate of instability was exacerbated further by the death of President Idriss Déby in April 2021 and the subsequent military coup, which appeared to place the country on the brink.[1] His death came amid a rebel offensive launched by the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) group in the centre and north of the country, after which a military junta of generals close to the president staged a coup and made his son, General Mahamat Idriss Déby, the new president of the Transitional Military Council (CMT). The junta announced that it would govern Chad for 18 months, during which time it would organize an inclusive national dialogue before handing over the reins of power to a civilian government, with no convictions or sanctions being brought against Chad by the international community. Some analysts highlighted the fact that the transitional authorities formed a civilian cabinet in late April that included key opposition politicians, thus seeming to relinquish some of their power.[2] By early May, the army had pushed back the FACT insurgents to Libya. Although there was an initial wave of persecution of the political and social opposition as a result of the mobilizations and protests against the coup d'état and the CMT, the transitional authorities later opened up the political space in the country to a limited extent and began to lay the groundwork for the promised national dialogue, which could mark a turning point in the country's history.

In this regard, several voices from the country's socio-political sphere called on the transitional authorities and the CMT to fulfil their pledge to facilitate a national dialogue. The CMT overturned a decades-long ban on protest marches, allowed the popular Transformateurs opposition movement to become a political party, and agreed to draft an amnesty for exiled or imprisoned rebels. Over the following months, the transitional authorities took steps to organize the national dialogue. In July, the Organizing Committee for the Inclusive National Dialogue (CODNI) was established. However, disagreements about the composition of the CODNI, the inclusiveness of the national dialogue, the interference of the CMT, the participation of the different insurgent movements, or the matters to be addressed in the talks, among other issues, led to the postponement of the dialogue forum, which had initially been scheduled for early 2022. In August, Mahamat Déby called on the various armed groups (FACT, UFR, CCMSR) to join the dialogue process. In November, he announced a general amnesty for the armed and political opposition in order to facilitate the participation of these actors in the national dialogue. In December, as a result of the general amnesty, many members of the civilian and armed opposition, including key figures, announced their willingness to participate in the process and meetings took place between representatives of the Chadian insurgency and the Chadian government in Egypt and France. On 31 December, Déby granted a general amnesty to more than 300 opponents and rebels.

However, the country faces many challenges in its transition, along with structural issues that complicate this hopeful stage. There are some outstanding decisions regarding the national dialogue (especially those concerning its inclusiveness and the participation of the different armed groups) that could derail the process or at least further delay its start. The country is also plagued by structural issues, such as inter-community conflicts and disputes over land ownership and uses, which, exacerbated by climate change, have multiplied in recent years and could be politically instrumentalized.

In this respect, a climate of distrust persists between the different sectors of the opposition and civil society towards the transitional authorities, the CMT and the Déby family as a result of nepotism, systematic human rights abuses, and the persecution of the socio-political opposition by the Déby family for more than 30 years since it came to power. This situation was made more acute by the political instrumentalization of the situation of exceptionality resulting from the restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This exceptionality was evident during the presidential elections of April, won by Idriss Déby. Although the political space opened up to a certain extent after Déby's death, various factors contribute to feeding this distrust.

Chadian politics have undergone profound changes in which different actors (especially the former ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), the Déby family and the political opposition) are still positioning themselves. Various analysts[3] consider that the junta might be trying to take control of the party that has been in power for three decades, while at the same time keeping the hard core of the party on side. In June, an extraordinary congress was convened to elect the party's new general secretary (the previous incumbent, Mahamat Zene Bada, fled to France when the junta pressured him to organize an extraordinary general congress to appoint a new leadership). The position went to Haroun Kabadi, former president of the National Assembly, who had been criticized in April for

1. Various authors, Chad: The end of an era, *The Africa Report*, Dossier in depth, April 2021.
2. AFP, Chad's new junta names transition government, *France24*, 2 May 2021.
3. See Jeune Afrique, Tchad : comment Mahamat Idriss Déby a pris la tête du Conseil militaire de transition, 26 April 2021; Jeune Afrique, Tchad: ce que devient Mahamat Zen Bada, l'ancien secrétaire général du MPS, 16 August 2021; International Crisis Group, *Getting Chad's Transition on Track*, 30 September 2021.

failing to fulfil his constitutional duty of taking office as the president of the transitional authority (citing health reasons) after the death of Idriss Déby. This paved the way for Déby's son Mahamat Déby to take over, perpetuating the family's hold on the presidency. In October, Kabadi himself was appointed as the new president of Chad's National Transition Council, an interim parliament appointed by a committee designated by the CMT, underscoring the restoration of the status quo prior to Idriss Déby's death, but now with his son in charge. However, different sources also highlighted the tensions within the Déby family concerning the transition process. These tensions came to the fore in December with the shootings involving relatives of Hinda Déby, Idriss Déby's widow, whose tentacles continue to control the country.[4] Meanwhile, the opposition was divided, since some of its leaders chose to join the government; in particular, former opposition leaders such as Saleh Kebzabo or Mahamat Alhabo, who were part of Wakit Tama, the main opposition platform which brings together multiple sectors of civil society, the political opposition and youth organizations. The platform was thought to have been weakened by the loss of some of its leaders. Other voices questioned the legitimacy of the junta. At the end of December, Wakit Tama reportedly announced its readiness to meet with Mahamat Déby at his request in order to discuss the transition and the dialogue process. Opposition figures, armed groups and representatives of civil society have been calling for dialogue for decades, hoping that it can lay the groundwork for state reforms. The participants aim to include a wide range of topics. The Wakit Tama platform sees dialogue as an opportunity to compensate for years of exclusion from the government and calls for a restoration of the balance of power in state institutions, the reduction of the political role of the armed forces, and the introduction of checks and balances in the government.

The national dialogue in Chad may help lay the groundwork for the beginning of a new phase to end the spiral of instability and violence of recent years

The AU agreed to support the transition on condition that presidential elections be held by the authorities within eighteen months and that members of the military council be prohibited from standing for election, specifically requiring the junta to amend the transition charter in order to include clauses to this effect. In December, the Episcopal Conference of Chad made a statement along similar lines, questioning the military junta for retaining full powers during the transition. However, the junta has not amended the transition charter as promised, instead claiming that the review of the charter should be discussed during the national dialogue. Nevertheless, the opposition fears that the transition will be delayed or that the junta will simply enable Mahamat Déby to take his father's place permanently.[5] Meanwhile, although the various insurgent movements have expressed their willingness to participate in the process and the transitional authorities have in turn expressed their willingness to allow these groups to participate, the CMT might make the issue of disarmament a condition for their involvement in the dialogue process. Over the course of the year there were contacts between informal representatives of the CMT and insurgent sectors in Togo, Egypt and France. Subsequently, Qatar offered to facilitate meetings in Doha with the insurgent groups, which were scheduled for the start of 2022. The goal of these meetings is to facilitate the participation of the groups in the dialogue process, which was scheduled for February 2022 but which, given the numerous delays, might be further postponed. On 1 October, the Special Committee on Dialogue with Armed Groups held its first meeting. This committee was tasked with resolving disagreements between political-military groups and the authorities in order to establish preconditions for participation in the national dialogue. The two main political-military movements are the FACT, which was responsible for the death of Idriss Déby, and the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR), led by Mahamat Déby's cousins Timan and Tom Erdimi. Both groups are based in Libya, from where they have periodically launched offensives against the country, although according to some analysts, they might be losing the support of the Libyan leadership. On 14 September, troops of Khalifa Haftar, the commander whose forces had fought the government in Tripoli from 2014 to October 2020, when the parties agreed a ceasefire, attacked their former FACT allies in southwestern Libya. Libya's Government of National Unity agreement, signed in March 2021, required all foreign fighters who had backed Haftar or the Tripoli government to leave the country.[6] As such, the main armed actors could be forced out of Libya. Depending on the preconditions, this might either encourage them to participate in the national dialogue or, conversely, to redouble their efforts to overthrow the military junta.

In conclusion, although there is a broad consensus on the need to promote and participate in the national dialogue and to facilitate the participation of the political-military movements and the political and social opposition, it is essential to overcome the climate of distrust generated over many years by the country's elites, who will ultimately lead this uncertain process. It is also necessary to ensure the active participation of the international community, especially France and the AU, without forgetting that in order for this fragile transition to be a success, it is crucial for the entire process to be monitored by an organized and mobilized civil society.

4. Jeune Afrique, Tchad : plusieurs membres de la famille d'Hinda Déby Itno suspects dans une affaire de meurtre, *Jeune Afrique*, 20 December 2021.
5. International Crisis Group, *Getting Chad's Transition on Track*, 30 September 2021.
6. Reuters, Libya's foreign minister confirms departure of some foreign fighters, *Reuters*, 3 October 2021.

4.2. The resumption of talks between India and Pakistan on the Line of Control

In February 2021, the directors-general of military operations of India and Pakistan issued a joint statement in which they noted the commitment of both sides to all ceasefire agreements along the Line of Control, as well as in other sectors "in the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders." The announcement interrupted a trend of steady and increasing ceasefire violations in recent years. Indeed, in 2020 some media outlets reported that the year had seen the highest number of violations of the ceasefire agreement in the last 17 years. The figures provided by India's Ministry of Home Affairs, which only included violations of the agreement by Pakistani forces, indicated that ceasefire violations had risen from 2,140 in 2018 to 3,479 in 2019 and 5,133 in 2020, to which the breaches by the Indian security forces must be added. In recent years, these violations of the ceasefire agreement have produced fatalities among both military personnel and civilians on both sides of the border, who are subjected not only to the daily impact of living in a heavily militarized territory, but also to that of the armed actions of both armies and insurgent groups operating in the area, especially in the territory controlled by India.

In November 2003, following a series of contacts and confidence-building measures, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire along the Line of Control and the Siachen Glacier. This agreement paved the way for a rapprochement between the two governments, which adopted a series of measures to improve communication on both sides of the border, including the restoration of air, land and sea transport between the countries. The rapprochement led to the start of a process of dialogue between India and Pakistan known as a "composite dialogue", which began after the meeting that took place between Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, and the Indian prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in Islamabad in 2004 during the summit of the regional organization SAARC. The composite dialogue came in the wake of previous rapprochement initiatives that had taken place between the governments of India and Pakistan since 1985. The dialogue lasted for several years and took the form of a series of negotiation rounds, with no progress being made on the key issues of contention between the two countries, especially with regard to the situation in Kashmir. The subsequent deterioration of bilateral relations, marked by episodes of violence both along the Line of Control and in the Indian state of Kashmir, led to the suspension of the dialogue without it having borne fruit. In recent years, violence has persisted in Kashmir, in parallel to a deterioration of the political situation in the region with the loss of state status in 2019. Moreover there has been a steady, growing trend of violence and exchanges of fire between the

The challenge remains to achieve a rapprochement between India and Pakistan that transcends the issue of the ceasefire and the reduction of violence in the border area in order to address the key issues of the dispute

Indian and Pakistani armed forces along the border. As such, the announcement of a renewed commitment by both governments to the 2003 ceasefire agreement, despite its limitations and the challenges that lie ahead, is an important initiative that opens the door to a possible resumption of dialogue in the future. The agreement to reactivate the ceasefire came after the Indian government began a rapprochement with its Pakistani counterpart in December 2020, offering the possibility of carrying out backchannel talks. Media outlets reported that the talks were conducted by the intelligence chiefs of the two countries, due to India's insistence that the meetings should not be led by political interlocutors. The meetings were held in the United Arab Emirates, as confirmed by a diplomat from this country who had reportedly carried out initiatives to bring about the rapprochement, although India stated that both sides agreed not to incorporate a third party in the dialogue. The priority for Pakistan was the return of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, while India prioritized rapprochement with Pakistan in an attempt to reduce tension, which would enable it to devote more military resources to the situation of tension with China and increase its military deployment on the border with that country. Undoubtedly, the regional context (with the seizure of power in Afghanistan by the Taliban in August, preceded by a major escalation of the armed conflict in the previous months, along with the border tensions between India and China of the last two years) drove and conditioned this rapprochement between India and Pakistan.

The dialogue failed to make progress and several media outlets highlighted that the relations between India and Pakistan became increasingly distant from April, with no new direct or indirect meetings or contacts being reported. Nevertheless, the level of violence along the border was significantly reduced, with no verified ceasefire agreement violations. This reduction in violence brought about a huge improvement in the living and security conditions of the population on both sides of the Line of Control, which in recent years has been severely affected by violence. Therefore, although the initiative has been limited in terms of the scope and duration of the talks, the positive effects of the agreement have persisted throughout the year, creating favourable conditions for a possible resumption of dialogue between the two historically opposed countries. The challenge therefore remains to achieve a rapprochement that transcends the issue of the ceasefire and the reduction of violence in the border area in order to address the key issues of the dispute. The reduction of clashes along the Line of Control points to a scenario more conducive to substantive talks between the two governments.

4.3. The resumption of political negotiations between the government and the opposition in Venezuela

In mid-August, Nicolás Maduro's government and most of the opposition initiated a new negotiation process in Mexico that was facilitated by Norway and accompanied by Russia and the Netherlands, with significant backing from the international community. Although this process was interrupted in mid-October and few specific, tangible agreements were reached in the three rounds of negotiations, at the start of 2022 there was cause for optimism regarding the resumption of talks due to several factors. Both domestically in Venezuela and internationally, numerous changes occurred that provided both negotiating parties with incentives to resolve through dialogue and negotiation the socio-political, economic and humanitarian crisis in which the country has been mired for years.

On the domestic front, following the re-election of Maduro in the presidential elections of 2018 (considered fraudulent by the opposition and by part of the international community), dozens of countries (led by Donald Trump's administration) recognized the opposition leader Juan Guaidó, president of the National Assembly, as interim president of the country, upping the sanctions, rhetoric and pressure on Maduro's government. On several occasions, the Trump administration did not rule out coercive measures to resolve the crisis in the country, while certain sectors of the opposition called for some type of international intervention in order to put an end to the dramatic humanitarian situation, and some countries proposed suspending Venezuela's membership of the OAS. In May 2020, the Venezuelan government even accused the opposition and the US of being behind an attempted coup d'état. Despite the growing isolation and the deepening of the economic crisis in the country, at the start of 2021 it seemed fairly clear that this high-pressure strategy would not lead to government alternation, especially after the ruling party won resoundingly in the legislative elections of December 2020, which had a low turnout having been boycotted by the opposition and which were considered illegitimate by the international community. In January 2021, as a result of the end of the term of office of the National Assembly (which had been controlled by the opposition since 2015), many of the countries and international organizations (such as the EU) that had recognized Guaidó as the legitimate interim president of the country reiterated this position.[7]

However, part of the opposition distanced itself from the most belligerent strategy championed by the US and Juan Guaidó, opting instead to attempt to negotiate with the government in order to achieve better conditions of coexistence and greater guarantees of political participation. As such, the negotiations that took place during the first half of the year between the government and part of the opposition, led by former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles, paved the way for the formation of a more inclusive National Electoral Council (with two of its five members considered close to the opposition) and for the decision by a significant sector of the opposition to participate in an election for the first time since 2017, namely the regional and local elections held at the end of 2021, in which the ruling party obtained a large majority amid low turnout and accusations of irregularities. Previously, these same sectors of the opposition had already shown their preference for obtaining concessions from the state through negotiation. In 2020, for example, the Turkish government facilitated talks between the government, Capriles and fellow opposition leader Stalin González, which led to the release of 50 imprisoned opponents and the dismissal of judicial proceedings against another 60 members of the opposition (many of whom were lawmakers) who were in exile or had been granted asylum abroad. At the time, Maduro declared that the measure was aimed at promoting national reconciliation and facilitating greater participation by the opposition in elections.

Meanwhile, some voices consider that the worsening of the economic and humanitarian crisis in which the country has been mired in recent years has also encouraged Maduro's government to be more willing to pursue a strategy of dialogue that may foster a relaxation of international sanctions and the recovery of frozen assets abroad. Regarding the aforementioned crisis, at the end of 2021 the UNHCR[8] reported that the violence, insecurity, and economic and medical conditions in Venezuela had forced more than 5.9 million people to leave the country, making it the country with the second highest number of displaced people in the world, only behind Syria. The vast majority of these people have moved to Colombia and other Latin American countries. The UNHCR stated that since 2014 there has been an 8,000 percent increase in the number of Venezuelans claiming asylum around the world. At the start of 2021, the United Nations responded to the crisis by calling for the withdrawal of economic sanctions, arguing that they were having a devastating effect on the civilian population.[9] With billions of dollars frozen abroad, the United Nations said that the country was facing major shortages in several sectors (machinery, spare parts, electricity, water, fuel, gas, food or medicine), that more than 2.5 million people were suffering from severe food insecurity and that around 90% of the population was subsisting on less than ten dollars a month, which explains the high rates of extreme poverty in the country.

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7. International Crisis Group, *Cómo superar la fractura global sobre Venezuela*, Report 93, Latin America & Caribbean, ICG, 17 February 2022.
8. UNHCR, *Data reveals plight of Venezuelan refugees and migrants evicted in pandemic*, UNHCR, 25 October 2021.
9. Público, La ONU pide levantar las sanciones a Venezuela por sus 'efectos devastadores', *Público*, 13 de febrero de 2021.

The change of government in the US at the beginning of 2021 also produced a scenario that was more conducive to dialogue, facilitating greater coordination and coherence in the management of the Venezuelan crisis by certain actors in the international community. Although Joe Biden continued to recognize Guaidó as interim president of Venezuela and during the year the new US administration was accused of differing little from the previous administration in its approach to Venezuela, the Venezuelan government itself acknowledged that the noises coming out of Washington were less belligerent. In this respect, shortly after taking office, Biden declared himself open to exploring a relaxation of sanctions and to engaging in dialogue with the Venezuelan government. Moreover, at various points during the year he relaxed sanctions in certain specific sectors, such as transactions in ports or airports or by authorizing the exportation of propane gas to Venezuela. While the US expressed greater willingness to engage in dialogue, other actors in the international community pressed harder for the Venezuelan government and opposition to resume the path of dialogue. Accordingly, in March, the International Contact Group (composed of Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Panama, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay and the EU) issued a statement in which it considered that the only way out of the Venezuelan crisis was through political negotiations between the parties, along with the organization of credible and transparent elections, in accordance with the Venezuelan constitution. During this period, a Norwegian government delegation travelled several times to Venezuela to explore the readiness of both sides to resume dialogue.

Although the international community has played a significant role in the various negotiation processes that have taken place previously in Venezuela, on this occasion there appears to be a greater strategic alignment of the main international actors concerning the importance of resolving the crisis through negotiation. In addition to Norway's role as the official facilitator of the dialogue process (as was the case in the previous negotiation process in Oslo and Barbados), Russia and the Netherlands, considered close to the government and the opposition, respectively, were assigned to accompany the process. Some analyses have highlighted the fact that the negotiations are taking place in Mexico, whose government has tried to maintain a position of neutrality or one that is not excessively aligned with either side. This is borne out by the fact that after Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office in July 2018, the Mexican government left the Lima Group, which in recent years has been openly critical of Maduro's government.

Both domestically in Venezuela and internationally, numerous changes occurred that provided both negotiating parties with incentives to resolve through dialogue and negotiation the socio-political, economic and humanitarian crisis in which the country is mired

Meanwhile, it seems that both the government and the opposition have agreed to the establishment of a Group of Friends. Although the composition of this group generated some friction during the talks in Mexico, causing its establishment to be postponed, at the beginning of 2022 it transpired that it could be made up of ten countries and be coordinated by the United Nations and the Vatican. In addition to the facilitation structure of the talks, the negotiations that began in Mexico in August 2021 received the unanimous, solid backing of the international community. Even actors who had previously been openly in favour of isolating Venezuela, such as the Secretary General of the OAS, on this occasion supported the initiative. Moreover, it should be noted that the resumption of dialogue in Mexico was preceded by numerous exploratory meetings between the Norwegian government and both negotiating parties, not only in the first half of 2021, but also in 2020, shortly after negotiations in Barbados were interrupted at the end of 2019. In this respect, Caracas highlighted that between February and June 2020, 19 meetings had taken place between the government and the opposition led by Guaidó, including two meetings in which he personally took part with his Popular Will party, together with the leaders of the other three parties of the so-called G4 (Justice First, Democratic Action and A New Era).

Despite the apparent greater willingness of the government, opposition and international community to find a way out of the conflict through negotiation, there are also some elements that give cause for caution. First of all, it should be noted that in recent times there have been several negotiation processes (five since 2013) that have not borne fruit and that have increased the scepticism of certain sectors regarding the government's political will. Following the breakdown of negotiations in Oslo and Barbados in 2019, some opposition leaders criticized the government's use of the periodic resumption of negotiations to buy time, strengthen its position, demobilize citizens, and delegitimize and divide the opposition. Likewise, Maduro has frequently accused the opposition of acting on behalf of the interests of third countries. Secondly, some voices who are sceptical of the dialogue initiated in Mexico point out that this process lasted barely two months. In mid-October, the day before the start of the fourth round of negotiations, the government withdrew from negotiations following the extradition to the US of Alex Saab, a Colombian businessman close to the government accused of money laundering. In this respect, some sectors have expressed doubts about the possibilities of a successful outcome to the talks initiated in Mexico given the fact that the Venezuelan government has conditioned their resumption on the release of Saab, which does not

depend on the opposition in any way. These critical voices have also pointed out that during the three rounds of negotiations that took place in August and September, only two agreements were reached: the claim and defence of Venezuelan sovereign rights over the Guyana Esequiba Territory (a territorial dispute with Guyana dating back to the 1830s) and the creation of a so-called Social Assistance Table formed jointly by the government and the opposition to address social issues such as social programmes, child nutrition, transplants or vaccination. Furthermore, the opposition protested that the interruption of the talks prevented the implementation of these agreements or the continuation of talks on the seven points of the substantive agenda of the negotiation: political rights, electoral schedule with guarantees, respect for the rule of law, lifting of sanctions, renunciation of violence, social protection measures and guarantees of implementation of whatever is agreed.

Beyond these difficulties, it should be noted that all parties have expressed their willingness to resume dialogue in the near future and have stated their commitment to a negotiated solution to the crisis in Venezuela. Even the government, which withdrew from the negotiations, has on several occasions expressed its willingness to resume talks. Although previous negotiation processes in the country have shown that highly specific issues can block or stall negotiations, the domestic and international changes that have recently taken place, along with the commitment and unity of action that the international community has recently shown towards resolving the crisis in Venezuela would appear to pave the way for a scenario of greater cooperation and rapprochement between the parties.

4.4. Towards an improvement in relations between Turkey and Armenia?

A diplomatic opening between Turkey and Armenia took place in 2021 with a series of announcements and measures aimed at normalizing bilateral relations that have been marked by hostility due to factors such as the historical wound of the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, which has not been recognized by Turkey, or the conflict over the status of the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is formally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. A military conflict broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the 1990s and again in 2020 over the control of the enclave. Throughout this long-running dispute, Turkey has remained an ally of Azerbaijan, keeping the Turkish-Armenian border closed since 1993 and providing Azerbaijan with military support in the 2020 war. The set of measures announced and/or adopted by the governments of Turkey and Armenia, as a result of changes in the region, offer hope for the improvement of bilateral relations, although various elements exist that may complicate, dampen or restrict the scope of this opportunity.

In 2021, several steps were taken towards dialogue and trust building between the two countries. As part of the move towards normalizing bilateral relations, in mid-December, the Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced in parliament the appointment by both countries of special envoys, as well as the imminent resumption of flights between the two capitals. Armenia reaffirmed the announcement a day later. The Turkish diplomat Serdar Kilic, former ambassador to the US and a trusted lieutenant of the Turkish president, was appointed as special envoy for the normalization of relations with Armenia. Meanwhile, Armenia appointed the deputy speaker of the parliament and former chairman of its foreign relations committee, Ruben Rubinyan, who is close to the Armenian prime minister, Nikol Pashinian. Turkey announced that the first talks between the two envoys would take place in Moscow. In turn, the Armenian ministry of economy announced at the end of December the lifting of the embargo on imports of products from Turkey as of January 2022.

This openness towards the improvement of relations between the two countries has emerged within the new context generated by the 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which had a major impact on human security. Tens of thousands of people were displaced (around 91,000 Armenians and 84,000 Azerbaijanis, according to a Council of Europe report) and the hostilities caused considerable damage to the civilian infrastructure of Nagorno-Karabakh. Several hundred civilians were killed and around 6,800 military personnel

In 2021, Armenia and Turkey began a process of rapprochement, adopting measures that may lead to the improvement of diplomatic relations, although the process failed to include dimensions such as social dialogue

from both countries were killed or disappeared. The housing and basic needs of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh who had been displaced to Armenia and of those who had returned to the enclave remained an issue in 2021. Meanwhile, the mining of the districts whose control had been regained militarily by Azerbaijan constituted a serious obstacle to the return of the Azerbaijanis who had been forcibly displaced from those areas in the 1990s.

The war ended with Azerbaijan in a position of military superiority. The agreement signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia (with Russia as mediator) ended hostilities, ratified Azerbaijan's control of the districts around Nagorno-Karabakh (whose status as Azerbaijani territory had not been in dispute but which had been occupied by Armenia in the war of the 1990s, triggering the mass displacement of their Azerbaijani population) and committed the parties to establishing economic and transport links in the region. Turkey and Armenia announced rapprochement measures. In this context, the transfer to Azerbaijan of the control of the districts around Nagorno-Karabakh was included in the agreement that ended the hostilities and that removed Turkey's justification for keeping its border with Armenia closed.

This openness towards the improvement of relations between both countries is taking place within the framework of movements towards greater regional integration (mainly economic) in the new scenario in the South Caucasus following the 2020 war, although many question marks and difficulties remain to be overcome. One of the points in the nine-point agreement signed in November 2020 to end hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia was the unblocking of all economic and transport links in the region, along with Armenia's provision of a link between Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan, and the provision of traffic control by the border guard service of the Russian Federal Security Service. Throughout 2021, much of the negotiating process between Azerbaijan and Armenia (mediated by Russia and with support from the OSCE Minsk Group and the EU) focused on the issue of opening trade relations and transport links, although it faced difficulties and delays. All in all, the 2020 war had a major impact on the geostrategic scenario in the region. For Armenia, the pandemic and the war had a serious economic impact, while the war and its outcome deepened its subordination to and dependence on Russia, which was able to expand its political and military role in the region as a mediator, with the deployment of peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the corridor that connects the enclave to Armenia. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan projected itself as a military actor, adopting an approach

of militaristic triumphalism and positioning itself as an ally both of Russia (the main exporter of arms to Azerbaijan) and Turkey. The latter country, which has supported the Azerbaijani army for decades, supplying it with weapons, training and advice, was thus able to increase its weight and strengthen its political and military ascendancy in the region.

In this scenario, the potential improvement in relations between Turkey and Armenia benefits both sides, especially in economic terms with the prospective reopening of the border. Turkey stated in 2021 that the rapprochement with Armenia would take place in coordination with Azerbaijan, thus limiting the risk of Azerbaijani opposition to the process, despite the fact that serious socio-political antagonism still exists between Armenia and Azerbaijan, along with ceasefire violations. Russia has not voiced any opposition to the rapprochement. Meanwhile, following uncertainty about the Armenian government's position of strength in the aftermath of the 2020 war and having faced anti-government demonstrations in 2021, Pashinian's party was returned to office with 54% of the votes in the snap election (49.3% turnout versus 48.6% in 2018), giving the government room for manoeuvre in its decisions regarding the rapprochement with Turkey. All in all, a rapprochement and the reopening of the border would offer economic dividends to all the governments involved, given the possibility of the establishment of a transit zone through the transport links of the South Caucasus.

However, several factors limit the scope of the opportunity. On the one hand, the rapprochement is framed in an exclusive format, restricted to the elites and without incorporating actors, mechanisms and processes of broader dialogue, such as the truth and reconciliation dimension. On the other hand, the willingness to embrace rapprochement closely linked to economic integration will not necessarily entail greater economic security for populations as a whole, particularly those in situations of greater economic vulnerability. Moreover, the antagonism, limitations and stumbling blocks of the negotiation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to dominate the regional context, which has an impact on the prospects for improved relations between Armenia and Turkey. Furthermore, heightened tension regarding Russia's role in Ukraine also generate uncertainty and new risks in the Caucasus.

Turkey and Armenia also attempted to improve bilateral relations in 2009. That process, facilitated by Switzerland, involved the signing of protocols by the countries' respective prime ministers. However, the initiative did not prosper. The ongoing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey's ally, was a major factor in that failure. The context is now different, although various challenges and difficulties remain to be overcome. The rapprochement that occurred in 2021 and the prospects for improving relations between Armenia and Turkey constitute an opportunity. However, it will require support, not only in order to achieve a successful outcome but also in order to expand its scope to encompass dimensions of social dialogue and citizen participation, including in areas of historical memory and peacebuilding with social justice.

4.5. Coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), approved in 2017, came into force on 22 January 2021. This is the first international treaty aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Its coming into force meant that it became legally binding for the states that had ratified it and would become so for any other states that ratified it in the future. By the end of 2021, 58 states parties and 86 signatories had pledged their commitment to the treaty text. The TPNW prohibits nations from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, or allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed in their territory. Meanwhile, a nation that possesses nuclear weapons may become a party to the treaty, providing that it agrees to destroy them in accordance with a legally binding, time-bound plan. The treaty considers that any use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, in particular the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, given, among other aspects, the completely indiscriminate nature of the consequences of their use and the prohibition by international law of such attacks.

The signing of the treaty was considered a huge international breakthrough in disarmament. Indeed, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize went to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons or ICAN, the international civil society campaign that promoted the ratification of the treaty, encourages new states to join it and monitors full compliance with its terms. As the UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, "The elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations", highlighting the centrality of the nuclear issue in addressing international security challenges.

The fact is that despite the progress represented by the ratification and subsequent coming into force of the treaty, nuclear weapons continue to represent an enormous international security risk. According to data compiled by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), nine countries possessed roughly 12,700 nuclear warheads at the end of 2021, although 90% of all nuclear weapons were owned by the US and Russia.[10] These are estimates, since states do not disclose information regarding their nuclear weapons. The FAS pointed to a slowdown in the trend of reduction in the global arsenal that had occurred since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, the reduction was mainly due to the dismantling of previously withdrawn weapons, since China, India, North Korea, Pakistan, the United Kingdom and possibly Russia were reportedly increasing their arsenals.

Although none of the states with nuclear weapons had signed the treaty or expressed their willingness to do so in the near future, some cracks were beginning to open up on the part of states traditionally allied with certain nuclear powers. In this respect, three EU states (Ireland, Malta and Sweden) have joined the treaty and two NATO member states, Norway and Germany, have expressed their willingness to participate as observers at the first conference of states parties of the treaty scheduled for June 2022. Norway was the first NATO country to express this intention after a change of government, while members of Germany's new coalition government, such as its foreign minister, have expressed their willingness to work towards making Germany become a party to the treaty, despite the fact that it is one of the NATO countries with US nuclear weapons stationed in its territory. The parties that make up the current coalition government in Spain reached an agreement in 2018 to join to the treaty, although no concrete progress has been made in this respect since then.

The growing tension between Russia and the countries in the Euro-Atlantic area underlines the urgency of promoting the scope of this treaty by incorporating new states parties willing to promote nuclear disarmament

Meanwhile, ICAN has highlighted that several economic actors, such as international investors, appear to be beginning to consider the nuclear weapons sector a risky business; in 2021, 127 financial institutions stopped investing in nuclear weapons companies.[11] This would mean a reduction in the total number of investors compared to the previous year, which could mark a change in trend in the international economic support of the nuclear weapons industry.

The growing tension between Russia and the countries in the Euro-Atlantic area underlines the urgency of promoting the scope of this treaty by incorporating new states parties willing to promote nuclear disarmament. The use of these weapons represents an enormous risk for the world population, and the huge insecurity generated by the mere possibility of their use, even if it does not materialize. In the context of an international environmental crisis of catastrophic proportions, the existence of nuclear weapons further increases the risk of destruction of the ecosystems and life systems of the planet. The consequences of the use of nuclear weapons would result in what is known by the scientific community as "nuclear winter", with a drastic drop in

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10. Federation of American Scientists, *Status of World Nuclear Forces*, 20 December 2021.
11. ICAN, *This is how the nuclear weapon ban treaty made history in 2021*, 23 December 2021.

the temperature of the earth, due to the reduction of solar radiation resulting from the ashes and dust that would occur after deflagration, with the consequent impact on food production (among many other effects), causing worldwide famine.[12]

Therefore, the existence and coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represents an excellent opportunity to strengthen the process of elimination of these weapons globally, since deterrence strategies have proved highly ineffective in terms of denuclearization. States allied with nuclear powers can play a key role in driving this denuclearization process by joining and participating in the treaty, and by supporting civil society organizations involved in the implementation of the treaty.

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12. Coupe, J., Bardeen, C. G., Robock, A., & Toon, O.B., "Nuclear winter responses to nuclear war between the United States and Russia in the Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model Version 4 and the Goddard Institute for Space Studies Model E", *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres*, 124, 2019.

5. Risk scenarios for 2022

Drawing on the analysis of the contexts of armed conflict and socio-political crisis in 2021, 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. The risk scenarios for 2022 or even in the longer term. The risk scenarios for the year 2022 refer to the challenges and risks of the proliferation of coups d'état in Africa, following the execution of four successful military coups in the continent in 2021 (Chad, Mali, Guinea and Sudan); Uganda's intervention in Congolese territory in pursuit of the ADF armed group, which could fuel an escalation of the conflict with serious destabilizing effects; the worsening of the situation in Myanmar, given the increase in violence and the deterioration of the humanitarian and economic situation in the country following the coup and in the context of the pandemic; the rising number of attacks perpetrated by the armed group MIT in the Indonesian province of Central Sulawesi; the intensification of the political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the grave situation of violence, apartheid and dispossession in Palestine and the risks of continuing to ignore this reality.

Map 5.1. **Risk scenarios for 2022**
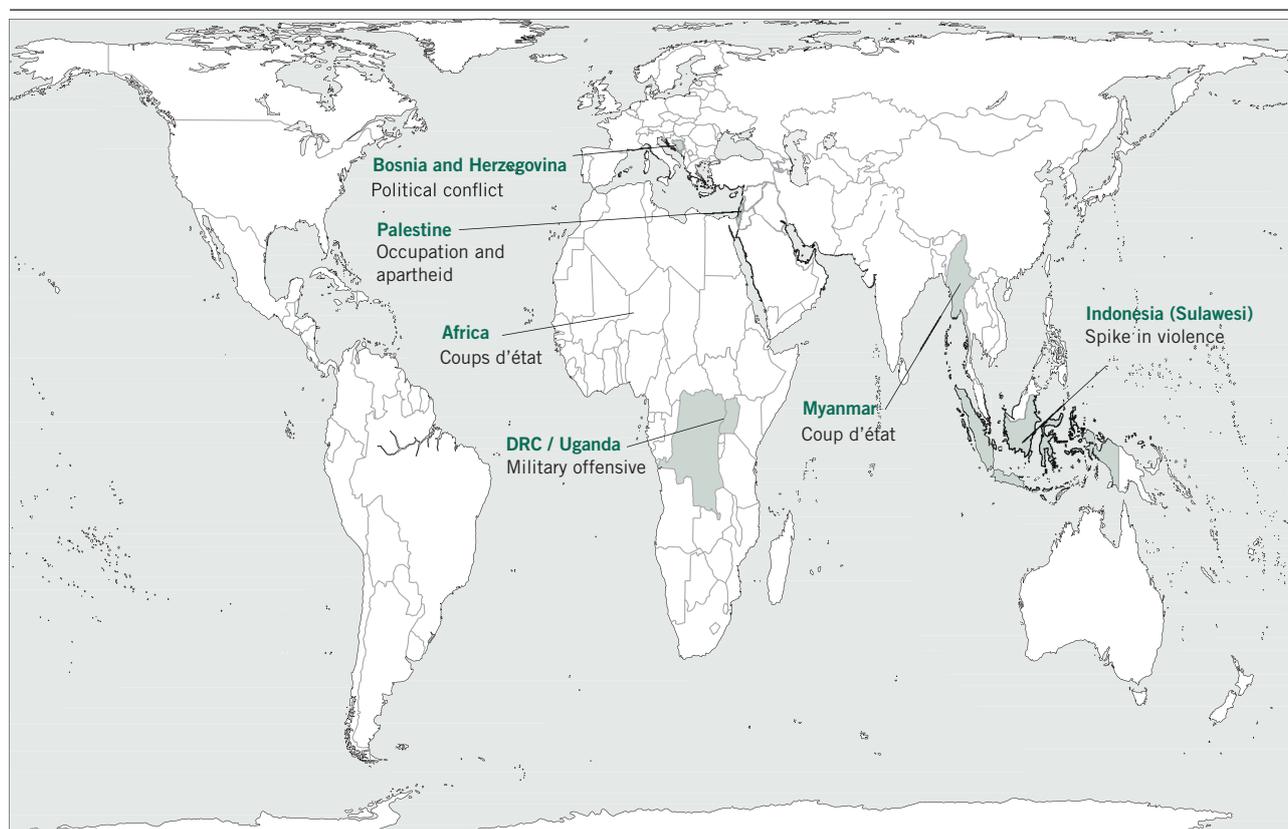
5.1 Challenges and risks of the proliferation of coups in Africa

2021 proved to be a year of setbacks in terms of democratic governance for the African continent, where four successful military coups were perpetrated, namely in Chad (April), Mali (May), Guinea (September) and Sudan (October). Moreover, an attempted military coup was thwarted in Niger in March, while at the time of closing this report another successful coup was taking place in Burkina Faso (23 January 2022). The continent has not seen this many successful coups in a single calendar year since 1999. If we add to this tally the coups that have taken place since 2013 in Africa, including in countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, CAR, Burkina Faso or Zimbabwe, we can observe that around 20% of African countries have been subjected to unconstitutional changes of government in less than a decade.

The Lomé Declaration of 2000, in which the now-disbanded Organization of African Unity (OAU) pledged to prohibit unconstitutional changes of government on the continent, undertaking not to recognize governments resulting from coups and to expel them from the organization, succeeded in containing the practice of military coups to some extent for a while; fifteen successful coups had taken place in the decade leading up to the Lomé Declaration (1991-2000), compared to eight in the following decade (2011-2020). However, the resurgence of military interventionism in African politics in the past year, mainly in the western region, jeopardizes the significant progress made in governance by African societies. The indicators of the annual Ibrahim Index of African Governance report point to a stagnation in governance over the last five years, and indeed to a deterioration (for the first time in almost a decade) in 2019. It has been pointed out that although the continent has been making progress in terms of good governance, the threat of a worsening security situation and the erosion of spaces for civic and democratic participation risk derailing the progress achieved.[1] The trend represents a serious threat to the peace, security and stability of the continent, endangering some of the aspirations of the African agenda 2063 (The Africa We Want), including aspiration 3, focused on building an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, and Aspiration 4, which aims to achieve a peaceful and secure Africa.[2]

The reasons behind the emergence of this coup trend are complex and multicausal. However, there are two elements that have been observed in recent episodes that could be used by military apparatuses to justify such actions: the deterioration of the security situation

Around 20% of African countries have been subjected to unconstitutional changes of government in less than a decade

and political instability. In the case of Chad, the death of President Idriss Déby, in the midst of a climate of severe political and security instability, served as a pretext for the seizure of control of state institutions by a military junta led by his son, General Mahamat Déby, overturning the constitutional order. In Guinea, the coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, overthrowing the government presided over by Alpha Condé, was preceded by an unconstitutional change to rescind the presidential term limit, generating widespread popular discontent that was harshly repressed by the government. In Mali, the causes were related to the deterioration of the security situation, the crisis in the transitional government and the increase in popular discontent, all of which gave rise to the second coup in the country in nine months by Colonel Assimi Goïta. Meanwhile, the coup in Sudan was also related to tensions between the civilian and military wings of the government. The military side, led by the Chairman of the Sovereignty Council, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, took over the entire government, bringing the transition to an end. Paradoxically, in these last two cases the coups were provoked by the military wing of the transitional hybrid government that had emerged from previous military coups, putting an end to the agreed transitions.

The responses to these coups have differed widely. Internally, while the coups in Chad and Sudan met with the disapproval of their respective populations, triggering popular mobilizations and political opposition to which the state security forces responded with repression, the new military juntas in Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso were well received and enjoyed popular support, even by opposition political parties. Externally it was a similar story, since African organizations and international actors adopted different standards in their respective responses. While there was unanimous condemnation of the coups in Guinea, Mali, Sudan or Burkina Faso, in the case of Chad most of the actors in the international community limited themselves to timidly calling for a return to constitutional order, without condemning the coup; in fact, the French government had no problem with recognizing the military junta on exceptional security grounds. Meanwhile, the African Union (AU) decided to suspend Mali, Guinea and Sudan from the organization, but did not do the same with Chad. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) suspended Mali and Guinea (and, recently, Burkina Faso), imposed sanctions on members of Guinea's military junta, imposed even harsher economic sanctions on Mali (backed up by the West African Monetary Union (WAEMU), the other regional

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1. Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2020), 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance.
2. African Union, *Agenda 2063. The african we want*, december 2021.

organization in the area) but did not impose sanctions on Burkina Faso. Internationally, the sanctions on Mali were backed by the US, the EU and France, while China and Russia blocked a statement of support for them in the Security Council.

The application of this double standard is being used to cast the sanctions and attempts by the international community to restore constitutional order as a neo-colonial, self-interested approach that is not aimed at defending democracy but rather at promoting strategic interests. This in turn has led to a general questioning and delegitimization of broad consensuses on how to deal with threats to peace and security in conflict prevention policies. Furthermore, the failure of the international community and of African actors to issue unified, specific condemnations of coups, along with the existence of actors who maintain diplomatic relations with the governments resulting from them (thus breaking the effect of regional and global isolation), fuel the contagion effect among military actors, who feel that they enjoy impunity.

The AU and other African organizations should promote and strengthen preventive measures against bad governance in order to avoid the contagion effect on the continent

Meanwhile, African organizations have achieved only limited success by imposing suspension measures on countries where coups have been perpetrated, while at the same time seeking to force military juntas to share power with civilian leaders. In fact, the coups in Mali and Sudan, whose pre-coup governments were themselves civilian-military hybrids resulting from previous coups and formed under international pressure, once again involved the usurpation of power by the military wing of the transitional hybrid government some time after its formation. In this respect, it can be argued that the time has come for the AU and other African organizations to review their policy of legitimizing coups under the umbrella of creating hybrid governments. Moreover, they should promote and strengthen preventive measures against bad governance in order to avoid the contagion effect on the continent, punishing not only unconstitutional changes of government but also non-democratic and unconstitutional ways of preserving power, such as third mandates or electoral fraud. If they fail to do so, we may find ourselves on the cusp of a proliferation of unconstitutional changes with unforeseeable consequences.

5.2. Uganda's intervention in Congolese territory in its pursuit of the ADF

In mid-November, the Congolese armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) carried out several attacks in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. The bombings constituted a geographical shift and qualitative leap in the group's actions and triggered an armed response by Uganda in Congolese territory, which may entail an escalation in the evolution and severity of this conflict with potentially serious consequences.[1] This Ugandan operation reopens one of the most serious and deadly episodes that the African continent has experienced in recent decades: the intervention of Uganda and other countries of the region (mainly Rwanda and Burundi) in the Second Congo War (1998-2003), also known as the Great War of Africa, still fresh in the memory of citizens of DR Congo and the rest of the Great Lakes region due to the devastating impact that it had in DR Congo in terms of the loss of human life, with consequences that persist to this day in the form of instability and violence in the east of the country.

Three blasts occurred in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, on 16 November 2021. The triple suicide bombing was carried out near the national parliament and the Ugandan police headquarters, leaving seven people dead and 40 injured. The Ugandan authorities, which blamed the attacks on the ADF, initially reacted by carrying out mass arrests of potential suspects inside the country. It then announced plans to redeploy the Ugandan army in neighbouring DR Congo. The ADF claimed responsibility for the attacks perpetrated in Uganda. On 30 November, the Ugandan Armed Forces reported the first airstrikes against ADF positions on Congolese soil, and in early December Ugandan troops entered Congolese territory after reaching an agreement with the Congolese government to combat the insurgency, marking the return of the Ugandan Armed Forces to DR Congo 20 years after the end of the Great War of Africa.

The ADF is an Islamist rebel group led by Ugandan and Congolese fighters operating in the northwest of the Rwenzori Massif (North Kivu, between DR Congo and Uganda). It was created in the mid-1990s in western Uganda through the merger of other Ugandan armed groups taking refuge in DR Congo (Rwenzururu, ADF, National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU)) and was later renamed ADF. The prevailing ideology of the new group was that of the former ADF, which originated in marginalized Islamist movements in Uganda linked to the conservative Islamist movement Salaf Tabliq. Led by Jamil Mukulu, since the late 1990s the group had kept a low profile in the province of North Kivu, near the border with Uganda, where a series of military

Following the attacks perpetrated in Kampala by the armed group ADF, the Ugandan Armed Forces were redeployed in DR Congo, 23 years after the start of the Second Congo War

offensives had practically dismantled it. However, it was able to regroup since its funding networks and recruitment capacity remained intact. In its early years, it was instrumentalized by Mobutu-led Zaire (and later by Kabila-led DR Congo) to put pressure on Uganda. The group also received the backing of Kenya and Sudan, along with strong underground support in Uganda. Its initial aim was to establish an Islamic State in Uganda, but in the 2000s it established itself in communities that welcomed it in DR Congo, becoming a local threat to the Congolese administration, although its activity was limited. In early 2013, the group conducted a recruitment drive, carried out a wave of abductions and escalated its attacks on the civilian population. However, it was not until 2015, when its then leader, Jamil Mukulu, was imprisoned and replaced by Musa Baluku, that it underwent a process of radicalization and expansion of its activities. In 2019, the Congolese Armed Forces launched an offensive against the group. This led to an escalation of violence in the north of North Kivu province, with grave consequences for the civilian population, due to the impact of the operations of the security forces, as well as that of the resulting reprisals carried out by the ADF. Since then, the violence and insurgency have intensified. In this climate, crimes against humanity and war crimes may have been committed, according to the United Nations.

In 2021, a series of events highlighted the severity of the situation and the growing militarization of the conflict. The many operations conducted by the Congolese Armed Forces in recent years have inflicted significant losses on the ADF, dismantling several of its strongholds. However, the group maintained its ability to cause harm to the civilian population, expanded its area of operations and resorted more frequently to improvised explosive devices, a method of combat that had not been used by the ADF until the end of 2020, after which it escalated its use of such devices. Furthermore, in August 2021, another event occurred that caused great concern due to the resulting consequences, not only in military terms, but in respect of the narrative that the ADF can build to legitimize its existence: President Félix Tshisekedi of DC Congo authorized the US special forces to support the Congolese security forces in their activities against the armed group, which is the only one in the region included on the US list of foreign terrorist organizations due to its links to Islamic State (ISIS). It is considered the deadliest of the dozens of armed groups operating in eastern DR Congo. According to the report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, published in June 2021,[4] despite attempts by the ADF

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3. See the summary of DRC (east-ADF) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

to project alignment with the armed group ISIS, it could not be established whether ISIS offered direct support or exercised command and control functions over the ADF. Nevertheless, it has proved possible to verify the participation of foreign fighters, who have contributed to perfecting techniques in the construction of explosive devices, and it should also be noted that ISIS claimed responsibility for three attacks in the town of Komanda, in which the ADF executed several people between September and October. Later on, as if it were the prelude to the Ugandan attack, on 11 and 12 November, suspected ADF fighters carried out one of the deadliest attacks in 2021 in North Kivu, killing at least 38 civilians. In response to the Ugandan offensive of late November, the ADF intensified its military operations, the most notable of which was a suicide bombing on 25 December in a restaurant in Beni, in which at least nine people were killed. It was the country's first recorded suicide attack.

The Ugandan operation has generated a climate of concern and mistrust in eastern DR Congo due to the escalation of military activities, to the memory of the Ugandan presence in the 1990s, when war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed during the Second Congo War, and to the fact that the ADF has shown significant resilience despite the major offensives launched against it. All of this raises numerous questions about the possibilities of defeating the group militarily, and about the inevitable civilian casualties that will result from pursuing this goal. In this respect, the offensive once again highlights the commitment to a strategy focused on the securitization of international responses to threats to peace and international security. This strategy is proving to be a failure in other contexts since it does not contribute to reducing the impact of the activities of armed groups but rather it increases them. Furthermore, it fails to address the structural root causes of this and other conflicts.

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4.   UN Security Council, *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, S/2001/560, 10 june 2021.

5.3. Escalation of violence in Myanmar following the coup d'état

The coup d'état perpetrated by the armed forces of Myanmar in February 2021 has had a huge negative impact on the country's security, humanitarian and economic situation, in the context of a worsening of the pandemic, which has made the consequences of military action even more dramatic. The risk of escalating violence has increased due to several factors: the coup d'état itself, the ensuing repression by the security forces and the closure of spaces for the political participation of Myanmar's society as a whole, and the emergence of an armed response organized by broad sectors of the opposition. On 1 February, the armed forces (officially known as the Tatmadaw), prevented the formation of the parliament that had resulted from the elections held at the end of 2020, in which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) had obtained a clear majority. The coup d'état led to the formation of a new government in which General Min Aung Hlaing serves both as prime minister and as chairman of the State Administration Council; that is, simultaneously occupying the positions of head of state and leader of the government. The coup disrupted the process of transition to democracy which began in 2010 and which had made the NLD (headed by Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition to the military dictatorship in its last decades) the ruling party since the 2015 elections. The incomplete transition, governed by the 2008 Constitution, led to a power-sharing arrangement between political parties and the military, which prevented the complete transfer of power to a government elected at the ballot box. The fragility of the process and the enormous influence of the army had been reflected in previous crises, such as the one that occurred in 2017, when a military operation caused more than 700,000 Rohingya people to flee to Bangladesh, amid accusations of genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the armed forces, and with no steps taken by Aung San Suu Kyi's government to put an end to the massacre and persecution of the Rohingya population.

After the February coup, violence in the country steadily escalated. The response of civil society to the seizure of power by the military was nonviolent, consisting of demonstrations, strikes, pots and pans protests, and various other peaceful, symbolic manifestations of resistance. The security forces cracked down extremely hard on social protests, with a large-scale military deployment that included the establishment of operational bases in schools, universities and hospitals, according to the International Crisis Group[1] Military forces fired on protesters, and night security operations were carried out in different cities involving not only mass arrests but also beatings, looting and seemingly random killings. One of the most serious episodes took place on 27 March, the Armed Forces Day, when 158 unarmed civilians, including 14 minors, were shot dead in different parts of the country.

The escalation of repression led the opposition and broad sectors of the citizenry to organize armed resistance to the actions of the security forces. As such, while the early months of 2021 were marked by the first displacements of opposition groups to areas under the control of different ethnic armed groups in order to receive military training, as the year progressed there were a number of rapprochements between the National Unity Government (or NUG, which the lawmakers who were elected in the 2020 elections established after the coup d'état) and ethnic armed groups with the aim of forging military alliances to strengthen opposition to the military regime.[2] In addition, the NUG announced the formation of a military arm, the People's Defence Force (PDF), entrusted with bringing together and coordinating all the groups that emerged to provide an armed response to the coup d'état. Meanwhile, the peace process between the armed groups which in the previous years had adhered to the national ceasefire agreement gradually fell apart, due to the opposition of some of these groups to the coup d'état and as a result of the resumption of armed clashes in many parts of the country. While the alliances between ethnic armed groups and the new groups that have emerged (with the support of the NUG) in opposition to the coup are fragile and in no way represent a unified coalition of opposition to the military government, armed violence has been on the rise in recent months and there is a risk of further escalation and a stagnation of violence, with catastrophic consequences for the country's civilian population as a whole.

Various organizations estimated that at least 1,500 civilians and more than 2,000 soldiers had died as a consequence of the actions of Myanmar's security forces, whether in the repression of protests or in clashes and security operations. Although these figures are difficult to verify, they give an idea of the severity of the situation of conflict in the country. In addition to the killings, thousands of people have been injured by the violence or have been arrested in repressive operations of the military regime. Meanwhile, the escalation in armed clashes between the insurgency, the PDF and the armed forces has led to the growing invisibility of nonviolent resistance initiatives by civil society, which led the opposition to the military regime

The combination of the coup and the health crisis as a result of pandemic has brought about the collapse of the country's economy, giving way to a humanitarian crisis of enormous proportions

5. International Crisis Group, *The Cost of the Coup: Myanmar Edges Toward State Collapse*, International Crisis Group Briefing 167/Asia, 1 April 2021.
6. International Crisis Group, *Myanmar's Coup Shakes Up Its Ethnic Conflicts*, Crisis Group Asia Report, No. 319.

in the first few weeks. Civil society has continued to resist the consequences of the military coup peacefully, through networks of mutual support and actions to boycott the regime. However, these initiatives have ceased to receive the media attention they attracted in the immediate aftermath of the coup, with the focus shifting to violence and armed action.

The context of pandemic and economic crisis contributed to aggravating the situation. The combination of the coup and the health crisis has brought about the collapse of the country's economy, giving way to a humanitarian crisis of enormous proportions. The international isolation provoked by the coup has led to a hike in the prices of essential products and large-scale job losses, placing many people in a position of vulnerability and at risk of not seeing their most basic needs met. Moreover, the pandemic has hit the Asian country especially hard.[3] The number of infections rose after the coup, in a country with a very precarious health infrastructure.

As such, the military coup of 2021 has plunged the country into a political, social and economic crisis of enormous proportions. The risk of escalating violence is increasing, with the consequent impact on the country's civilian population, with no prospect of a negotiated solution to the breakdown of the peace process. Attempts by the ASEAN to put pressure on the regime have so far proved unsuccessful. The international community must redouble its efforts to find diplomatic avenues of rapprochement with the political opposition and the regime in order to get the country's process of democratization back on track.

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7. Transnational Institute, *No One Left Behind? Covid-19 and the Struggle for Peace and Justice in Myanmar*, Myanmar Policy Briefing 25, November 2021.

5.4. Escalating violence in Sulawesi (Indonesia)

Several analyses have warned about a recent escalation in attacks by the East Indonesia Mujahideen (Indonesian: Mujahidin Indonesia Timur; abbreviated MIT), an armed group that is active in the province of Central Sulawesi, especially in the Poso area. Despite its relatively small membership, the highly restricted geographical area in which it operates and its limited scope of action, the recent resurgence of the MIT's armed activity raises concerns about several factors: its connections to ISIS and other jihadist-inspired groups in Indonesia and Southeast Asia in general; the recruitment capacity that the group seems to maintain and the social support it seemingly enjoys in certain areas; and, above all, the possibility of the resumption of community and religious tensions in Poso. Between 1998 and 2001, this area witnessed spiralling sectarian and communal violence in which more than 1,000 people died (more than 2,000 according to some sources) and almost 90,000 people were injured, along with numerous terrorist attacks and episodes of violence since that period. At roughly the same time, between 1999 and 2002, sectarian clashes between Muslim and Christian communities also occurred in the nearby province of Maluku, in which approximately 5,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands were displaced.

The escalation in attacks by the MIT since 2020 has surprised analysts of the region, since a group that was believed to have been virtually dismantled has in fact shown a great capacity for resilience and resistance to the military pressure of the state over the last decade. Indeed, a report by the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) published in 2021 claimed that the MIT is currently the most active terrorist organization in all of Indonesia.[8] After several years of counterinsurgency operations and the deployment of some 2,400 police officers and elite soldiers in the Poso area, several articles argue that in 2016 MIT was practically defeated and in the process of disappearing. In that year, the group's leader and founder, Santoso, was killed, and dozens of the group's fighters were killed or arrested. Moreover, the level of infiltration by intelligence services in communities in the region was extremely high and effective government-led deradicalization programmes had discouraged and reduced recruitment drives by jihadist organizations throughout the country.

Meanwhile, in May 2017, several armed organizations which had sworn allegiance to ISIS began the siege of the Philippine city of Marawi (on the island of Mindanao), leading to a five-month standoff with the Philippine Armed Forces, who required the help of several countries in order to regain control of the city. This assault occupied the attention, resources and militancy of armed groups in the region. As such, the terrorist group Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), the main ally of ISIS in Indonesia, which in recent times had channelled significant funds from Syria to the MIT, directed its economic resources to the battle of Marawi, thereby reducing its funding of the MIT. Likewise, according to a report by the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC),[9] the fighters recruited in this period were more interested in heading to Mindanao (the Southeast Asian region which, according to ISIS, should be the epicentre of a new province or wilayat of the Islamic caliphate) than in swelling the membership of the MIT. However, after Santoso's death, the group's new leader, Ali Kalora, focused his efforts on recruiting new fighters and rebuilding the group's networks and support bases. According to some analysts, he used his connections with networks of local Ulama and Koranic schools (some illegal or clandestine) and with families of imprisoned fighters in Java and Sulawesi. In addition, the earthquake that struck the Sulawesi region in September 2018, killing at least 4,300 people, created the right conditions to strengthen ties between the group and certain communities, as well as to intensify the recruitment of young people.[10]

In addition to the increase in the number of people recruited, some analyses[11] indicate that in recent times the MIT has increased its operational and military capacity, its financing through radical groups abroad, and its connections with regional jihadist organizations, such as the JAD (several people participating in a joint operation were recently arrested) or even from outside Southeast Asia (in 2016, for example, six Uyghurs were killed in Sulawesi in a police operation against the MIT). It should also be noted that in 2014 the MIT was the first group in Indonesia to swear allegiance to ISIS and that its presence in digital media, far more prominent than that of other jihadist organizations in the region, closely resembles the media and propaganda messages and strategy of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Likewise, it is estimated that up to 700 people mainly from Indonesia and Malaysia joined the ranks of ISIS, even forming a unit of their own in the Syrian province of Hasakah known as Katibah Nusantara Daulah Islamiyah. Meanwhile, some voices point out that the MIT continues to enjoy some support and sympathy in certain parts of the province of Central Sulawesi, as demonstrated by the fact that thousands of people attended the funeral of the MIT leader Ali Kalora in September 2021, or that hundreds of people flocked to the funerals of two prominent members of the MIT the previous year. An IPAC report noted that the increase in brutality in the attacks perpetrated by the MIT since 2020, especially in relation to the beheading of civilians accused of being army informants, or the burning of houses, had several tactical objectives:

8. Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, *The Decline of ISIS in Indonesia and the Emergence of New Cells*, IPAC Report no. 69, 21 January 2021.
9. Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, *COVID-19 and the Mujahidin o Eastern Indonesia (MIT)*, IPAC short briefing no. 3, 28 April 2020.
10. Alif Satria, Indonesia: Putting the Sigi Attack in Context, *BenarNews*, 4 December 2020.
11. Uday Bakhshi, Is the East Indonesia Mujahideen a Threat to Indonesia?, *The Diplomat*, 18 July 2020.

preventing the activity of government informants; raising the group's international profile; demonstrating that it is currently the only jihadist organization in Indonesia with a territorial base; or stoking community clashes like those which had already taken place in the past in Sulawesi or in the nearby province of Maluku.

As regards community clashes, some voices[12] have warned that the MIT and other jihadist organizations such as the JAD could take advantage of the stereotypes, fears, uncertainties, denominational polarization and community fragmentation caused (and perpetuated) by the inter-community conflict that took place in Poso between 1998 and 2001, and by the episodes of violence that have occurred in that area since then. Although the spiral of community clashes formally came to an end with the signing in December 2001 of the Malino Declaration (an agreement facilitated by the government that provided for the disarmament of Christian and Muslim militias, the return of tens of thousands of people to their places of origin, the reconstruction of communities and infrastructures, reconciliation programmes and socio-economic development projects), more attacks and acts of violence have taken place since then that have threatened coexistence between the different communities that inhabit the province of Central Sulawesi, such as the bombing of buses in Poso in 2002 and 2004 (in which 13 people were killed and 30 were injured), the massacre of 13 Christian civilians in 2003 in the

The recent increase in attacks by the armed group MIT in the province of Central Sulawesi is a worrying trend in a region that has witnessed major outbreaks of community violence in recent decades

same region, the beheading of three girls in 2005 in Central Sulawesi, or the bombing of a market in the town of Tentena (in which 22 people were killed and around 90 were injured) on 28 May 2005, which marked the fifth anniversary of a massacre in a Muslim community in which 165 people were killed in Central Sulawesi. As discussed above, in the nearby province of Maluku, particularly in the Ambon area, major community clashes took place that resulted in thousands of deaths. In both Ambon and Poso, the conflict have occurred in a context of political and economic instability caused mainly by the death of dictator Suharto in 1998 and by the impact of the financial crisis throughout Southeast Asia.

Despite the risks posed by the recent resurgence of violence in Sulawesi and the apparent regrouping of the MIT in the region, an IPAC report notes that there has recently been a significant decline in both the activity of organizations loyal to ISIS in Indonesia and in support for ISIS. Some of the reasons behind this are the collapse of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the increasing difficulties involved in travelling to these countries, the impact of the pandemic on the mobility and funding of certain armed groups, or the growing anti-terrorist capabilities of the Indonesian state. Regarding this last point, the passing in 2018 of new anti-terrorist legislation that authorized preventive actions against people suspected

of planning the perpetration of attacks, along with the larger budget for surveillance and counterinsurgency tasks, are thought to have led to the clear reduction in the number of actions classified as terrorist incidents since 2018. In this respect, the IPAC points out that the massive influx of people of Indonesian origin into the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq has not produced a qualitative leap in the operational and military capacity of jihadist organizations in Indonesia, and that currently the weapons available to these organizations are very rudimentary, consisting of devices of their own manufacture, light weapons and knives. In the specific case of Sulawesi, the capacity of the two main organizations operating in the region (the JAD and the MIT) also appears to be relatively volatile and clearly inferior to that of earlier times. By way of example, in March 2021 the JAD carried out an attack on a church in the city of Makassar (capital of the province of South Sulawesi) in which two people were killed and 22 others were injured. Although this was one of the most important actions carried out by the group in the region in recent times, its impact was clearly lower than that of some of its previous actions, such as the attacks in Surabaya in 2018 (58 fatalities) or Sarinah in 2016 (33 fatalities). As for the MIT, as a result of its swelling membership and the greater lethality of its actions since 2020, the government increased its pressure on the group, carrying out a larger number of arrests. In an attempt to circumvent this pressure, some media reported in May 2021 that the MIT had split into two factions: one led by Muhammad Busra, alias Qatar, in Poso; and one in the Sigi region led by Ali Kalora, who was killed in combat in September 2021. According to some sources, Kalora's death represents a major setback for the armed group.

In conclusion, despite the fact that the number of actions classified as terrorist incidents has decreased markedly in Indonesia in recent years, and that the operational capacity of some jihadist organizations has clearly been eroded by the collapse of ISIS in the Middle East and by Jakarta's counterinsurgency policies, there are still dozens of groups in existence that have sworn allegiance to ISIS, many of which have demonstrated enormous resilience, fragmenting and dispersing into small cells or clusters. In addition, in the specific case of Sulawesi, in the past it has been observed that in contexts of polarization and fragmentation along denominational lines, isolated episodes of violence with no apparent political or religious connotation can unleash community violence dynamics of far-reaching consequences. As occurred in Ambon and Poso in the late 1990s and at the turn of the 21st century, foreign armed organizations have taken advantage of the situation of instability in order to interfere in the local dynamics of the conflict with the aim of stoking violence and benefitting from the situation.

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12. Ibid.

5.5. The growing political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Political tensions increased significantly in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2021. The Bosnian Serb boycott of the country's central authorities, the decision of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska to pull out of various state institutions (including the army), and disagreements over electoral reform, among other factors, strained relations and created greater uncertainty about how the situation might play out in 2022, a year that marks the 30th anniversary of the start of the Bosnian War, and in which elections are scheduled for October. Several local and international socio-political actors expressed their concern about the deteriorating political climate in the country and called for the adoption of measures aimed at reaching political agreements and defusing the crisis.

The Dayton Peace Agreement (1995) put an end to the bloody three-and-a-half-year-long Bosnian War (1992-1995) and led to the creation of a complex administrative structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina consisting of a power-sharing arrangement and the preservation of territorial integrity in the form of a decentralized federal republic composed of two entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under Croat-Bosniak control; and Republika Srpska). In the decades of post-Dayton state-building, disagreements between the elites of the three main population groups have festered, as have those between the Bosnian Serb leadership and the international actors entrusted with overseeing compliance with the Dayton Agreement. The prolonged post-war period has been characterized by a general lack of trust between the political actors of the entities, and by the prioritization of the interests of elites over the socioeconomic needs of the population and the construction of a shared historical memory. Moreover, the population has grown increasingly disaffected due to the lack of participatory processes and the failure of the international architecture that supports and monitors the implementation of the agreement to incorporate spaces for social participation. These continuous socio-political tensions were exacerbated in 2021 by a series of factors.

Firstly, the heightened tensions between the Bosnian Serb leadership and the state authorities were manifested on many fronts in 2021. The Bosnian Serb representatives announced a boycott of the country's tripartite presidency, of the Parliamentary Assembly and of the Council of Ministers. Furthermore, in October, Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serb member of the tripartite presidency and leader of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), announced that the Republika Srpska would be pulling out of the armed forces, judiciary and tax system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although Dodik had threatened to withdraw

from state institutions on numerous occasions in the past, and had even advocated the secession of the Serb-controlled entity, these warnings had not materialized and were thought to be an instrument of pressure and propaganda rather than a real position. However, in December 2021 the warnings were reinforced when the National Assembly of Republika Srpska approved a non-binding agreement for the start of the withdrawal of the Bosnian Serb entity from the state's army, tax authority and judiciary, and for the drafting of the necessary legislation to establish parallel institutions. This revealed a more determined stance on the part of the Bosnian Serb leadership to unilaterally bring into question and place strain on the country's current political structure. Christian Schmidt, the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement, had warned in his November report that implementing the threats would mean a departure from the framework established by the Dayton Agreement. The crisis was compounded by the longstanding tension between the High Representative (who has executive powers) and the Bosnian Serb authorities, who regard the existence of this position as external interference.

Heightened tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2021, in the context of a new clash with the authorities of the Bosnian Serb republic and longstanding disputes over electoral legislation, triggered alerts about the risk of a deteriorating situation in the country

This situation of heightened tensions occurred in a pre-election year, with a general election scheduled to take place in October 2022. In this context, it was difficult to second-guess the ultimate scope of the objectives of the Bosnian Serb leadership, which could range from the instrumentalization of tension as a way to strengthen its own position in political and electoral processes to the ultimate achievement of fulfilling secessionist aspirations. However, other elements could act as a counterweight. The Bosnian Serb political opposition absented itself from the December vote and was critical of the decision, which it put down to electioneering tactics, warning that the announced withdrawal from the institutions risked creating a situation of armed conflict. International actors also reacted to the 2021 crisis, warning of possible sanctions in the event of a unilateral withdrawal. In that context, diplomatic activity aimed at reducing tension intensified during the year. Furthermore, the leaders of the country's three main communities ruled out the possibility of a new armed conflict.

Another element of tension continued to be the dispute over the electoral system. The political position of the Croats includes the demand for the power to choose their own representative in the tripartite presidency of the country, currently shared with the more numerous Bosniak community. The possibility of a specific electoral district in which the Croats are the majority group has been raised at various times as one of

the options to meet the aforementioned demand. However, years of disputes over electoral legislation have not produced agreements on new formulas and mechanisms. Added to this is the fact that the current system discriminates against citizens who do not form part of the three main communities (Bosniak, Croat and Serbian). In this regard, the European Court of Human Rights has in recent years urged the authorities to put an end to discrimination against people from non-majority communities. In 2021, the Council of Europe reiterated that call, demanding that changes be made to electoral legislation and to the Constitution. Longstanding disagreements over electoral legislation could create a climate of increased political tension in the months leading up to the October 2022 election or might even bring about an electoral boycott, which together with the crisis concerning Republika Srpska would aggravate the situation in the country as a whole.

Another risk factor was the increasing internationalization of elements of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among other incidents, in the UN Security Council in 2021, Russia threatened to veto the renewal of the EU mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) unless all references to the Office of the High Representative were removed. Tthe mission was finally renewed at the end of the year without reference to this Office. There was also a failed attempt by Russia and China in 2021 to abolish the post of International High Representative. Meanwhile, international actors warned of possible sanctions against Dokik, and Hungary raised the possibility of vetoing EU sanctions. Furthermore, the grave crisis between Russia and Ukraine, with its dimension of crisis between Russia and NATO, the US and the EU, had an impact in the context of international relations in Europe, with the ensuing risk that other more localized tensions on the continent (such as the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina) could be instrumentalized by Russia as part of a greater geostrategic dispute between international actors.

In the context of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the existence of growing risks of political disputes, with uncertain consequences, became evident, although local political elites ruled out the possibility of violent conflict. In 2022, greater effort will be required to drive forward initiatives aimed at seeking broad agreements regarding processes to strengthen the administrative arrangements of the entities that make up the country, with the participation of socio-political actors, to address and transform mistrust and grievances, and to promote approaches based on the human rights of the population as a whole.

5.6. Violence, apartheid, dispossession: the price of ignoring the occupation of Palestine

The intensification of direct violence in 2021 in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israel's occupation of Palestine temporarily redirected attention to a notorious, protracted dispute which has gradually dropped down the list of priorities of international affairs, despite the formal declarations made by multiple actors and the supposedly long-term international engagement in the search for a two-state solution. The commemoration in 2021 of the 30th anniversary of the so-called Madrid-Oslo process served as an opportunity to reflect critically on the dynamics that have played out ever since then, which in practice have favoured Israel's occupation of Palestine and the application of policies that have consolidated the fragmentation, oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people. An analysis of the harmful consequences of the peace process in respect of the terms in which it was applied, the serious violations and discrimination suffered by the Palestinian population, and the current status of the conflict, highlights the cost of continuing to ignore the Palestinian issue and the urgency of adopting new approaches aimed at ending Israeli impunity and addressing the conflict from a perspective committed to respect for international law and human rights.

In recent years, voices that are openly critical of the Madrid-Oslo process have become more prominent and recurrent, calling into question its mechanisms and its insistence on the two-state formula while failing to deal with the reality on the ground. In 2021, the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories extensively addressed the responsibility of international actors in perpetuating a framework that has proved to have failed.[13] In the document, Michael Lynk argued that one of the main problems of the Madrid-Oslo process is that it allowed Israel to impose its demand for negotiations with Palestinian representatives to take place outside the framework of applicable international law, including international humanitarian law and the United Nations resolutions themselves. The failure to apply this normative framework as the benchmark of the process has eroded the feasibility of a two-state solution, since in practice it has paved the way for the gradual establishment of a single state with unequal rights. As Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the UN, pointed out in 2021, Israel's policy of incremental de facto annexation in the occupied Palestinian territories

means that the prospect of a two-state solution has all but vanished. He also stressed that the conflict could not be considered a dispute between equals that can be resolved through bilateral negotiations.[14]

In fact, the asymmetry of power between the parties has been accentuated in this process, since the negotiating framework has benefited the occupying power. Under the Oslo Accords, Israel saw its right to exist recognized by the PLO without there being an equivalent recognition of the right to self-determination and the creation of a Palestinian state. Israel's responsibilities as an occupying power were externalized through the Palestinian Authority and it has benefited from contributions from international donors.[15] The Oslo Accords further fragmented the Palestinian territories, and the lack of a clear timetable beyond the five years of the initial interim period enabled Israel to turn the negotiations into a permanent process, while continuing to implement its settlements expansion policy.[16] In addition, the main mediator of the process, the US, has maintained its position of unconditional support for Israel, which has fostered the occupation and the lack of accountability. The EU has failed to use its political and economic potential to put pressure on Israel. It has avoided confrontation and has not distanced itself from the policies set out by the US, maintaining its unrestricted adherence to the Madrid-Oslo process, despite criticism.[17] There is also no firm commitment to the Palestinian cause among the governments of the Arab world, as has become even clearer in the wake of recent bilateral agreements with Israel.

Critics of the Madrid-Oslo process have underlined that the systematic adherence of the main international actors to the two-state formula, ignoring the reality that exists on the ground and without demonstrating the effective political will to resolve the conflict, has led to a "diplomatic pantomime"[18] and a "sham peace process".[19] At the end of 2021, the International Crisis Group argued that the discourse of diplomatic representatives on a bilateral solution which is virtually unattainable in practice enables Israel to persist in its annexation policies.[20] Many Palestinian voices have been sceptical of the process from the outset and have strongly protested that Israel is using the peace process to evade accountability and deepen its domination over the Palestinians, as the analysts Inés Abdel Razek and

13. UN, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*, A/76/433, 22 October 2021.
14. Ban Ki-moon, "US should back a new approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", *The Financial Times*, 29 June 2021.
15. José Abu Tarbush, *Tres décadas de la Conferencia de paz de Madrid: un marco negociador deficitario*, Memorandum no. 251/2021, OPEX, Fundación Alternativas, November 3, 2021.
16. Inés Abdel Razek, "Thirty Years On: The Ruse of the Middle East Peace Process", *al-Shabaka*, 31 October 2021.
17. See note 13 and Hugh Lovatt, "The end of Oslo: A new European strategy on Israel-Palestine", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, Policy Brief, 9 December 2020.
18. UN, Report of the Special Rapporteur..." (2021), op. cit.
19. José Abu Tarbush (2021), op.cit.
20. International Crisis Group, "Ten Conflicts to Watch in 2022", *Foreign Policy*, 29 December 2021.

Yara Hawari have recently pointed out.[21] Supposed attempts to "revive" the peace process have become irrelevant, especially in a scenario in which successive Israeli governments maintain only a formal adherence to negotiations.[22] As José Abu Tarbush asserts, Israel seems willing to pursue a policy of managing the conflict indefinitely.[23] At the same time, most Palestinians have lost all hope of obtaining a state through a negotiation process. Meanwhile, the PA (affected by a growing lack of legitimacy, discredited by corruption, accused of collaborationism, and at loggerheads with Hamas) maintains an internationalization strategy through which it seeks to compensate for the asymmetry of power, with extremely limited results. Despite repeated threats by the Palestinian leadership to disengage from the Oslo Accords, these remain the existing framework. In this scenario, it is unhelpful for Fatah and Hamas to be seemingly permanently divided, since in practice this fosters the status quo and the distribution of power between the two organizations, undermining generational change and the renewal of the Palestinian leadership.[24]

In this context, a growing number of voices have been calling for an acknowledgement of the failure of this approach by the international community to address the Israeli-Palestinian issue in recent decades, underlining the pressing need to adopt a new one. This is especially urgent and inescapable given the clamour against the reality of apartheid experienced by the Palestinians. Numerous Palestinian voices, activists and civil society organizations, as well as United Nations experts,[25] have been denouncing this situation for years. These protests recently gained more notoriety and media visibility after Israeli human rights organizations such as B'Tselem, along with leading international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International, openly denounced the apartheid practiced against the Palestinian population and pointed the finger at the Israeli authorities for their responsibility in this crime.

Critical voices argued that the systematic adherence of the main international actors to the two-state formula, ignoring the reality on the ground and without demonstrating the effective political will to resolve the conflict, has resulted in a "sham peace process"

By way of example, in a lengthy report published in May 2021, HRW highlighted that the Israeli authorities have systematically favoured the Jewish population and discriminated against the Palestinian population. The organization pointed out that in order to maintain the Jewish population's control over power, politics and demography, the Israeli authorities have dispossessed, confined, forcibly separated and subjugated Palestinians by virtue of their identity. The report added that certain assumptions (the occupation is temporary, the "peace process" will bring an end to Israeli abuses, the Palestinians have control over their lives in the West Bank and Gaza, Israel is an egalitarian democracy…) have obscured the reality, which is a regime of Israeli rule that is deeply discriminatory of Palestinians.[26] A few months later, and following four years of research, Amnesty International published another report with a similar diagnosis, in which it emphasized that the Palestinian population is treated as an inferior racial group and is systematically disenfranchised.[27]

Beyond the context of structural violence, the importance and urgency of a new approach has also been brought into stark relief by the current situation, and by the events and dynamics observed in the last year. The year 2021 saw not only a significant escalation of direct violence (which caused the highest levels of lethality in seven years, the vast majority of victims being Palestinian) but also an incremental increase in violence by Israeli settlers, with the complicity of the authorities. Additionally, the new Israeli government that took office in 2021 intensified the persecution and criminalization of well-known Palestinian civil society organizations and only seemed willing to offer a kind of "economic peace" in order to scale down the conflict. The set of factors involved therefore reinforces the need for a new approach that addresses the asymmetry of power between the parties, focusing on upholding rights and promoting urgent actions to dismantle the Israeli occupation.

21. Inés Abdel Razek (2021), op. cit. and Yara Hawari, "Thirty years of sham 'peace process'", *Al-Jazeera*, 1 November 2021.
22. International Crisis Group, *Beyond Business as Usual in Israel-Palestine*, Middle East Report no. 225, ICG - USMEP, 10 August 2021.
23. José Abu Tarbush (2021), op. cit.
24. Itxaso Dominguez de Olazábal, "Praxis of Palestinian Democracy: The Elections that Never Were and the Events of May 2021", *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook*, IEMED, November 2021.
25. UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissione, *Israeli annexation of parts of the Palestinian West Bank would break international law – UN experts call on the international community to ensure accountability*, 16 June 2020.
26. Human Rights Watch, *A Threshold Crossed. Israeli Authorities and the Crimes Of Apartheid and Persecution*, HRW, 27 April 2021.
27. Amnesty International, *El apartheid israelí contra la población palestina: un análisis de décadas de opresión y dominació*n, February 2022.

Glossary

AA: Arakan Army
ABSDF: All Burma Students' Democratic Front
ABM: Ansar Beit al-Maqdis
ACLED: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ADF: Allied Democratic Forces
AKP: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
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 des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo)
AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AQPA: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ARS: Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia
ARSA: Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a
AU: African Union
AUBP: African Union Border Program
BDB: Benghazi Defense Brigades
BH: Boko Haram
BIFF: Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BLA: Baloch Liberation Army
BLF: Baloch Liberation Front
BLT: Baloch Liberation Tigers
BRA: Balochistan Republican Army
BRP: Baloch Republican Party
CAR: Central African Republic
CENCO: Conférence Épiscopale Nationale du Congo (Congolese Episcopal Conference)
CHD: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
CMA: Coordination of Movements of Azawad
CMPFPR: Coordinating Committee of Patriotic Resistance Movements
CNDD-FDD: Congrès National pour la Défense de la Démocratie - Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Congress for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy)
CNDP: Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (National Congress for the Defense of the People)
CNF: Chin National Front
CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPI-M: Communist Party of India-Maoist
CNL: Congrès National pour la Liberté (National Congress for Freedom)
DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DKBA: Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
DMLEK: Democratic Movement for the Liberation of the Eritrean Kunama
DPA: Darfur Peace Agreement
DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC: East African Community

ECOWAS: Economic Community Of West African States
EDA: Eritrean Democratic Alliance
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
EPL: Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETA: Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom)
ETIM: East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETLO: East Turkestan Liberation Organization
EU: European Union
EUCAP NESTOR: European Union Mission on Regional Maritime Capacity-Building in the Horn of Africa
EUCAP SAHEL Mali: European Union Capacity Building Mission in Mali
EUCAP SAHEL Niger: European Union Capacity Building Mission in Niger
EUFOR: European Union Force
EUNAVFOR Somalia: European Union Naval Force in Somalia - Operation Atalanta
EUTM Mali: European Union Training Mission in Mali
EUTM Somalia: European Union Training Mission in Somalia
EZLN: Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army)
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAR-LP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Liberación del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces for the Liberation of the People)
FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FARC-EP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army)
FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FDLR: Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
FIS: Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front)
FLEC-FAC: Frente de Liberação do Enclave de Cabinda (Cabinda Enclave's Liberation Front)
FLM: Front de Libération du Macina (Macina Liberation Front)
FNL: Forces Nationales de Libération (National Liberation Forces)
FPB: Forces Populaires du Burundi (Popular Forces of Burundi)
FPR: Front Populaire pour le Redressement (Popular Front for Recovery)

FPRC: Front Patriotique pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (Patriotic Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic)
FSA: Free Syrian Army
GATIA: Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés (Imghad Tuareg Self-Defense Group and Allies)
GII: Gender Inequality Index
GNA: Government of National Accord
GSIM: Groupe de Soutien à l'Islam et aux Musulmans (Support Group for Islam and Muslims)
GSPC: Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat)
HCUA: High Council for Unity of Azawad
HRW: Human Rights Watch
HTS: Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
IBC: Iraq Body Count
ICC: International Criminal Court
ICG: International Crisis Group
ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
ICU: Islamic Courts Union
ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IDMC: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IFLO: Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia
IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IISS: International Institute for Strategic Studies
IOM: International Organization for Migration
ISGS: Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISIS: Islamic State
ISWAP: Islamic State in the West African Province
IWF: Iduwini Volunteers Force
JEM: Justice and Equality Movement
JKLF: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JMB: Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (Mujahideen Assembly)
JNIM: Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (Support Group for Islam and Muslims)
KANU: Kenya African National Union
KCP: Kangleipak Communist Party
KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party
KFOR: Kosovo Force
KIA: Kachin Independence Army
KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army
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
KPLT: Karbi People's Liberation Tigers
KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government
KYKL: Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (Organization to Save the Revolutionary Movement in Manipur)
LeJ: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Army of Jhangvi)
LeT: Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Good)
LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LNA: Libyan National Army
LRA: Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M23: March 23 Movement

MAA: Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad (Arab Movement of Azawad)
MASSOB: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MB: Muslim Brotherhood
MEND: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MFDC: Mouvement de las Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance)
MILF: Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINUSCA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MLC: Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (Movement for the Liberation of the Congo)
MLCJ: Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice)
MNDAA: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MNJTF: Multinational Joint Task Force
MNLA: Mouvement National pour la Libération de L'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)
MNLF: Moro National Liberation Front
MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
MPC: Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique (Patriotic Movement for Central Africa)
MRC: Mombasa Republican Council
MUYAO: United Movement for Jihad in West Africa
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP: National Congress Party
NDA: Niger Delta Avengers
NDAA: National Democratic Alliance Army
NDF: National Democratic Front
NDFB: National Democratic Front of Boroland
NDGJM: Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate
NDPVF: Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDV: Niger Delta Vigilante (Niger Delta Patrol)
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NMSP: New Mon State Party
NNC: Naga National Council NPA: New People's Army
NPA: New People's Army
NSCN (K-K): National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Kole-Kitovi)
NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isaac Muivah
NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang
NSCN-R: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Reformation
NSLA: National Santhal Liberation Army
OAS: Organization of American States
OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs
OFDM: Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
OIC: Organization for Islamic Cooperation
OLF: Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPC: Oromo People's Congress
OPM: Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Organization of Free Papua)
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OXFAM: Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PA: Palestinian Authority
PDKI: Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan
PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PJAK: Party of Free Life of Kurdistan
PKK: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan **(**Kurdistan Workers' Party**)**
POLISARIO Front: Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro
PREPAK: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
PREPAK (Pro): People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak – Progressive
PS: Province of Sinai
PYD : Democratic Union Party of Kurds in Syria
RED-Tabara: Résistance pour un État de Droit au Burundi (Resistance for the Rule of Law in Burundi)
RENAMO: Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
REWL: Red Egbesu Water Lions
RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front
RPF: Revolutionary People's Front
RSADO: Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization
RSF: Rapid Support Forces
SADC: Southern Africa Development Community
SADR: Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SCACUF: Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front
SCDF: Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces
SIGI: Social Institutions and Gender Index
SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLA: Sudan Liberation Army
SLA-AW: Sudan Liberation Army - Abdul Wahid
SLA-MM: Sudan Liberation Army- Minni Minnawi
SLDF: Sabaot Land Defence Forces
SNNRPS: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State
SOCADEF: Southern Cameroons Defence Forces
SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA-IO: Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition
SPLM: Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-N: Sudan People's Liberation Army-North
SRF: Sudan Revolutionary Forces
SSA: Shan State Army
SSA-N: Shan State Army – North
SSC: Sool, Saanag and Cayn
SSDM/A: South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army
SSLA: South Sudan Liberation Army
SSOA: South Sudan Opposition Alliance
SSPP: Shan State Progress Party

SSUF: South Sudan United Front
TAK: Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons)
TNLA: Ta-ang National Liberation Army
TFG: Transitional Federal Government
TPLF: Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TTP: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAE: United Arab Emirates
UFDD: Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (Union of the Forces for Democracy and Development)
ULFA: United Liberation Front of Assam
ULFA-I: United Liberation Front of Assam - Independent
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
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNISFA: United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei
UNLF: United National Liberation Front
UNMIK: United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS: United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCI: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOWAS: United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSMIL: United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UPC: Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (Union for Peace in Central Africa)
UPLA: United People's Liberation Army
USA: United States of America
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWSA: United Wa State Army
VRAE: Valle de los Ríos Apurímac y Ene (Valley between Rivers Apurimac and Ene)
WB: World Bank
WFP: World Food Programme of the United Nations
WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WTO: World Trade Organization
YPG: People's Protection Unit
YPJ: Women's Protection Units
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 2022! 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 2021 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.
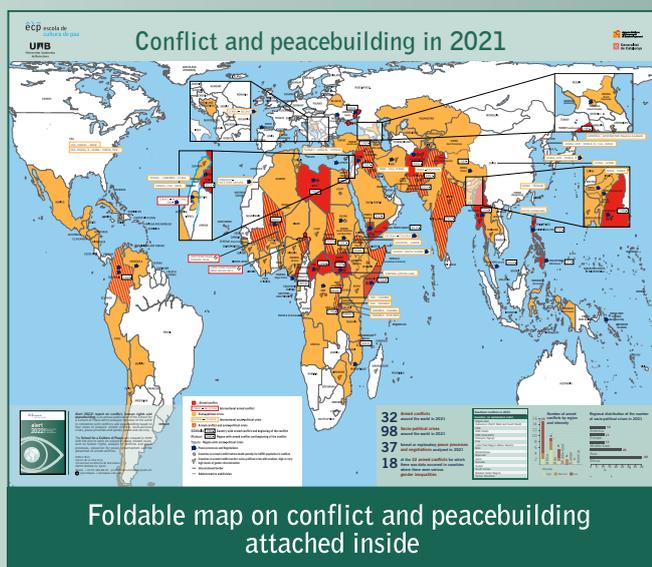
Peace cannot be conjured out of thin air; it is built from a deep understanding of the roots of a conflict, of its main actors, of regional and global dynamics. *Alert!* is a crucial tool in this process thanks to its detailed analysis —from a gender perspective— of the events of the past year. We live in a time in which the media and experts shift their attention more and more quickly from one conflict to another, in which public opinion becomes inflamed only to forget in the space of a few weeks the thousands of refugees fleeing from violence. That is what makes the *Alert!* report even more essential: it conveys a thorough picture of dozens of silent wars that have exacted an enormous price in terms of human lives, as well as setting out the essential elements to take the first steps on a path to lasting peace.

Enrica Picco,
Central Africa Project Director, International Crisis Group

Year after year, the *Alert!* report provides thorough, comparative data and analyses on key issues for the monitoring of armed conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding. For organizations who consider it essential to approach peacebuilding from a feminist and gender perspective, this report is vital reading. Its monitoring of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and of the contributions made to peace by women and civil society are especially relevant.

Laura Alonso Cano,
President of WILPF Spain

The *Alert 2021!* Report is an essential resource to understanding the complexity of modern conflicts across the globe but it doesn't stop there – by identifying warning signs and opportunities, the report provides necessary insights into the work that we as the peace movement should be engaged in. We know that the world is in a very dangerous place and that without diverse coalitions of activists and peacemakers, we stand no chance. Let us engage together in turning these words into action for peace, common security, and justice as we pursue a true socio-political transformation.

Reiner Braun,
Executive Director of the International Peace Bureau

Conflict and peacebuilding in 2021

Foldable map on conflict and peacebuilding attached inside