

# Opportunities for peace and risk scenarios for 2017



*Opportunities for peace and risk scenarios* is an annual publication linked to the yearbook *Alert! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, which identifies and analyses scenarios and issues on the international agenda that may enable peacebuilding or lead to an increase in violence and instability in the short or medium term.

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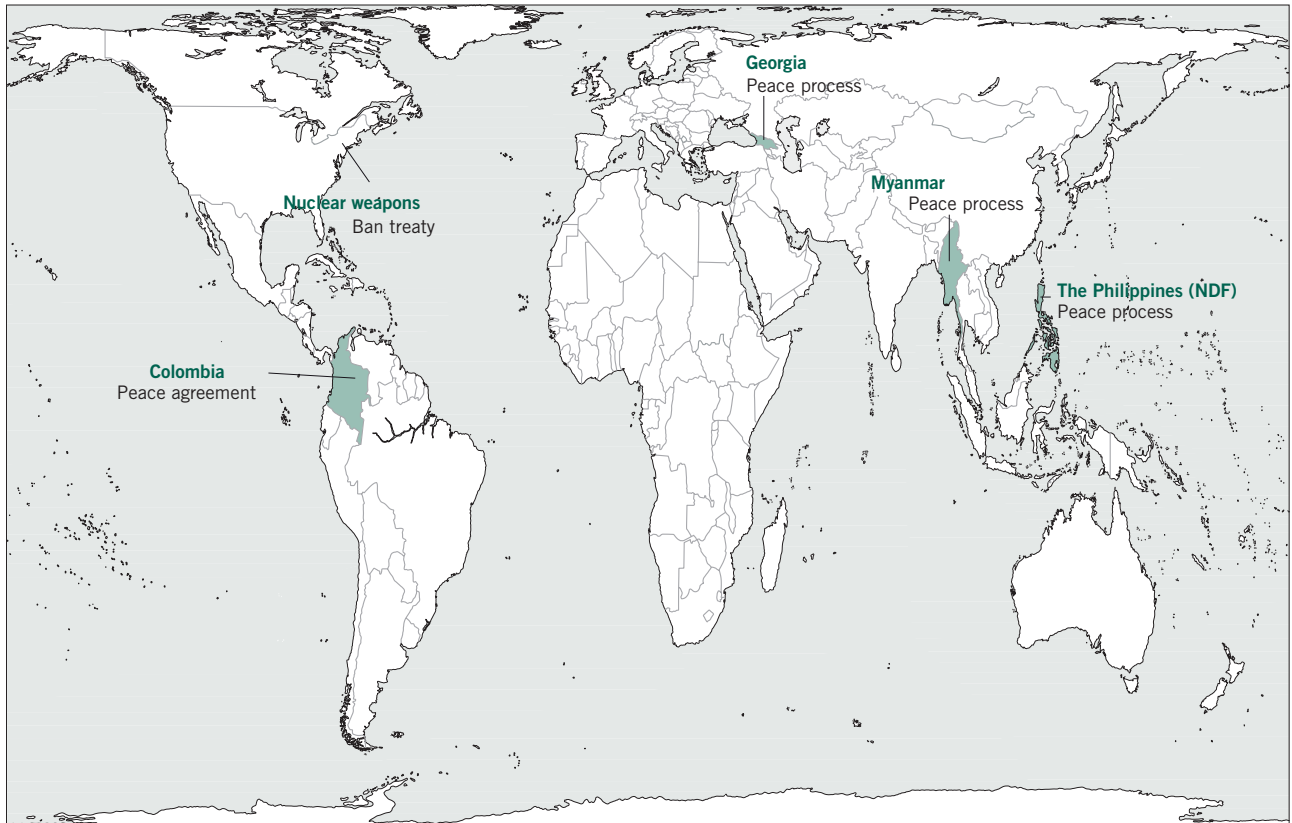
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# Executive summary

## Opportunities for peace in 2017



■ ■ **Colombia:** The inclusion of a gender perspective in the Colombian peace agreement signed by the government and the FARC militia presents a unique opportunity to move forward in building a sustainable and inclusive peace in Colombia, with the participation of women and the LGBTI population as key players in implementing the agreement.

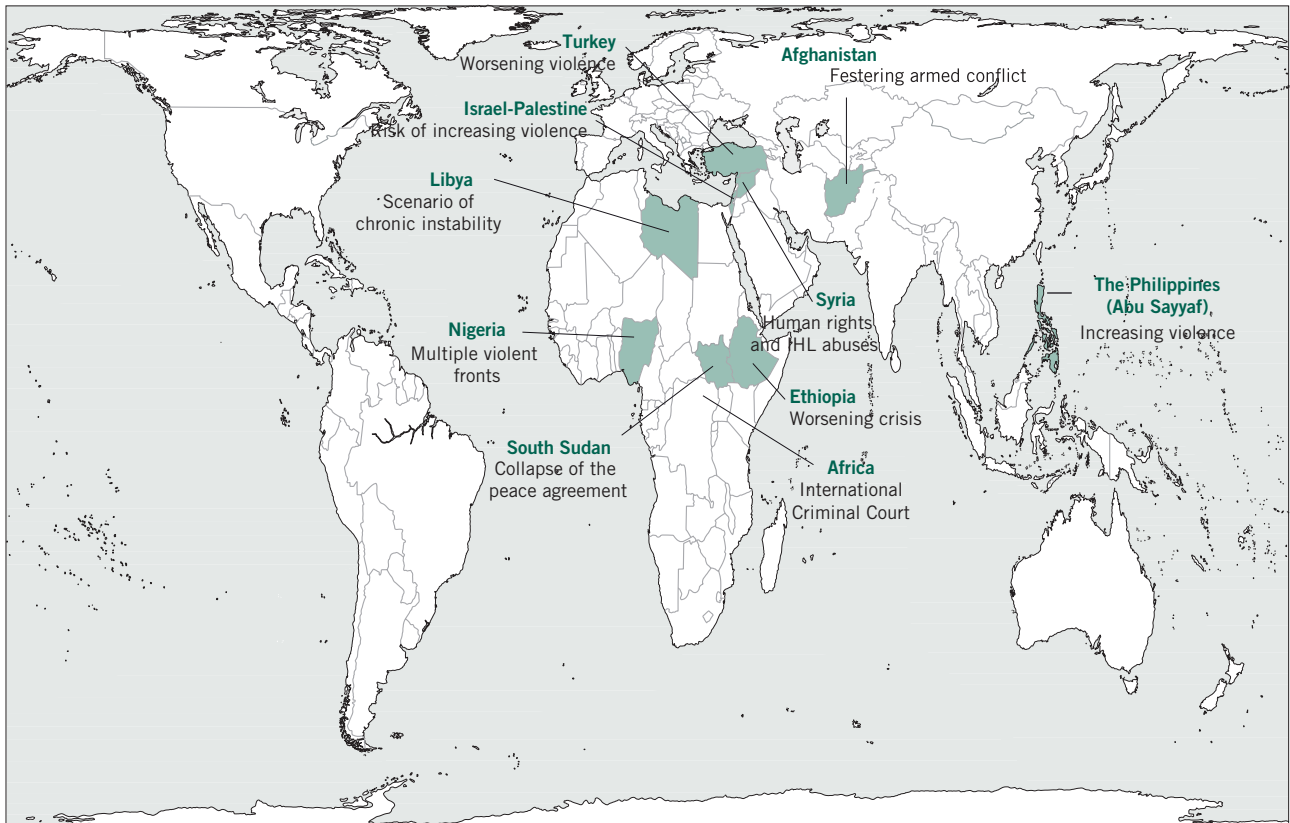
■ ■ **The Philippines (NDF):** The resumption of peace talks in 2016 between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) –organisation that groups together different Communist-inspired groups and negotiates with Manila on behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)–, as well as the political will expressed by both sides in order to sign a peace agreement by mid-2017, offer a historic opportunity to put an end to one of the long-lived conflicts in the world.

■ ■ **Myanmar:** The government of Myanmar is facing the best chance to negotiate a political accord to end an armed conflict that has lasted 70 years. The political and popular legitimacy of the new Government is the main factor, given its local and international support. However, many challenges must be surmounted to achieve a genuine inclusive process.

■ ■ **Georgia:** In 2016 the resumption of one of the mechanisms of the peace process, the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Abkhazia, and the institutionalisation of talks between Georgian representatives involved in the formal negotiating process and local women’s organisations were two events of significant importance for multi-level confidence-building in Georgia, despite the political obstacles in formal negotiations.

■ ■ **Nuclear weapons:** Despite the opposition from the nuclear States and their allies, the commitment to begin negotiations in 2017 on a treaty outlawing nuclear weapons by more than a hundred States, in addition to an increasing humanitarian approach to this issue and the pressure from the international civil society are opening a historic opportunity to stigmatise the use and possession of nuclear weapons and to promote a legally binding instrument.

## Risk scenarios in 2017



■ ■ **Ethiopia:** The country is facing the worst political and social crisis in recent years. A wave of anti-government protests have been suppressed in an extremely harsh way by the security forces and may have caused one thousand deaths in the past year. The protests have revealed the fragile social contract between the elites and a population frustrated by years of corruption, the authoritarian political system and the exclusion of large population groups from the alleged Ethiopian economic miracle. In this scenario, the state of emergency decreed at the end of 2016 is a sign of the aggravated situation in the country.

■ ■ **Libya:** During 2016 the countless difficulties to implement the agreement of Skhirat confirmed the pact's fragility and highlighted the complex challenges Libya is facing. Persistent political polarisation, an explosive security situation resulting from an atomised and active range of armed actors, an international approach conditioned by interests and priorities that are often discordant and a situation of economic and humanitarian deterioration with chronic human rights violations are among the factors that could lead to a worsening situation in the country in 2017.

■ ■ **Nigeria:** The proliferation of political tensions, armed movements and intercommunal violence in various regions of the country (north, centre and south) is seriously deteriorating the security situation in Nigeria, threatening its stability. The role of the Nigerian Armed Forces and police in repressing opposition groups and communities and dissidents has contributed significantly to the explosion of violence in various parts of Nigeria, boosting the radicalisation of different movements.

■ ■ **South Sudan:** One year after the peace agreement was signed in South Sudan, the future of the peace process seems more uncertain and precarious than ever. The failure to implement the clauses of the agreement, the systematic ceasefire violations, the increase in violence against the civilian population and the de facto collapse of the transitional government few months after its inception underscore the main challenges the country faces in the immediate future.

■ ■ **Afghanistan:** Fifteen years after the beginning of the current phase of the armed conflict in the country with the invasion by US troops, the situation of armed violence is deeply entrenched and continues generating serious impacts to the civilian population. New conflict dynamics, the emergence of ISIS and an aggravated crisis of forced displacement make more difficult to find a negotiated solution. In addition, the political crisis the government is facing reduces the options to improve the situation in the country.

■ ■ **The Philippines (Abu Sayyaf):** The proliferation and greater coordination of various Islamist groups, the possibility that ISIS may be expanding and consolidating its presence in Mindanao as the epicentre of its activities and project in Southeast Asia and the substantive increase in armed actions conducted by groups declaring their alignment with, and even ISIS membership, like Abu Sayyaf and Islamic State in Lanao, can lead to an increasing insecurity in the region in 2017. These factors can also affect the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF.

■ ■ **Turkey:** With the recent peace process dead and buried and amidst a violent political, social and regional intensification of the conflict, as well as a much more complex general scenario in Turkey –marked by the challenges and consequences of a failed coup d'état attempt in July 2016, the current dynamics point to the risks of a scenario of worsening violence, greater militarisation and an increasingly insurmountable divide between the contending parties, as well as between the state and the Kurdish movement as a whole.

■ ■ **Israel-Palestine:** The 50th anniversary of the Arab-Israeli war that led to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the Gaza Strip may create a scenario with more tensions and violence, considering the convergence of other dynamics such as the Israeli government's dramatic shift to the right, the Palestinian population's signs of growing frustration with the Israeli occupation and with Palestinian political leadership, and low expectations that international initiatives may reactivate the peace process amid increasing scepticism about the viability of the two-states solution.

■ ■ **International Criminal Court:** The International Criminal Court (ICC) faces numerous challenges, pressures, and criticism. In recent years, criticism has increased among those who see it as an institution that has focused on prosecuting crimes in Africa. The ICC is now facing one of the greatest challenges since its inception, as three African countries (South Africa, Burundi, and Gambia) have announced their withdrawal from it. The culmination of these moves and their domino effect may weaken the institution and provoke a regression in terms of protecting human rights in Africa and on the world stage.

■ ■ **Syria:** The war in Syria has been characterized by brutal levels of violence against the civilian population, systematic human rights violations, and continuing infringements of international humanitarian law in a context of total impunity and the indifference of the international community. Although it is not the only case, Syria is setting a dangerous symbolic precedent on the use of violence in current conflicts and has exposed in stark fashion the weaknesses of the international framework to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict.

**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. It was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through research, parallel diplomacy, training and awareness generating activities. Its main scope of action includes analysing conflicts, peace processes, gender, human rights and transnational justice, and education for peace.

The 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.
- **Second track diplomacy.** The ECP promotes dialogue and conflict-transformation through second track 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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