

alert 2018!

Report on conflicts,
human rights
and peacebuilding



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Foreword

Diana de la Rúa Eugenio
President of the International Peace Research
Association Foundation (IPRA Foundation)¹

The year 2018 has multi-complex and multi-sectorial scenarios that must be studied through creative approaches that are adapted to the real and perceived needs, so as to bring suggestions and proposals that transform the difficulties into inclusive and positive processes.

Those of us who, in the past 25 years, have been studying and working in the field of non-violent conflict resolution and building a culture of peace, can see an evolution and a change in the dynamics of conflict that encourage us to search for new paths to deal with them, since we are faced with growing direct, structural and cultural violence, with the added ingredient that they are trivialized through shows and videogames that, among other things, enter into our homes, normalize violence and make it invisible, turning it into a carrier of a profound culture of violence.

Often, situations of violence are portrayed as facts *per se*, isolated, leaving aside the human, social and environmental consequences that stem from these. New generations are growing up in this scenario, which makes it imperative to show the conflicts and their subsequent effects, as well as the processes in place to neutralize the escalation of violence and promote peaceful and productive alternatives.

There are always good examples, but they must be brought to light so they are not just overshadowed by the aggressiveness and violence of certain diatribes that often make a lot of noise but are void of ideas or proposals. Take the example of two countries on the American continent that are going through historic situations:

Colombia is immersed in a peace process which, even if since the agreement was signed in 2016 lost some momentum because of the failure to comply with some points, is currently being resumed with the dialogue between the parties and, for the first time in fifty years, Colombia is holding free presidential elections in a context free of war. It is worthy to continue insisting on the process, trying to revert the elements that are posing obstacles to it, but it is also fundamental for promises to be kept, for the entire process to be credible and that promises are finally fulfilled so as to look into a future of shared development.

In the United State of America there are several themes for researchers and peace workers among which: a) a deepening of marking differences between social groups by the current administration, leading to a new surge of white supremacy movements that clashes with civil rights that were believed to stay forever more. This has forced institutional counterbalances to come on stage –judges- to balance out the injustice and the fact that some cities and states have openly declared their differences in this respect. The drift towards polarization and linking it to scapegoats leads to social divides to capitalize on political gains among those standing by a leader who proposes divisions that are consistent with a manichaen dualism and who discredits anything that is not to his benefit. The government system with a separation of powers in the country has shown that, at least today, democracy is still working; b) the emergence of the #MeToo movement, bringing out the male patriarchal conditions encrusted and hidden from the public, has lead to a change in perception with regards to harassment against women at their workplace, where this behaviour is not only unacceptable but is also denounced and leads to public exposure. This is a stimulating change in paradigm that may be replicated in the rest of countries.

Situations to be considered

Currently two axes should be added that change human life in the world and that converge in time, leading to great uncertainty and violence that are not usually visible: climate change and the influence of social media.

The move to the anthropozoic era has caused situations that couldn't have been foreseen in their full dimension, but we must live with them, mitigate their influences and try to revert –or at least reduce– their results, which spread throughout this planet and generate climatic changes that, in turn, bring geographic, economic, political and social changes that disrupt the lives of communities. The words flooding, drought, deforestation and pollution are part of our language, but it would seem that their meaning in our collective conscience and in political agendas everywhere in the world are yet to be taken onboard. This is not only during electoral periods when disasters strike and they

1. Diana de la Rúa Eugenio is also the President of the Association “Respuesta para la Paz” –Response for Peace– (Argentina), a mediator and facilitator in multi-party conflicts and a university professor.

are dealt with from the visible part of the urgency, but to make profound changes that can slow down the terrible consequences they bring about and that will for sure worsen if effective and immediate action is not taken. Since 2004 there is concern when talking about the so-called techno-fossils, with billions of varieties due to the rapid production and obsolescence of products –whether they are useful or not– that we don't know what to do with. Decision-makers have not yet taken this seriously.

For years there has been talk about the impact of communication technologies on society, but now we see the scope of the discretionary use of technological algorithms that are generated to change cultural patterns and manipulate them to generate opinion movements and, of course, to influence democratic processes in countries; influences that are bought and sold to the highest bidder as if in any village market, regardless of what this manipulation means for the countries and for the world, thus weakening democracies, generating negative suspicions in political processes and in the sovereignty of nations, besides building power on power, not for the peoples, the people and their communities, but for those who entrench themselves behind the advantages that power gives them.

These two last scenarios coincide in time, they overwhelm and discourage citizen participation, which in itself is very little. People prefer to become abstracted or disconnected from reality so as not to make changes to their lives that would mean giving up styles of consumption (water, fuel, buying unnecessary things) for as long as they can. Those who suffer may get entangled in binary discourses with no support from interest groups, who polarize the negative perceptions of some groups, radicalize the messages and actions, and usually choose some groups to be scapegoats and blame them for the bad situation.

The culture of peace and social participation

For all of the above, it is necessary for people to develop a shared vision for the future that is respectful of the diversity of opinions and can recover the possibility of a harmonious coexistence where everyone feels they can participate and not just sit and watch. By educating for peace and using all of its tools –dialogue, mediation and facilitation, among others– work is done through non-violent communication to allow a verbal interaction and to rebuild dialogue processes among the parties, to be able to voice opinions, fears, feeling, interests and needs without being judged or unappreciated. One of the symptoms of this day and age is the difficulty that people have to identify what it is they want; they find it easier to explain what they

don't want. Making this change is a vital exercise to permeate into all social spaces, bringing empowerment and efficacy of expression with them.

Being able to determine what one wants is a step towards gaining personal independence because it focuses on how to achieve the desired objectives without waiting for a leader or a pater *familia* to provide. It is also good training in taking responsibility for decisions taken freely, which also helps one grow as a person and a citizen and encourages participation in other areas of life, such as political participation, whether this is done as one of the actors defining public policies or as someone who proposes changes from the grassroots level.

We must train ourselves for debate and confrontation without losing our bearings, to achieve goals legitimately and for this it is vital to generate consensus that will allow visualizing collective concerns, set priorities and find a spirit of cohesion to make peace processes advance. Consensus does not mean pressure or compulsion; consensus means that everyone agrees, voluntarily, on what will or won't be done.

Building a culture of peace is a collective process, slow and deep, where there will always be some people who, due to their ability or personality will stimulate others; but they must all have a strong commitment and recognize and accept that making concessions is required to achieve consensus.

One substantial contribution that helps build a culture of peace is for children to learn at school not only the usual subjects –mathematics, language, science, and many others– but also how to resolve conflicts peacefully. This will help them throughout their lives in everyday interactions because they will carry in them the importance of the process, the tools and the required means to reach a different model of social exchanges.

Developing projects

Even if fieldwork is essential, it is also necessary to constantly develop new theories and study other proposals, analyze them, compare them, draw conclusions that will allow updating and measuring the outcomes and, eventually, go deeper and change them. Joining fieldwork and peace research, whether this is done at universities, by NGOs or independently is what will allow us to find a meeting point and bring answers that match the needs of today. There are many organizations and foundations that give the possibility to finance this research, so it is important to take some time to learn how to access this funding, know what values support them and feel encouraged to apply for these grants. The culture of peace will greatly

Alert! is an effective tool to share an in-depth analysis of conflicts and their possible solution, as well as to spread and disseminate a culture of peace that invites to think carefully about the current confrontations with an approach that is committed to peaceful resolution

benefit and will be encouraged through all channels, researchers, workers, editors, with those benefiting sharing the results this has on people's lives.

This new edition of *Alert!* is an effective tool to share an in-depth analysis of conflicts and their possible solution, as well as to spread and disseminate a culture of peace that invites to think carefully about the current confrontations with an approach that is committed to the peaceful resolution of these conflicts, leaving room to continue developing, questioning and adapting theories to facts and the operability of processes, whilst broadening the spaces for discussion and learning.

Executive Summary

Alert 2018! 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, socio-political crises, and gender, peace and security. The analysis of the most relevant events in 2017 and the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main scenarios of armed conflict and socio-political crisis around the world allows for a regional comparative vision and also allows identifying global trends and elements of risk and early warning 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.

Some of the most relevant conclusions and information in the *Alert 2018!* report are listed below:

- During 2017, 33 armed conflicts were recorded, of which 32 were still active by the end of the year. Most of these were in Africa (14), and Asia (9), followed by the Middle East (6), Europe (3) and the Americas (1).
- Thirteen of the 33 armed conflicts recorded were of high intensity. This was the case of Libya, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), Myanmar, Pakistan, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).
- In 2017, 13 of the 33 conflicts –representing 39%– showed a clear deterioration of the situation during the year. This is the case of Libya, Mali (North), CAR, DRC (East), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, the Philippines (NPA), the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Jammu and Kashmir), Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). 27% of the conflicts did not experience any significant change, and 34% showed a reduction in violence.
- Beyond the multi-cause nature of armed conflict, 73% of conflicts (24 of the 33 cases) were mainly driven by opposition to domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State. Also, claims based on identity or calls for self-government were one of the main causes in 55% of cases (18 conflicts).
- In 2017, armed conflicts continued to have extremely serious impacts on the civilian population, leading to or deepening situations of humanitarian crisis, such as in DRC, South Sudan, Iraq and Yemen, among others.
- One of the impacts of armed conflicts continued to be sexual violence. During 2017, sexual violence was reported in contexts such as South Sudan, Mali, Myanmar and Syria.
- Forced displacement was, one year more, one of the most serious consequences of armed conflicts globally. Figures published in 2017 highlighted that, until the end of 2016, a total of 65.6 million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of situations of conflict, persecution, violence and/or human rights violations, around 300,000 more than at the end of 2015.
- During 2017 88 socio-political crises were identified around the world. These cases were mainly concentrated in Africa (37) and Asia (18), whereas the remaining cases were spread around Europe (13), Middle East (12) and the Americas (8).
- One fifth of the socio-political crises in 2017 were of high intensity, and more than half of these were in Africa. This is the case of Angola (Cabinda); Burkina Faso, Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West); Ethiopia; Ethiopia (Oromia); Kenya; Mozambique; Niger; Nigeria; DRC; Venezuela; Korea, DPR-USA, Japan, Rep. Of Korea; India (Manipur); India-Pakistan; Pakistan; Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh); Egypt; and Lebanon. 47% of cases (48) were low-intensity, and one third (29 cases) were medium-intensity.
- 54% of socio-political crises in the world were of internal (48 cases), 30% (26 cases) were internationalized internal socio-political crises; and 16% (14 cases) were international.
- As for the evolution of socio-political crises, 42% of crises deteriorated compared to 2016, especially in Africa and the Middle East, while 40% of cases experienced no significant changes, and 18% of cases improved slightly.
- 68% of socio-political crises were mainly driven by opposition to domestic or international policies implemented by the respective governments or by opposition to the political, social or ideological position of the respective states. Also, claims based on identity and/or demands for self-government were one of the main causes in 45% of socio-political crises.
- 75% of armed conflicts and 45% of socio-political crises with data available on gender equality took place in contexts of serious or very serious gender inequalities.
- One year more, women's organizations and civil society denounced the fragmented implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.
- The United Nations determined there had been a regression in the participation of women in peace processes and a decrease in the number of peace agreements that included gender issues in their wording.
- Women's organizations in countries in conflict such

as Syria, Libya and Yemen reclaimed a greater participation in peace negotiations.

- The *Alert 2018!* report identified five opportunities for peace: the process for the implementation of the peace agreement between the Government and the FARC in Colombia; the prospective adoption of the Bangsamoro Basic Law as the completion to the peace process between the MILF and the Philippine's Government; the possibilities for an agreement to find a political solution to the tensions in Mozambique; the scenario of a future disappearance of ETA and the prospect of progressing on other outstanding issues in the Basque Country; and the work of the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia, which could become a mechanism of reference in the framework of transitional justice.
- The report outlines five risk scenarios: the escalation of violence and the increase in instability in Cameroon; the consolidation of the armed group ISIS in the south of the Philippines and Southeast Asia; the repercussions of the Rohingya crisis for the democratic transition and peace process in Myanmar; the shrinking space for opposition and the dismantlement of the post-peace agreement framework in Tajikistan; and the impact of high levels of violence on children as a consequence of the serious armed conflicts affecting North Africa and the Middle East.

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 crises. The third chapter looks at the gender impacts of conflicts and socio-political crises, 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 opportunities for peace, 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 crisis.

During 2017, 33 armed conflicts were recorded, 32 of which were still active by the end of the year

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 2017 are analyzed, as well as the impacts of such conflicts on the civilian population.

During 2017, 33 armed conflicts were recorded, a figure that follows the trend observed in previous years (33 cases in 2016, 35 conflicts in 2015, 36 in 2014, 35 in 2013). Of the 33 armed conflicts in 2017, 32 were still active by the end of the year, given that the situation of conflict in the Russian Republic of Dagestan ceased to be considered an armed conflict after the levels of violence and fatality dropped in recent years. It is worth noting that, among the armed conflicts in 2017, one was a new case: the conflict in Kasai region, in DRC, which witnessed a rise in hostilities between the Congolese Government and the Kamwina Nsapu militia, as well as confrontations between armed organizations linked to several ethnic groups.

Regarding the geographic distribution of armed conflicts, most of them were in Africa (14) and in Asia (9), similar to last year. For the remaining conflicts, six were in the Middle East, three in Europe and one in the Americas. Regarding the scenario of conflict and the actors involved, in 2017 only one of these was defined as an international armed conflict –Israel-Palestine–, while a great majority were of an internationalized internal nature (79%, 26 of the 33 cases), and 18% were prominently internal. Nevertheless, most conflicts today are influenced by regional or international factors, such as the flows of refugees, arms trade, the participation of foreign fighters, the logistical or military support provided by other states or by one of the contending sides or the political or economic interests from neighbouring states, as could be the case of the legal or illegal exploitation of resources.

Conflicts continued to be defined by their multi-causal nature. 73% of conflicts (24 cases) were mainly driven by opposition to the domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State, leading to struggles to erode or gain power. From these, 18 cases showed a struggle to change the system, mainly promoted by

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 2017*

AFRICA (14)	ASIA (9)	MIDDLE EAST (6)
Algeria (AQMI) -1992- Burundi -2015- CAR -2006- DRC (east) -1998- DRC (east-ADF) -2014- DRC (Kasai) -2017- Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007- Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011- Libya -2011- Mali (north) -2012- Somalia -1988- South Sudan -2009- Sudan (Darfur) -2003- Sudan (South Kordofan & Blue Nile) -2011-	Afghanistan -2001- India (CPI-M) -1967- India (Jammu & Kashmir) -1989- Myanmar -1948- Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005- Pakistan -2001- Philippines (NPA) -1969- Philippines (Mindanao) -1991- Thailand (south) -2004-	Egypt (Sinai) -2014- Iraq -2003- Israel-Palestine -2000- Syria -2011- Yemen (Houthis) -2004- Yemen (AQPA) - 2011 -
		EUROPE (3)
		<i>Russia (Dagestan) -2010-</i> Turkey (south-east) -1984- Ukraine (east) -2014-
		AMERICA (1)
		Colombia -1964-

* Between hyphens is the date on which the conflict started. In *Italics* are the conflicts that ended during 2017.

armed groups of a socialist inspiration –this is the case of organizations such as CPI-M in India, the NPA in the Philippines, or the FARC in Colombia– or by organizations embracing a jihadist agenda and that seek to impose their own interpretation of Islamic precepts. Among these last groups one can mention cases such as the armed group ISIS and its branches and its related organizations in different countries –ISIS was present in countries like Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and others–; the different branches of al-Qaeda operating in North Africa and the Middle East –among which AQMI (Algeria and Sahel) and AQPA (Yemen)–; Taliban militias operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or the al-Shabaab group in Somalia.

Most armed conflicts in 2017 (40%) were of high intensity, marked by high levels of violence and fatality with more than one thousand deaths per year

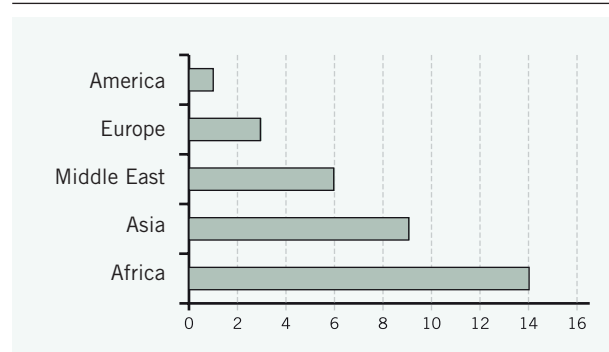
With regards to the evolution of armed conflicts in 2017, following the trend observed in 2016, **in most cases the levels of hostility and violence worsened. In 13 of the 33 cases –representing 39%– the evolution was negative, slightly lower than in 2016 (46%)**. Cases showing a clear deterioration of the situation during the year were Libya, Mali (north), CAR, DRC (east), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, the Philippines (NPA), the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Jammu & Kashmir), Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

With regards to intensity, **most armed conflicts in 2017 -13 of the 33 cases, or 40%– were high-intensity**, meaning scenarios marked by a fatality level above 1,000 per year, with severe impacts on the territory and serious consequences for the population. The 13 most serious conflicts in 2017 were Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), Myanmar, Pakistan, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

In turn, 12 armed conflicts (36%) were low-intensity, and eight cases (24%) were medium-intensity conflicts.

At a global level, armed conflicts continued to have severe impacts on civilian population. These consequences were seen in the death tolls and other kinds of impacts resulting from the indiscriminate and/or deliberate use of violence against civilians. During 2017, this situation was seen in practices such as summary executions and setting homes alight with people inside in Myanmar; extrajudicial executions and other serious human rights violations against civilians in the Kasai conflict (DRC); or sieges on the population as seen in Syria. Another serious pattern seen in 2017 was the materialization of especially bloody attacks in several armed conflicts, in countries like Afghanistan, Egypt (Sinai) and Somalia, among others. Furthermore, during 2017 there were also actions carried out within military campaigns that had serious repercussions on the civilian population.

Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2017



Forced displacement remained one of the most serious consequences of armed conflicts in the world and showed a continued increase observed in recent years. A total of 65.6 million people were forced to leave their homes in 2016 resulting from situations of conflict, persecution, violence and/or human rights violations, according to figures by the UNHCR available in 2017. This figure represents an increase by around 300,000 people more than at the end of 2015. Of the total displaced population, 22.5 million were refugees –17.2 million under the mandate of the UNHCR and 5.3 million Palestinians registered under the UNRWA–, 40.3 million were internally forcefully displaced and 2.8 million were asylum-seekers. Minors represented 51% of the refugee population. More than half of the world's refugees under the UNHCR mandate came from only three countries: Syria (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million) and South Sudan (1.4 million).

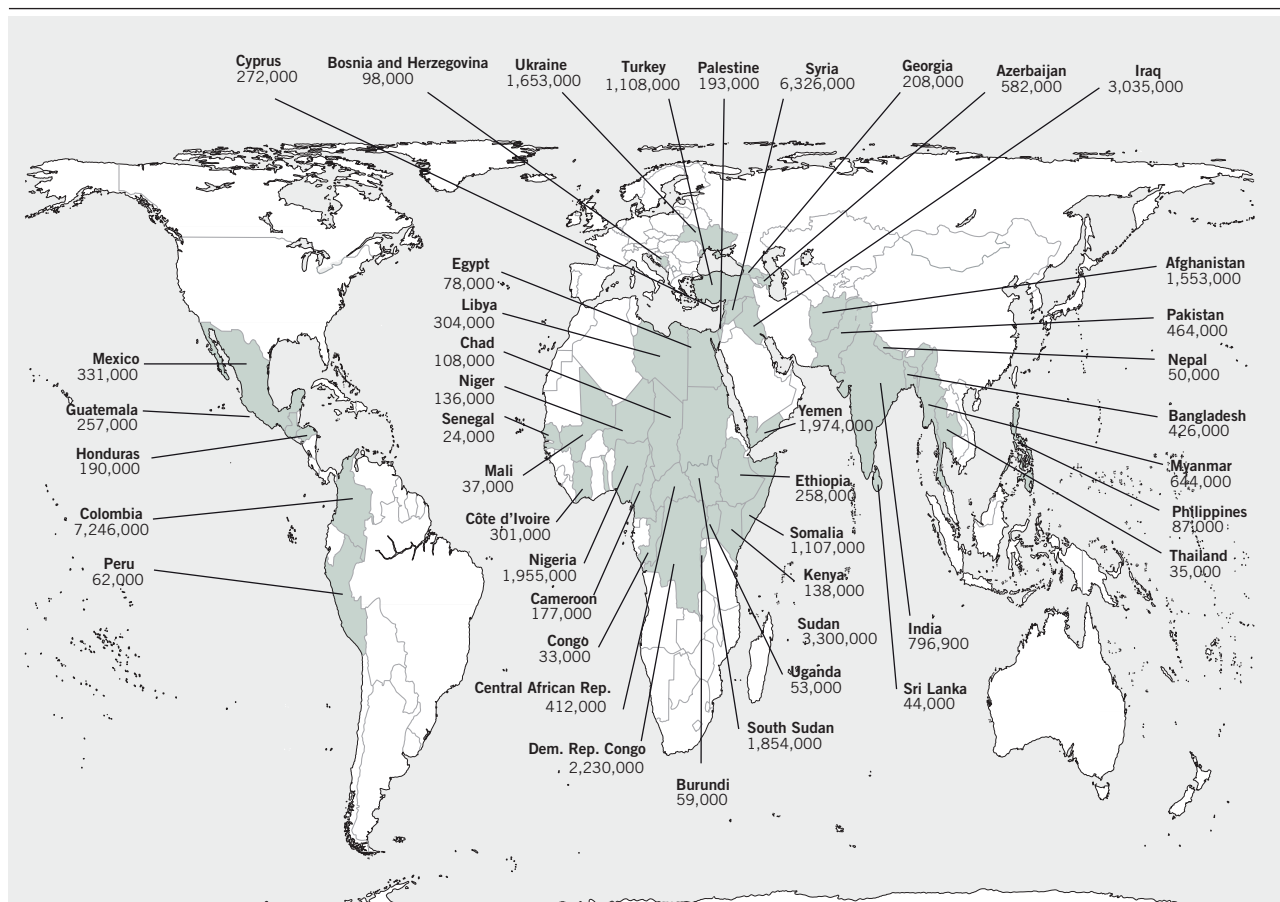
Without counting the Palestinian refugee population, 51% of the world's refugees came from only three countries: Syria (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million) and South Sudan (1.4 million)

Socio-political crises

The second chapter (**Socio-political crises**)² looks at the most relevant events regarding socio-political crises recorded during the year and compares global and regional trends. During 2017 88 socio-political crises were recorded globally. As in previous years, the largest number of socio-political crises took place in Africa, with 37 cases, followed by Asia, where 18 cases were recorded. Europe and the Middle East experienced 13 and 12 such scenarios respectively, while in the Americas there were 8 crises.

The socio-political crises had multiple causes, with more than one main factor in the large majority of cases. Studying the array of crises in 2017 allows identifying some trends regarding the main underlying causes or motivations. Similarly to previous years, 68% of cases included among the

Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2016



Source: IDMC, *GRID 2017: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2017.

- 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.

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

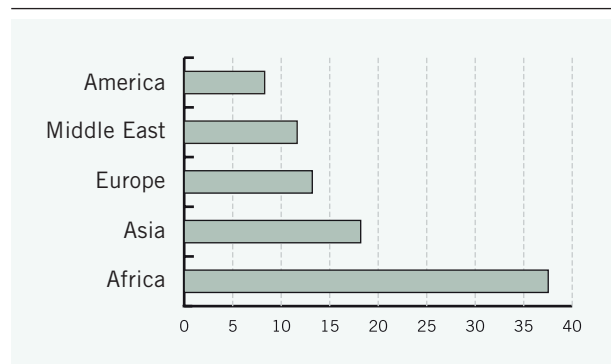
Following the trend of previous years, **slightly more than half of the socio-political crises in the world were internal (48 cases or 54%),** with the case of Latin America being especially paradigmatic, where practically all cases (except Haiti) were of this type. Conversely, **almost one third of the socio-political crises worldwide were internationalized internal socio-political crises (26 cases or 30%),** but this percentage was clearly higher in regions like Europe (54% of cases) or the Middle East (42%). **One sixth of socio-political crises were international (14 cases or 16%),** although in regions like Latin America no such tensions were identified.

During 2017, almost half of the socio-political crises were low-intensity (47%, a percentage that is clearly lower than the 54% registered in 2016), one third were medium-intensity (22% in 2016) and one fifth (18 cases) showed high levels of tension, more than half of these in Africa. Compared to the previous year, the number of serious socio-political crises dropped slightly (20% in 2017 compared to 24% in 2016) due to the existence of several cases that in 2016 had suffered high levels of tension but experienced some de-escalation in 2017. This was the case of Tunisia, El Salvador, North-South Korea, India (Assam), Bangladesh, Turkey or Israel-Syria-Lebanon. Nevertheless, there were also three scenarios that had registered medium-intensity socio-political crises in 2016 where the level of conflict increased substantially and were considered to be high-intensity in 2017: Burkina Faso, Niger and Venezuela.

The gender dimension in peacebuilding

Chapter three (**Gender, peace and security**) studies the gender-based impacts of conflicts and socio-political

Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2017



Africa and Asia were the continents with the largest number of socio-political crises in 2017 (37 and 18, respectively)

crises, 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.³ 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 analysing 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.

21 of the 33 armed conflicts in 2017 were in countries with severe gender inequalities

According to the SIGI, the levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 38 countries, concentrated mainly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Crossing the data from this index with that of countries living an armed conflict reveals that **21 of the 33 armed conflicts that were active in 2017 took place in countries with serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination and that five armed conflicts were taking place in countries with no available data on this topic –Algeria, Libya, Israel-Palestine, Russia and South Sudan–.** So, 75% of the armed conflicts for which data is available on gender equity took place in contexts with serious or very serious gender inequalities. Also, in six other countries with one or more ongoing armed

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

Conflict overview 2017

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	
Africa	DR Congo (Kasai) <i>Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)</i> <i>Libya</i> <i>Somalia</i> <i>South Sudan</i>	<i>CAR</i> DR Congo (east) DR Congo (east-ADF) <i>Sudan (Darfur)</i> <i>Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)</i>	Algeria <i>Burundi</i> <i>Ethiopia (Ogaden)</i> <i>Mali (north)</i>	Angola (Cabinda) Burkina Faso Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) <i>DR Congo</i> Ethiopia Ethiopia (Oromia) Kenya <i>Mozambique</i> Niger Nigeria	Central Africa (LRA) Chad Congo, Rep. of Côte d'Ivoire Eritrea Eritrea – Ethiopia Lesotho <i>Nigeria (Delta Niger)</i> <i>Togo</i> Tunisia	Djibouti DR Congo – Rwanda DR Congo – Uganda Equatorial Guinea <i>Gambia</i> Guinea Guinea-Bissau Madagascar Morocco <i>Morocco – Western Sahara</i> Rwanda <i>Senegal (Casamance)</i> Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland) <i>Sudan</i> <i>Sudan – South Sudan</i> Uganda Zimbabwe	
SUBTOTAL	5	5	4	10	10	17	51
America			<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Venezuela</i>	El Salvador Honduras Mexico	Bolivia Guatemala Haiti Peru	
SUBTOTAL			1	1	3	4	9
Asia and Pacific	<i>Afghanistan</i> <i>Myanmar</i> Pakistan Philippines (Mindanao)	Pakistan (Balochistan)	India (Jammu and Kashmir) India (CPI-M) <i>Philippines (NPA)</i> <i>Thailand (south)</i>	India (Manipur) India – Pakistan Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea Pakistan	Bangladesh <i>India (Assam)</i> Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea Tajikistan	China (Tibet) China (Xinjiang) China - Japan <i>India (Nagaland)</i> Indonesia (West Papua) Kyrgyzstan Nepal Sri Lanka Thailand Uzbekistan	
SUBTOTAL	4	1	4	4	4	10	27
Europe		Turkey (southeast) <i>Ukraine</i>	Russia (Dagestan)*	<i>Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)</i>	Russia Russia (Chechnya) Turkey	Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>Cyprus</i> <i>Georgia (Abkhazia)</i> <i>Georgia (South Ossetia)</i> Macedonia <i>Moldova, Rep. of (Transnistria)</i> <i>Serbia – Kosovo</i> Spain (Catalonia)	
SUBTOTAL		2	1	1	3	9	16
Middle East	Egypt (Sinai) Iraq <i>Syria</i> <i>Yemen (Houthis)</i>		<i>Israel – Palestine</i> Yemen (AQAP)	Egypt Lebanon	Bahrain Iran Iran (Sistan Balochistan) Iran (northeast) <i>Iran – USA, Israel</i> Iraq (Kurdistan) Israel – Syria – Lebanon Saudi Arabia Yemen (south)	<i>Palestine</i>	
SUBTOTAL	4		2	2	9	1	18
TOTAL	13	8	12	18	29	41	121

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics. With asterisk, armed conflicts ended during 2017. For more information on negotiations and peace processes, see School of Culture of Peace, *Peace Talks in Focus 2018. Report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2018

conflicts, the level of discrimination was lower, in some cases medium (Burundi, the Philippines), and in others low (the Ukraine, Colombia, Thailand and Turkey). With regards to socio-political crises, at least 32 of the 88 active socio-political crises in 2017 were in countries that experienced serious gender inequalities (high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 45% of socio-political crises for which data was available. 16 socio-political crises were in countries with no available data (Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Mexico, Japan, DPR of Korea, Republic of Korea, Cyprus, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Palestine).

Sexual violence was present in a large number of armed conflicts that remained active during the year 2017. One of the armed conflicts where sexual violence had a largest impact in 2017 was Myanmar, where many international and local human rights organizations denounced sexual violence carried out by Myanmar's armed forces on the Rohingya population, especially women and girls. Another serious case was South Sudan, where armed actors continued to perpetrate sexual violence on a mass level targeting people from ethnic groups considered rivals. As in previous years, the UN Secretary-General's report on the impact of sexual violence in armed conflicts, released

The use of sexual violence and other gender-based violence was reported in countries with armed conflicts and/or socio-political crises during 2017

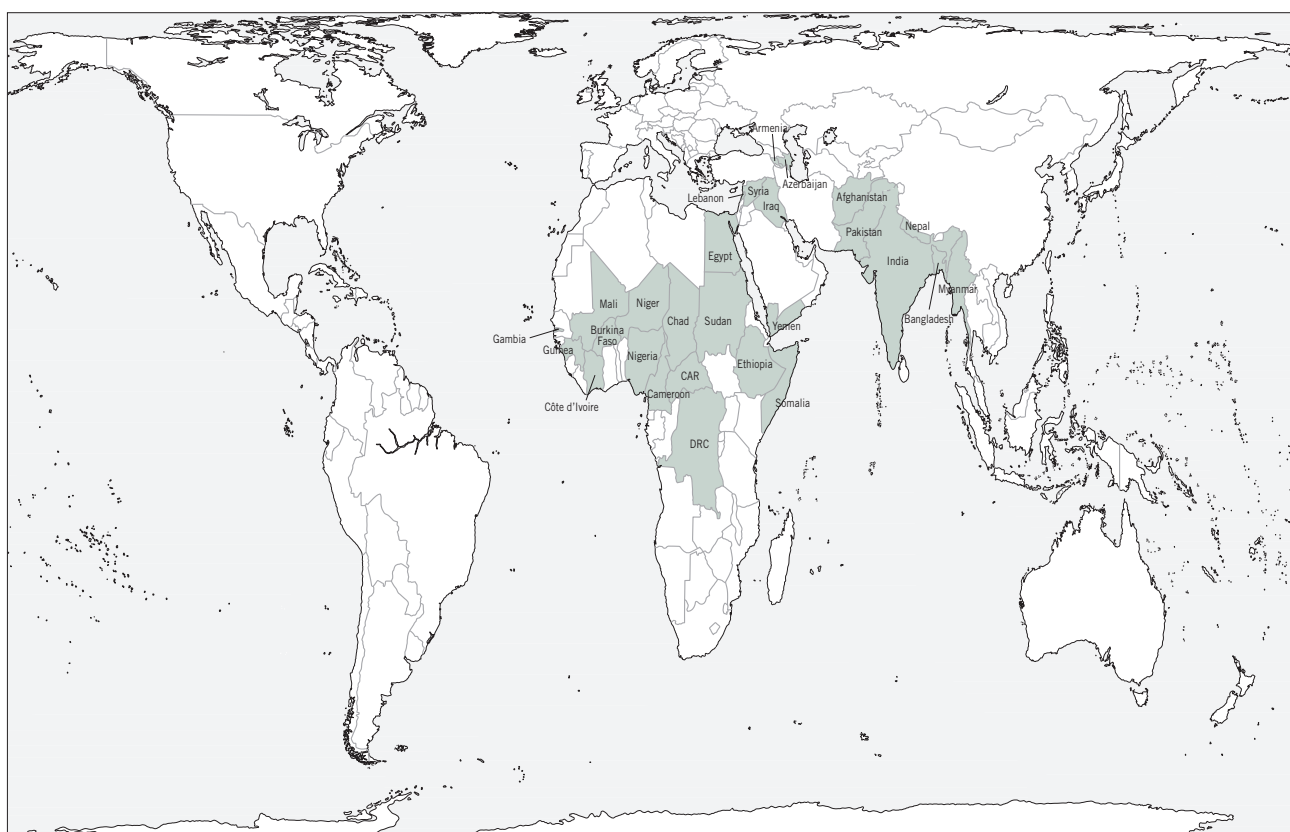
in April 2017 and covering the period from January to December 2016, identified armed actors responsible for committing systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also documents trends and patterns regarding the use of sexual violence in the framework of the conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Syria and Yemen. Also in the post-conflict

cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal and Sri Lanka, as well as in Burundi and Nigeria. It is important to note that from the 17 armed conflicts⁴ that, according to the UN Secretary-General's report, registered sexual violence in 2016, ten of these conflicts were of high intensity in 2017 –Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Also, in ten of these there was also an escalation of violence

during 2017 compared to the previous year –Libya, Mali (north), CAR, DRC (east), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

Also, during the year there were several initiatives to respond to sexual violence within the framework of armed conflicts. Among these, in the DRC 11 members of the Djeshi ya Yesu militia were sentenced to life

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



4. In some of the countries mentioned in the UN Secretary-General's report there was more than one conflict as defined by the ECP. The full list of armed conflicts is: Libya, Mali (north), Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) –including Nigeria– CAR, DRC (east), DRC (east-ADF), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria, Yemen (Houthis) and Yemen (AQPA).

Countries which have armed conflict and socio-political crises and high or very high levels of gender discrimination

	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination
Armed Conflicts*	Afghanistan Cameroon CAR Ethiopia India (2) Iraq Myanmar Pakistan (2)	Chad DRC (3) Egypt Malí Niger Nigeria Somalia Sudan (2) Syria Yemen (2)
Socio-political crises	Armenia Azerbaijan Burkina Faso Cameroon Côte d'Ivoire Ethiopia (3) Guinea India (4) Iraq Lebanon (2) Nepal Pakistan (2)	Bangladesh Chad DRC (4) Egypt Gambia Niger Nigeria (2) Somalia Sudan (2) Syria Yemen

* The number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in said country is shown in parentheses.

** One of the crises involving India is due to the tension it maintains with Pakistan.

*** Armenia and Azerbaijan are involved in a single international crisis related to the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh.

**** One of the crises in Lebanon is due to the tension it maintains with Israel and Syria.

Source: Table made from the levels of gender discrimination of the SIGI (OECD) and of the classifications of armed conflict and socio-political crisis of the Escola de Cultura de Pau. The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

imprisonment for using sexual violence against 40 girls, in a process that was supported by civil society and the United Nations. This ruling was considered to be highly relevant in the fight against impunity. Also, the UN Secretary-General presented the four pillars of the new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse: putting the rights and dignity of victims first; ending impunity; collaborating with civil society, external experts and other organizations; and addressing communication to raise awareness. As part of the new strategy, in 2017 a new position was created, that of the Advocate for the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. According to the UN report presented in 2017, during the year 2016 145 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN missions were reported (65 cases perpetrated by civilian staff and 80 by uniformed staff), compared to 99 cases in 2015 and 80 in 2014.

Besides sexual violence, countries with armed conflicts and/or social-political crises continued to face other gender-based violence. A case worth mentioning is that of El Salvador, with high rates of feminicide (468 women killed in 2017), to which one should add the serious violation of women's human rights due to the total prohibition of abortion and the high number of sexual crimes (3,947 sexual crimes reported in 2016, according to figures provided by the National Police, out of which 47% were cases of girls younger than 15 being raped, and 26% of girls aged 15 to 18). The attempts at restricting the freedom of movement for women by armed actors in

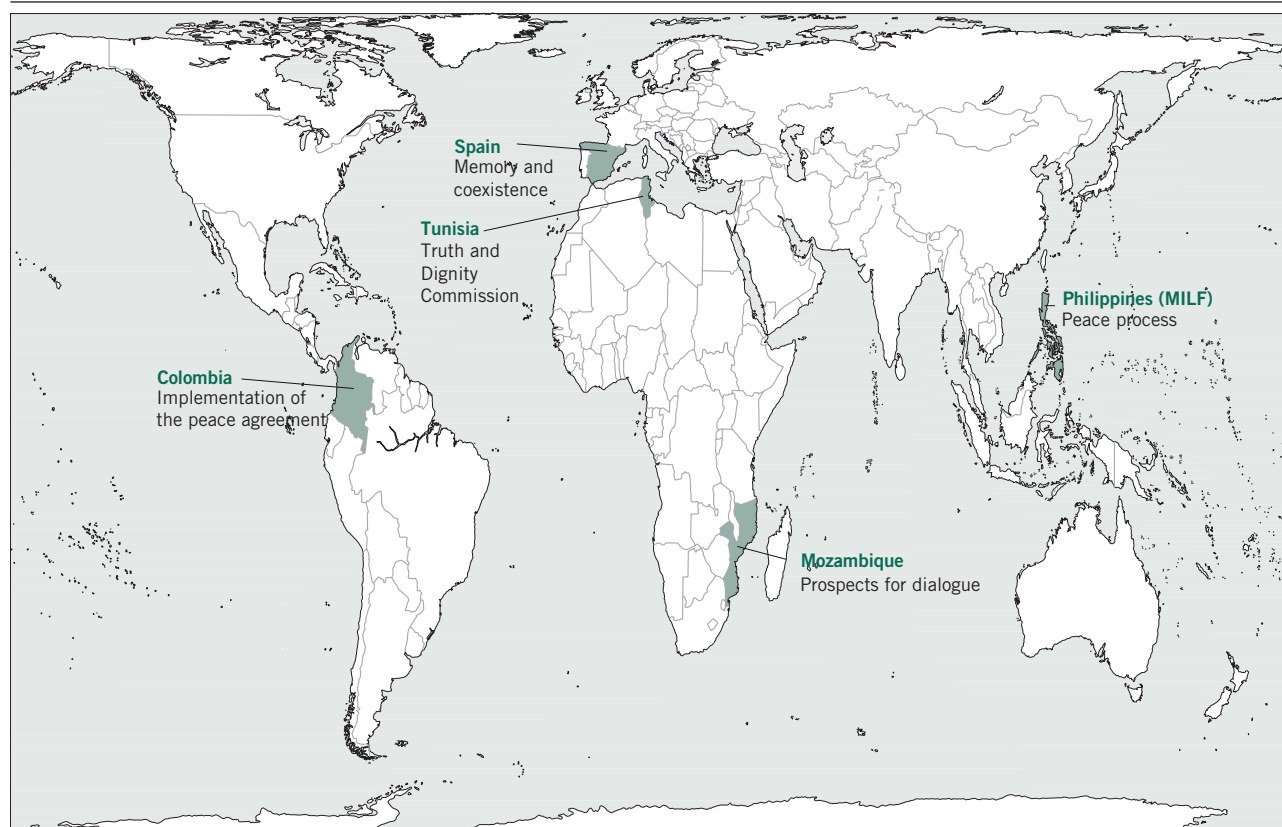
Libya, or the reports on the kidnapping of homosexual men –or anyone perceived as being a homosexual– in Chechnya by non-State actors and security forces were some of the other cases of gender-based violence in contexts of conflict and socio-political crises in 2017.

With regards to resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda, limitations in its implementation were observed one more year. For some areas of the agenda, such as the participation of women in peace processes, some setbacks were observed, showing that the progress achieved was not sustainable. In this regard, the number of women in senior positions within negotiating delegations for the peace processes followed by the UN dropped; the number of requests for expert advice on gender equality in processes mediated or co-mediated by the UN also dropped, and the number of consultations with civil society within the framework of peace process dropped as well. At the same time, the number of peace agreements including gender issues in their wording decreased. Women's organizations from around the world called for a greater commitment from States towards achieving an active participation of women and civil society, and greater efforts for disarmament, as well as guarantees for counter-terrorism policies, including in the financial sector, not to restrict or prevent the work of women's organizations, among other demands.

Women groups reclaimed a greater participation in several negotiations around the world and the inclusion

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

Opportunities for peace in 2018



of gender agendas. Among other significant cases in 2017, women's organizations from Colombia publicly supported the start of peace negotiations between the Government and the ELN guerrilla. Both delegations included women among their members. Nevertheless, gender issues were not given relevance in the peace talks during the year. At the same time, regarding the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC guerrilla, the Special Body to ensure a gender approach in the implementation of said agreement started to work in 2017, and to collaborate with the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIVI acronym in Spanish), in order to strengthen this approach. Nevertheless, difficulties and delays were observed in implementing the latter. In other contexts, despite the difficulties in participation, women's organizations pushed forward their demands for inclusion, such as in Libya, Syria and Mali, denouncing they are under-represented. In contexts like Yemen, women's organizations called for the adoption of an immediate ceasefire, urgent access for humanitarian aid and the resumption of peace negotiations.

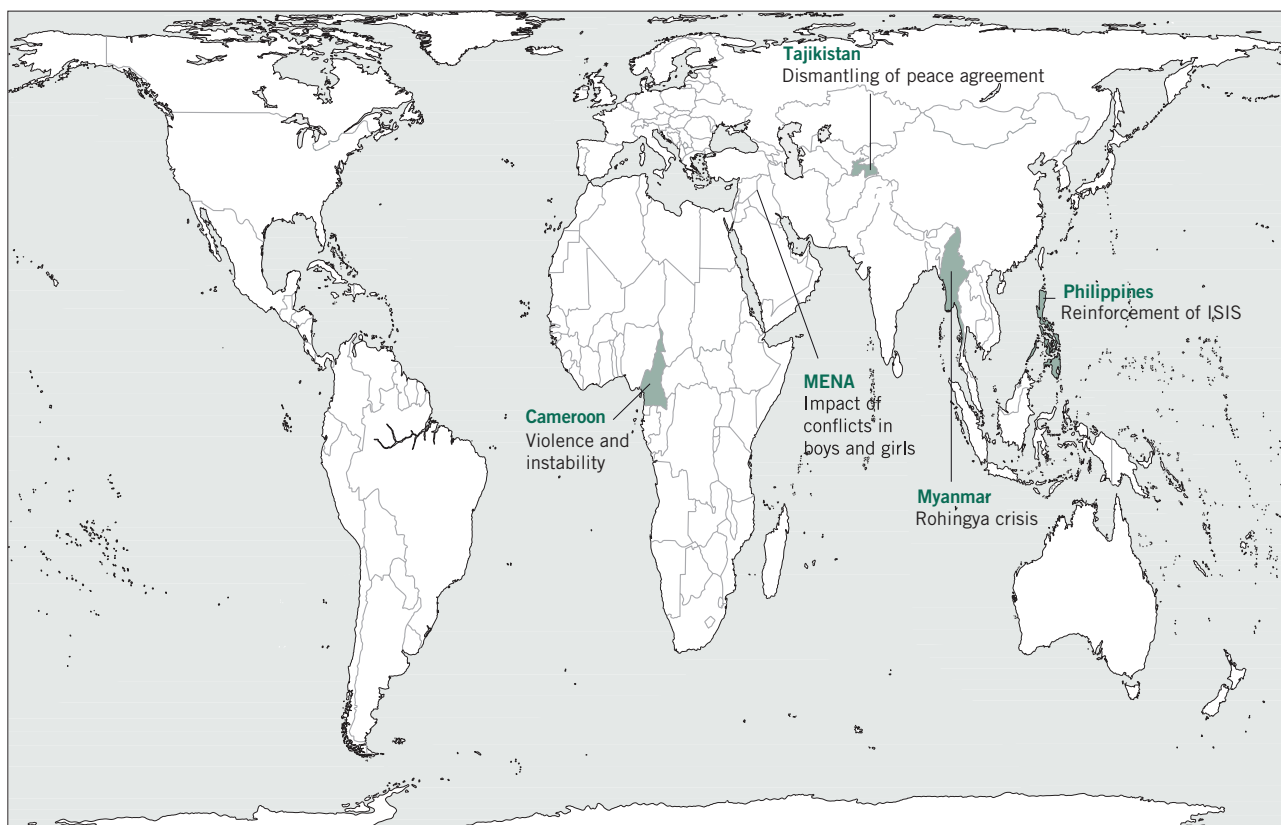
The Alert! report identifies and studies five contexts that are favourable in terms of peacebuilding in 2018

favourable for positive steps to be taken in terms of peacebuilding in 2018. The opportunities identified in 2017 refer to different regions and topics.

- **Colombia:** The drastic reduction in violence and relatively speedy implementation of the agreement between the Government and the FARC –when comparing this to peace agreements in other conflicts– especially with regards to measures to be implemented in the short term, bring opportunities to advance towards sustainable peace, despite the many obstacles and challenges ahead.
- **Philippines (MILF):** Progress made in discussing and processing the Bangsamoro Basic Law –a sort of statute of autonomy for the new region–, supported by the President, as well as the support for the 2014 peace agreement from the Government, the MILF, analysts and governments in a context of growing violence from groups loyal to ISIS, entails an opportunity to move forward in the process and in the implementation of the agreement.
- **Mozambique:** After three years of negotiations between the FRELIMO Government and the opposition party RENAMO, several positive steps were observed in 2017 –including a truce by the party in opposition, the withdrawal of troops from positions close to RENAMO's fieldom, the first meeting since 2015 between the President and the

Opportunities for Peace in 2018

Chapter four of the report (**Opportunities for Peace in 2018**) identifies and analyzes five scenarios that are



leader of the opposition, the support to dialogue from local civil society and international actors— may bring a new opportunity for peace in the country, despite the existing obstacles.

- **Spain (Basque Country):** Recent progress – including the disarmament of ETA in 2017 and the steps taken towards the dissolution of the group in 2018, as well as the agreement adopted in 2017 by all parties represented in the Basque Parliament except the PP to create a subcommittee on Memory and Coexistence— are positive steps towards peace being achieved in the Basque Country, even if there are still challenges regarding aspects such as the victims, coexistence, and prisoners.
- **Tunisia:** The work done by the Truth and Dignity Commission –a body for transitional justice adopted in 2013 by the first democratic government of the transition—, which started holding public hearings at the end of 2016 and had received more than 62,000 abuse cases from the past by the end of 2017 –with an increase of cases submitted by women, after the mobilization of women's organizations— is an opportunity for memory and reparation, in spite of the existing obstacles, including the failure of some key institutions to cooperate.

Risk Scenarios for 2018

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

- **Cameroon:** Growing instability in the country could further increase and generate a spiral of violence with unpredictable consequences. The risk dynamics are linked to regional factors –including the expansion of violence by Boko Haram in the north of the country as well as the effects of the crisis in the CAR in Cameroon, which include forced displacement of people and cross-border attacks— and also domestic factors –the worsening situation in the English-speaking regions, which are politically and economically marginalized by the State, which is controlled by the French-speaking majority. The four electoral periods in 2018 will be a new test in this risk scenario.
- **Philippines (Mindanao):** The unprecedented rise in armed activity in Mindanao in 2017 by organizations that have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS), the growing attention that ISIS itself is placing on Mindanao and Southeast Asia, as well as the recruiting of more and more people

by organizations considered jihadist bring to light the risk of the impacts this may have on the peace process between the Government and the MILF, as well as the risk that extremist and jihadist ideologies may spread among sectors of the population.

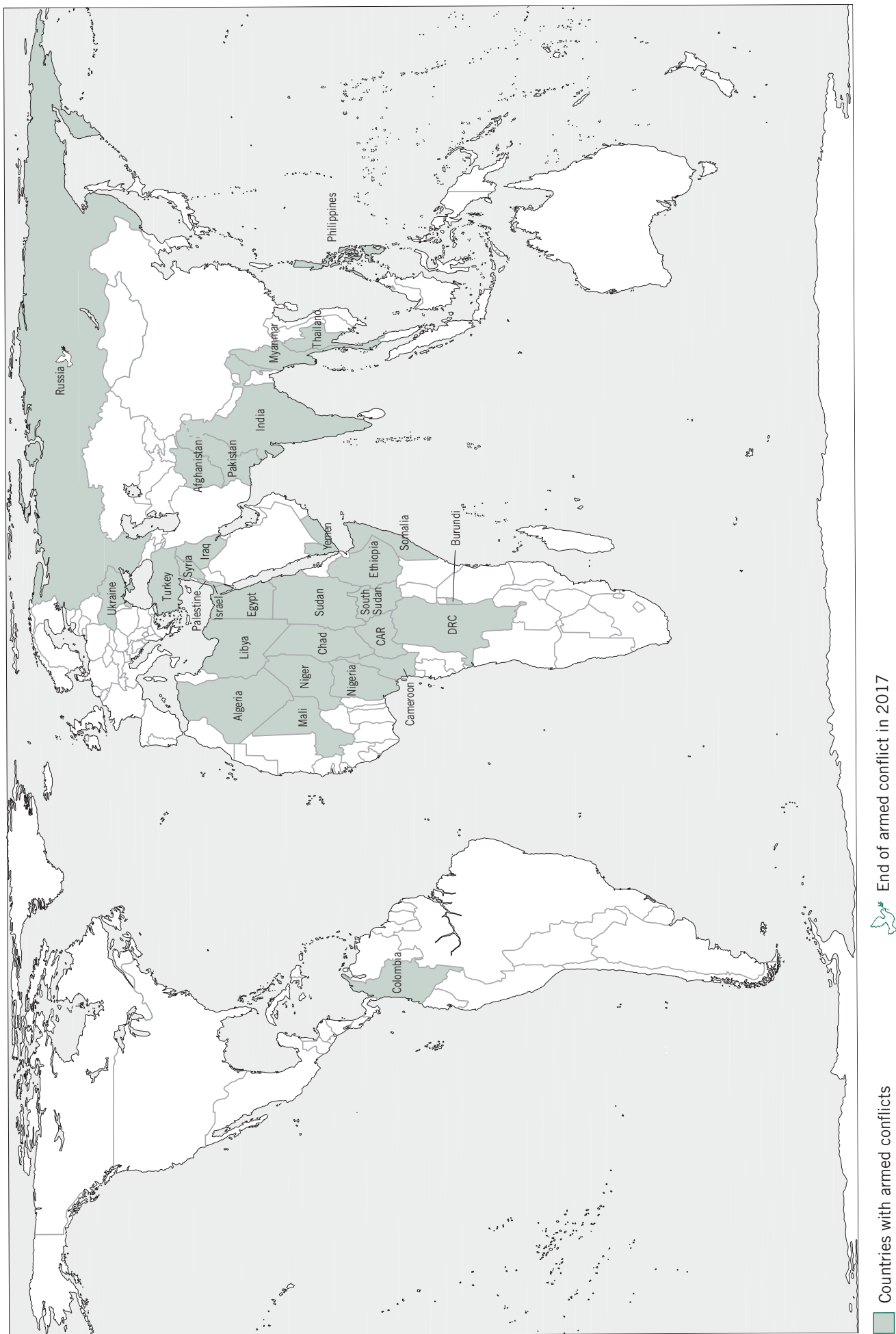
- **Myanmar:** The severe humanitarian and human rights crisis that affected the country in 2017 –with a large-scale military operation in response to several attacks by the Rohingya armed group ARSA in Rakhine State, forcefully displacing almost 700,000 people and entailing sexual abuse, homes being set alight and pillage by military personnel, which could constitute the crime of genocide– may put at risk the fragile progress achieved in democratizing the country and building peace in recent years.
- **Tajikistan:** The dismantling in recent years of the political framework that emerged from the 1997 peace agreement –which brought an end to the civil war from 1992 to 1997 – together with the growing

The report identifies and analyzes five scenarios of armed conflict and socio-political crisis that, given their condition, may worsen in 2018

number of political and judicial measures adopted against the political opposition –banning the Islamic opposition–, the violation of the members of opposition's human rights, their families' and human rights defenders', and the drastic shrinking of room for criticism may lead to a worsening of the tension in the country.

- **Middle East and North Africa:** The growing violence seen in several conflicts in the MENA region are having a growing impact on children, due to the indiscriminate and/or deliberate use of violence in highly-populated areas –50% increase in casualties among children in Syria in 2017, compared to 2016, among other factors–, the obstacles to humanitarian assistance, the impacts on minors of the destruction of civil infrastructure, including a severe deterioration of medical facilities, boys and girls being recruited, the forced displacement of children and the use of sexual violence, among other factors. Different types of violence against boys and girls pose a serious risk of trauma for a whole generation.

Map 1.1. Armed conflicts



1. Armed conflicts

- 33 armed conflicts were reported in 2017, most of them in Africa (14) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (three) and America (one). Of the 33 conflicts, 32 remained active at end of the year.
- The situation in Mali deteriorated during the year, with the many dynamics of violence affecting the north and centre of the country intensifying amidst difficulties in implementing the peace agreement.
- Al-Shabaab committed the worst attack in Somalia's history amidst a rise in US involvement and US counterinsurgency activity on land and in the air.
- The military strategy against Boko Haram pursued by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon reduced its capacity and by late 2016 the group was ousted from much of its stronghold in Sambisa Forest.
- The escalation of violence in Kasai, in south-central DRC, doubled the displaced population in the country, reaching 4.1 million and ranking the DRC first in the number of displaced persons in Africa.
- The situation in Libya was characterised by the persistent political crisis, institutional fragmentation and countless armed groups that led to multiple sources of violence.
- In Colombia, the conflict between the FARC and the government was declared ended following the armed group's disarmament and demobilisation in a process verified by the UN.
- In the Philippines, Mindanao experienced the most serious escalation of violence in recent years with five months of intense clashes in the city of Marawi between the Army and armed groups loyal to ISIS.
- After several attacks by the Rohingya armed group ARSA, the Burmese military operation in Rakhine State, in Myanmar, led to a dire humanitarian and human rights crisis.
- Turkey intensified its fight against the PKK inside Turkey and in the region, though the conflict-related death toll fell significantly compared to 2016.
- The armed conflict in Yemen made it the scene of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with 22.2 million people in need of aid, 3.4 million more than the year before.
- Iraq continued to be one of the most intense scenarios of conflict worldwide in a year marked by the expulsion of the armed group ISIS from Mosul and most of the country.
- The armed conflict in Syria continued to worsen as a result of the complex dynamics of violence and many battlefronts, with severe impacts on the civilian population.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2017. 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 2017, 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 2017.

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 2017

Conflict ¹ -beginning-	Type ²	Main parties ³	Intensity ⁴
			Trend ⁵
Africa			
Algeria -1992-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS, governments of North Africa and the Sahel	1
	System		=
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, factions of former armed groups	1
	Government		↓
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, MPC, UPC), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, France (Operation Sangaris), MINUSCA, EUFOR, groups linked to the former government of François Bozizé, other residual forces from armed groups (former Armed Forces), LRA armed Ugandan group	2
	Government, Resources		↑
DRC (east) -1998-	Internationalised internal	Government, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Rwanda, MONUSCO	2
	Government, Identity, Resources		↑
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militia, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	2
	System, Resources		=
DRC (Kasai) -2017-	Internal	DRC, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)	3
	Government, Identity		↑
Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-	Internationalised internal	Government, ONLF, OLF, pro-government militias (“Liyu Police”)	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) ⁶ - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Boko Haram (BH), MNJTF regional force (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)	3
	System		=

1. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. This last option is used in cases involving more than one armed conflict in the same state or in the same territory within a state, for the purpose of distinguishing them.
2. This report classifies and analyses armed conflicts using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following main causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the internal or international policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or the struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). In respect of the second type, the armed conflicts may be of an internal, Internationalised internal or international nature. An internal armed conflict is defined as a conflict involving armed actors from the same state who operate exclusively within the territory of this state. Secondly, an internationalised internal armed conflict is defined as that in which at least one of the parties involved is foreign and/or in which the tension spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Another factor taken into account in order to consider an armed conflict as internationalised internal is the existence of military bases of armed groups in neighbouring countries (in connivance with these countries) from which attacks are launched. Finally, an international conflict is one in which state and non-state parties from two or more countries confront each other. It should also be taken into account that most current armed conflicts have a significant regional or international dimension and influence due, among other factors, to flows of refugees, the arms trade, economic or political interests (such as legal or illegal exploitation of resources) that the neighbouring countries have in the conflict, the participation of foreign combatants or the logistical and military support provided by other states.
3. This column shows the actors that intervene directly in the hostilities. The main actors who participate directly in the conflicts are made up of a mixture of regular or irregular armed parties. The conflicts usually involve the government, or its armed forces, fighting against one or several armed opposition groups, but can also involve other irregular groups such as clans, guerrillas, warlords, armed groups in opposition to each other or militias from ethnic or religious communities. Although they most frequently use conventional weapons, and more specifically small arms (which cause most deaths in conflicts), in many cases other methods are employed, such as suicide attacks, bombings and sexual violence and even hunger as a weapon of war. There are also other actors who do not directly participate in the armed activities but who nevertheless have a significant influence on the conflict.
4. The intensity of an armed conflict (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation of violence, reduction of violence, unchanged) are evaluated mainly on the basis of how deadly it is (number of fatalities) and according to its impact on the population and the territory. Moreover, there are other aspects worthy of consideration, such as the systematisation and frequency of the violence or the complexity of the military struggle (complexity is normally related to the number and fragmentation of the actors involved, to the level of institutionalisation and capacity of the state, and to the degree of internationalisation of the conflict, as well as to the flexibility of objectives and to the political will of the parties to reach agreements). As such, high-intensity armed conflicts are usually defined as those that cause over 1,000 fatalities per year, as well as affecting a significant proportion of the territory and population, and involving several actors (who forge alliances, confront each other or establish a tactical coexistence). Medium and low intensity conflicts, with over 100 fatalities per year, have the aforementioned characteristics but with a more limited presence and scope. An armed conflict is considered ended when a significant and sustained reduction in armed hostilities occurs, whether due to a military victory, an agreement between the actors in conflict, demobilisation by one of the parties, or because one of the parties abandons or significantly scales down the armed struggle as a strategy to achieve certain objectives. None of these options necessarily mean that the underlying causes of the armed conflict have been overcome. Nor do they exclude the possibility of new outbreaks of violence. The temporary cessation of hostilities, whether formal or tacit, does not necessarily imply the end of the armed conflict.
5. This column compares the trend of the events of 2017 with those that of 2016. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2017 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.
6. In previous editions of the *Alert* report, this case had been identified as “Nigeria (Boko Haram)” because armed actions of this organization were concentrated in Nigeria. Since 2016 the case was renamed “Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)” given the regionalization of the armed conflict in the region known as Lake Chad, shared by Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Africa			
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, armed factions linked to Operation Dignity (Libyan National Army, LNA), armed groups linked to Operation Dawn, militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades, ISIS, AQIM, among other armed groups; USA, France, UK, Egypt, UAE, and other countries	3
	Government, Resources, System		↑
Mali (north) -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force	1
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, US, 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, SSIA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM, REMNESA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		=
Sudan (Darfur) -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, <i>janjaweed</i> , Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), other groups, UNAMID	2
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		↓
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group SPLM-N, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) armed coalition, PDF pro-government militias, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, South Sudan	2
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		↓
America			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, FARC-EP, ELN, paramilitary groups	1
	System		↓
Asia			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban militias, warlords, ISIS	3
	System		=
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1
	System		↓
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, United Jihad Council, All Parties Hurriyat Conference	1
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Myanmar -1948-	Internal	Government, armed groups (KNU/KNLA, SSA-S, SSA-N KNPP, UWSA, CNF, ALP, DKBA, KNPLAC, SSNPLO, KIO, ABSDF, AA, TNLA, HaY, MNDAA)	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, international militias, USA	3
	System		↓
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura)	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↓
Philippines (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/Dawlah Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF	3
	Self-government, Identity, System		↑
Philippines (NPA) -1969-	Internal	Government, NPA	1
	System		↑
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, separatist armed opposition groups	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Europe			
Russia (Dagestan) -2010-	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Republic of Dagestan, armed opposition groups (Caucasus Emirate and ISIS)	1
	System		End
Turkey (southeast) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	2
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Ukraine (east) ⁷ -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 and Hassam), Israel	3
	System		=
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi military and security forces, Kurdish (peshmerga), Shia militias (Popular Mobilization Units, PMU), Sunni armed groups, Islamic State (ISIS), international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Iran, Turkey, PKK	3
	System, Government, Identity		↑
Israel-Palestine -2000-	Internacional	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLF, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, Ahfad al-Sahaba knaf Bayt al-Maqdis (linked to ISIS)	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		=
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the PYD/YPJ militias of the PYD), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Turkey, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, among other armed parties	3
	Government, System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Yemen (AQPA) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias	1
	System		↓
Yemen (Houthis) -2004-	Internationalised internal	Armed forces loyal to Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), armed factions loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias, armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Iran	3
	System, Government, Identity		↑

1: low intensity; 2: medium intensity; 3: high intensity;

↑: escalation of violence; ↓: decrease of violence ; = : unchanged; End: no longer considered an armed conflict

1.2. Armed conflicts: analysis of trends in 2017

This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2017. This includes an overview of conflicts as compared to that of previous years, the geographical distribution of conflicts and the main trends by region, the relationship between the actors involved and the scenario of the dispute, the main causes of the current armed conflicts, the general evolution of the contexts and the intensity of the conflicts according to their levels of violence and their impact. Likewise, this section analyses some of the main consequences of armed conflicts in the civilian population, including the impact of hostilities on children, the aggravation of humanitarian crises as a result of conflicts, the impact of sexual violence in

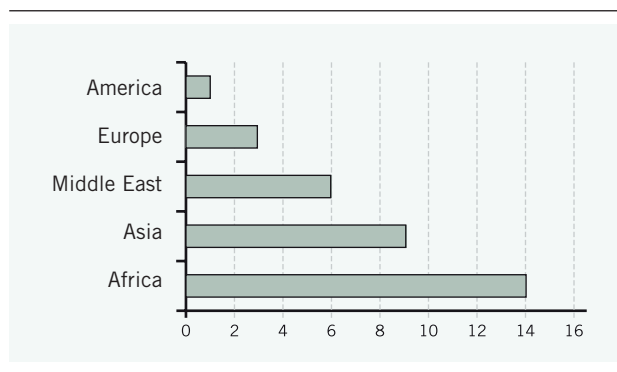
war-affected countries and forced displacement due to situations of conflict and violence.

1.2.1. Global and regional trends

The trend observed in previous years regarding the number of armed conflicts held steady in 2017, **with a total of 33, the same number as in 2016 and similar to what had been reported in previous periods** (35 conflicts in 2015, 36 in 2014 and 35 in 2013). Of the 33 conflicts accounted for in 2017, only 32 remained active at the end of the year, as the situation in the Russian Republic of Dagestan was no longer considered an armed conflict after presenting a pattern of significant drops in levels of violence in recent years. Compared to

7. In the previous edition of the *Alert!* report the armed conflict in Ukraine (east) and the socio-political crisis between Ukraine and Russia were analysed separately. In this edition they are analysed together.

Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2017



2016, the list of armed conflicts reported a new case in 2017: the conflict in the Kasai region of the DRC, following the intensification of hostilities between the Congolese government and the Kamwina Nsapu militia and after clashes between armed organisations affiliated with different ethnic groups. Regarding the geographical distribution of the armed conflicts around the world, the data for 2017 offer a similar picture to that of previous years. The vast majority of the conflicts were in Africa (14) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (three) and the Americas (one). Compared to 2016, the distribution of conflicts by regions in 2017 presented one additional conflict in Africa, in the DRC (Kasai), and one less in Asia, since the Xinjiang region (Turkestan) was no longer considered an armed conflict at the end of 2016 and was studied as a socio-political crisis in 2017.⁸ Cases in Africa accounted for 44% of all armed conflicts worldwide.

Most armed conflicts in 2017 were reported in Africa (14) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (three) and the Americas (one)

Regarding the relations among the actors involved and the scenarios of conflict, internal, international and, mainly, internationalised internal conflicts were identified. A total of six conflicts, or 18% of the conflicts around the world, were internal, meaning between armed actors of the same state and operating exclusively within and from its borders: DRC (Kasai), Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M), Myanmar, Thailand (south) and Russia (Dagestan). Only one conflict in the world was classified as international: that of Israel-Palestine (representing 3% of the total number of conflicts). The rest of the armed conflicts (26 out of 33, equivalent to 79%) were internationalised internal. These are cases in which one of the parties is foreign, the armed actors involved have bases or launch attacks from abroad and/or when the conflict spreads to neighbouring countries. **In many conflicts, this factor of internationalisation resulted in the involvement of third parties, including UN missions or missions linked to regional organisations, ad-hoc regional and international military coalitions, states and armed groups that operate across borders and others.**

UN missions were involved in various conflicts, and particularly in Africa, including MINUSCA in the CAR, MONUSCO in the DRC, UNAMID in Sudan and UNMISS in South Sudan or MINUSMA in Mali. The latter has been considered the most dangerous UN mission in the world since scores of its troops have lost their lives in recent years. Meanwhile, missions continued to be deployed by regional organisations such as the AU (AMISOM in Somalia), the EU (EUNAVFOR in Somalia) and NATO (the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan) and regional and/or international military coalitions were created ad-hoc in response to some conflicts. For example, the G5 Sahel Joint Force, conceived in 2014 but formalised in 2017, brought together troops from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania to respond to security challenges in the Sahel region. This military alliance was inspired by the experience of the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), launched in 2016 to combat the threat of the armed group Boko Haram and consisting of units from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Other examples of ad-hoc military coalitions are the conglomeration of forces led by Saudi Arabia and composed of nine other countries (UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan) participating in the war in Yemen since 2015 and the Global Coalition

Against Daesh, a US-led international anti-Islamic State coalition established in 2014 and composed of 71 countries and four institutions (EU, Arab League, NATO and Interpol).⁹

Some states were especially involved in conflicts outside their borders, including France, which continued its participation in the armed conflict in Mali through Operation Barkhane; Egypt, which launched attacks on Libyan soil in retaliation for attacks by the armed group ISIS; Turkey, which intensified its battle against the PKK in neighbouring countries; Russia and Iran, which remained actively engaged in supporting the regime of Bashar Assad in the war in Syria; and the US, which led the international anti-ISIS coalition's campaigns in Syria and Iraq whilst remaining involved in other contexts. In fact, in several cases, the new US government stepped up its military activities. There was an unprecedented increase in US air strikes in Somalia, more than twice as many as in 2016. A similar trend was observed in Yemen, where US air strikes against alleged AQAP and ISIS targets tripled. In Afghanistan, meanwhile, the US acknowledged having deployed a larger number of troops than it had officially disclosed (11,000, rather than 8,400).

In various armed conflicts, internationalisation was linked to the presence of armed groups operating beyond the borders of their countries of origin. One notable example was AQIM, which continued to conduct actions

8. See the summary on China (Xinjiang) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

9. For further information, see <http://theglobalcoalition.org/en/home/>.

in Algeria, but also carried out important attacks in the Sahel as part of its gradual process of “Africanisation” in recent years. In fact, the group’s most significant attack of 2017 took place in Mali, where the AQIM branch joined forces with Al-Mourabitoun and Ansar Dine to create a new organisation called the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM). Another prominent example was ISIS, which suffered major setbacks in its main strongholds in Iraq (Mosul) and Syria (Raqqa) in 2017, but continued to claim responsibility for attacks beyond the Middle East. Expanding its armed activity, ISIS committed some of the most serious attacks in Pakistan, claimed responsibility for some of the bloodiest attacks in Afghanistan, and claimed a greater role in the Philippine region of Mindanao, where local armed groups had strong links with ISIS and more foreign combatants were observed in hostilities with the government.

In addition to taking advantage of situations of armed conflict in many countries to expand its radius of action, ISIS also claimed responsibility for a series of attacks in different parts of the world that were blamed on ISIS cells or sympathisers during 2017. These included attacks in the **United Kingdom** (an attack outside the Westminster Palace in March that killed six people, a suicide attack during a concert in Manchester in May that killed 22 people and a hit-and-run attack with a truck and stabbings of several people by three attackers near the London Bridge in June, killing eight), **Sweden** (an attack in a commercial area of Stockholm in April that claimed five lives), **France** (an incident on the Champs-Élysées in April that resulted in two deaths and another attack in Marseille in October that claimed three lives), **Indonesia** (an attack on a bus station in Jakarta in May that killed three police officers), **Iran** (two attacks against Parliament and the Ayatollah Khomeini’s mausoleum in Tehran in June that killed 17 people), **Spain** (a van that deliberately ran over passers-by on La Rambla in Barcelona in August, killing 13 people and injuring more than 100 and a second attack in the town of Cambrils that resulted in the death of one woman and four attackers) and **the United States** (a truck attack in New York in October that caused the deaths of eight people and an attempted suicide bombing that was foiled in December).

The analysis of the different scenarios confirms the multi-causal nature of the armed conflicts. Following the trend observed in previous years, **the main motivations for most armed conflicts in 2017 included opposition to the domestic or international policies of their respective governments or to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a particular state, which led to struggles to gain power or erode power.** These types of factors were present in 24 of the 33 cases analysed, or 73%. Of these, 18 showed the desire to change the system, promoted mainly by socialist-inspired armed groups like the CPI-M in India, the NPA in the

Philippines and the FARC in Colombia and by jihadist organisations that intend to impose their particular interpretation of Islamic law. The latter groups included the self-styled ISIS and its affiliates and related organisations in different countries and continents (Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and others), the various al-Qaeda branches operating in North Africa and the Middle East, including AQIM (Algeria and Sahel) and AQAP (Yemen), the Taliban militias active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the al-Shabaab group in Somalia.

A second large group of cases were mainly caused by identity aspirations and/or demands for self-determination or self-government. These types of factors were identified in 18 of the 33 armed conflicts in 2017, equivalent to 55%, including cases such as Mali (north), conflicts in the east of the DRC and in the Kasai region, those in Darfur and Kordofan and Blue Nile in Sudan, Mindanao in the Philippines, Jammu and Kashmir in India, Balochistan in Pakistan, southern Thailand, Myanmar and southeastern Turkey, related to the Kurdish issue, to mention but a few. Of these cases, the conflicts in Kasai and Myanmar experienced an especially sharp rise in violence in 2017, in which

Most of the armed conflicts in 2017, 26 of 33 (79%), were internationalised internal

identity was a key component. A third group of cases was primarily motivated by the control of resources and territories, which appeared in nine of the 33 cases (27%). Struggles over resources were observed mostly in Africa, including Libya, the CAR, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Sudan (Darfur) and South Sudan, though they were also present in Asia, specifically in Pakistan (Balochistan). The territorial factor was also a key issue in the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

In keeping with the trend observed the previous year, **the levels of hostility and violence of most armed conflicts worsened in 2017. Thirteen (13) of the 33 cases (or 39%) showed a negative trend, a figure slightly lower than in 2016 (46%).** The conflicts in which the situation clearly deteriorated during 2017 were Libya, Mali (north), the CAR, the DRC (east), the DRC (Kasai), Somalia, the Philippines (NPA), the Philippines (Mindanao), India (Jammu and Kashmir), Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). In some contexts, like in Mali and Libya, the intensification in hostilities was related at least in part to the difficulties in implementing agreements to resolve conflicts politically. In the Philippines (NPA), the rise in violence was also linked to the crisis in the negotiations between the government and the NDF (political arm of the NPA). Conflicts that deteriorated especially pronouncedly included Myanmar, Syria and Yemen (Houthis), where levels of violence, serious human rights violations and humanitarian crises intensified, mainly affecting the civilian population. In nine of the 33 armed conflicts (27%) reported in 2017, the trend remained similar to that of 2016, whilst 11 showed lower levels of violence.

Violence subsided in Colombia and Thailand (south), resulting from implementation of the peace agreement and an active negotiating process, respectively, as well as in the Russian Republic of Dagestan, where the trend of falling levels of violence in recent years led us to stop considering it an active armed conflict in 2017. It should be noted, however, that identifying a case as ended due to a steady reduction in hostilities does not necessarily imply that its root causes have been resolved, nor does it rule out the possibility of a future outbreak of violence.

A large part of the armed conflicts (12 of 33, equivalent to 36%) were of low intensity, whilst fewer (eight, representing 24%) were of medium intensity. Following the trend of 2016, **most armed conflicts in 2017 (13 of the 33 cases, or 40%) were of high intensity**, meaning scenarios with death tolls of over 1,000 per year, with severe impacts on the territory and serious consequences for the population.

The 13 most serious conflicts in 2017 were Libya, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), Myanmar, Pakistan, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

Compared to 2016, **Asia was the region that showed the greatest variation, with a 50% rise in high-intensity cases in 2017, going from two to four after the dramatic escalation of violence in the Philippines (Mindanao) and Myanmar.** In many of these cases, in fact, the threshold of 1,000 fatalities per year was far exceeded. For example, in the Lake Chad region of Africa, around 1,800 people were killed between January and December in hostilities between the armed forces of several countries in the area and the armed group Boko Haram. The conflict in the DRC (Kasai) had claimed the lives of at least 3,400 people by June alone, according to figures provided by the local Catholic Church, whilst in Somalia partial counts indicated that at least 3,800 people died in 2017. According to UNAMA, over 3,400 people were killed in Afghanistan, but that figure only includes civilians.

Most armed conflicts in 2017 (40%) were of high intensity, characterised by high levels of violence and death tolls of over 1,000 per year

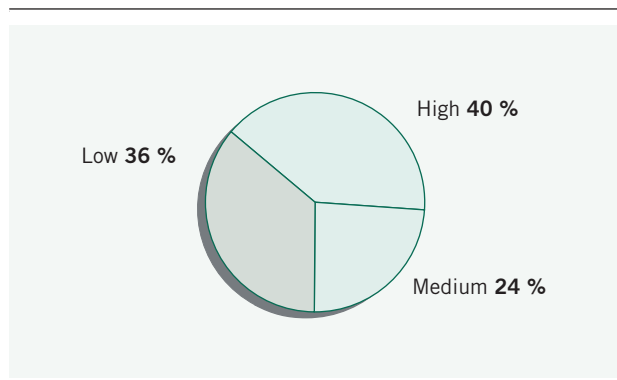
In the Philippine region of Mindanao, 1,100 people died in just five months and at least 6,700 Rohingya people were killed in the first month of the military operation in Rakhine State in Myanmar, according to figures provided by Doctors Without Borders. The situation in Rakhine State was especially dire in 2017 and supported allegations of the commission of crimes against humanity and genocide, given the systematic persecution of the Rohingya population. The Middle East region continued to have the highest number of high-intensity cases proportionately and witnessed

some of the bloodiest armed conflicts of 2017, especially in Syria and Iraq. Partial and provisional figures from the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) indicated that 10,000 civilians may have died in Syria in 2017, including 2,300 children. The Iraq Body Count (IBC) organisation stated that over 13,000 civilians lost their lives to the conflict in Iraq in 2017.

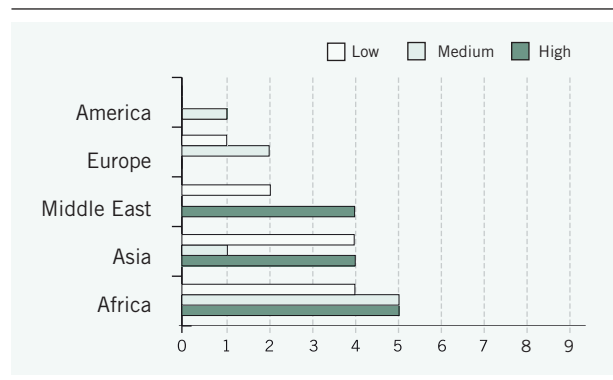
1.2.2. Impact of conflict on civilians

Worldwide, **armed conflicts continued to have severe impacts on the civilian population. These consequences were reflected in their deadliness, as shown in some of the aforementioned cases, and in other types of impacts as a result of the indiscriminate and/or deliberate use of violence against civilians.** During 2017, this was demonstrated with practices such as summary executions and the burning of homes with people inside, as observed in Myanmar; many extrajudicial killings and other serious human rights violations against civilians in the conflict in Kasai (DRC); and sieges of civilian areas like those reported in Syria, where around 390,000 people remained trapped at the end of the year, surviving in extremely harsh conditions in the area of East Ghouta. In this vein, particularly bloody attacks in different armed conflicts were prominent in 2017. For example, an attack in Afghanistan that was considered the most serious since the US military invasion of 2001 killed around 150 people, mostly civilians, and wounded 500. As part of the armed conflict in the Sinai, the most

Graph 1.2. Intensity of the armed conflicts



Graph 1.3. Intensity of the armed conflicts by region



Box 1.1. Regional trends in armed conflict

AFRICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The continent was home to the largest number of armed conflicts worldwide, 14 of 33 (equivalent to 44%). This is an increase of one over 2016, since the levels of violence in the Kasai region in the DRC in 2017 caused that case to be reclassified as an armed conflict. More than one third of the conflicts in Africa were of high intensity (five of 14): Libya, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the DRC (Kasai), Somalia and South Sudan. Most of the armed conflicts in the continent worsened, with escalating levels of violence in 2017, and a reduction in hostilities was only observed in three. The levels of violence of five other conflicts were similar to those of 2016. African armed conflicts were characterised by a high level of internationalisation. Transnational armed actors, international missions, foreign governments and other actors were observed in 13 of the 14 cases, whereas the dynamics of the conflict were purely internal in only one case: DRC (Kasai). Armed conflicts in Africa were caused by multiple factors, especially the desire to change the government or system, found in 11 of the 14 cases. The control of resources was also prominently represented. Seven of the eight conflicts in the world mainly caused by struggles to control resources were in Africa.
AMERICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was only one armed conflict in the Americas, in Colombia. The Americas therefore had only 3% of the armed conflicts in the world between them in 2017. In line with the trend observed in recent years, Colombia enjoyed decreasing levels of violence due to the peace process between the FARC and the Colombian government and the signing of the peace agreement in 2016.
ASIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asia ranked second in the number of armed conflicts after Africa, with a total of nine (27% of the total). A notable trend in 2017 was the proportion of conflicts in Asia that experienced an intensification of violence (four of the nine, or 44%) and the increase in high-intensity cases, which doubled compared to 2016, from two to four: Afghanistan, Pakistan (identified as serious cases the previous year), Myanmar and the Philippines (Mindanao), which were catalogued as high-intensity cases in 2017. One distinctive feature of Asia was its many internal conflicts, accounting for almost half of them (four of nine): the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M), Myanmar and Thailand (south). The main motivations for a large part of the armed conflicts in Asia (five of nine) included issues of identity and self-government, although the factor linked to changing the system was also significant in most contexts (five of nine).
EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were three conflicts in Europe: Russia (Dagestan), Turkey (southeast) and Ukraine (east), accounting for 9% of all armed conflicts worldwide. Unlike the previous year, Europe was not the scene of any high-intensity armed conflict in 2017. Levels of violence fell in Turkey (southeast) compared to 2016 and the conflict was considered to be of medium intensity. The same was true for Ukraine, which maintained a level of hostilities similar to the previous year. In Russia (Dagestan), the steady trend of declining violence in recent years continued in 2017, which led to stop considering the case an active armed conflict at the end of the year. Europe continued to be characterised by armed conflicts mainly caused by factors of identity and self-government and the desire to change the system and government. Two of the three cases were internationalised internal, Turkey (south-east) and Ukraine (east), whilst the dispute in the Russian region of Dagestan was largely internal.
MIDDLE EAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This region had the third-most cases of armed conflict in the world, at six (18%). It also remained the one with proportionally the highest number of serious cases worldwide. Four of the six conflicts in the Middle East (67%) were of high intensity: Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Half the cases in the region deteriorated in 2017: Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis), whilst the levels of violence in two others were similar to 2016: Egypt (Sinai) and Israel-Palestine. Only the conflict involving AQAP in Yemen saw a slight dip in the levels of violence compared to 2016. The Middle East was the only region where an international armed conflict was identified (Israel-Palestine), yet all its other conflicts were internationalised internal. The conflicts in the region were motivated by multiple factors, but the desire to change the system was especially prevalent, associated in part with jihadist armed actors who tried to promote their particular interpretation of Islamic law.

bloody attack in recent Egyptian history left more than 300 dead in a bomb attack and subsequent shootout in a mosque frequented by the Sufi community. The deadliest attack in the history of Somalia killed over 500 people and wounded another 300. In addition to these attacks, blamed on non-state armed groups, significant actions were also taken as part of military campaigns in 2017 that had serious repercussions for civilians. For example, in the offensive against ISIS

in Iraq, a US air strike killed more than 150 civilians who had taken refuge in a building fleeing hostilities. At the end of the year, the US acknowledged that its anti-ISIS campaign in Iraq and Syria had caused at least 800 civilian deaths since 2014, although other sources pointed to a much higher death toll.¹⁰

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or exacerbate humanitarian crises. For example, more than 7.7

10. See the summaries on Iraq and Syria in this chapter.

million people suffered from severe food insecurity in the DRC, 30% more than in 2016, whilst 4.8 million suffered the same situation in South Sudan. In Iraq, 11 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in late 2017. In Yemen, 22.2 million people required assistance at the end of the year, 3.4 million more than in 2016. Of this total, 11.3 million needed urgent aid to survive. The armed conflict in Yemen, the poorest in the Arab world, also led to the expansion of diseases such as cholera, which affected one million people in 2017 and caused the deaths of over 2,000 in the worst cholera outbreak in contemporary history.

At the same time, armed conflicts around the world continued to have an **especially serious impact on children**. The UN Secretary-General's yearly report on children and armed conflicts released in 2017, which covers the period between January and December 2016, found at least 4,000 violations against children attributable to government forces and another 11,500 verified violations perpetrated by armed non-state groups.¹¹ The UN report underscored that children continued to be killed or wounded in armed conflicts across the globe, highlighting Afghanistan, where 3,512 underage victims were counted, the highest number reported since the conflict began (923 dead and 2,589 wounded); Yemen, where there were 1,340 child victims (502 dead and 838 wounded); Iraq and Syria, where around 2,000 children lost their lives in hostilities connected with the fight against ISIS; and the DRC, which reported the highest number of dead children since 2012. The UN Secretary-General called on the warring parties to respect the principles of distinction between civilians and combatants, proportionality and precaution established by International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In addition to this report, the data compiled by the School for a Culture of Peace (ECP) on the trend of different conflict scenarios during 2017 confirms this worrying phenomenon. Thus, for example, during 2017 the military campaign against the Rohingya population may have caused the deaths of over 700 children in the first month of violence. In other contexts, such as Syria, UNICEF data indicate that 2017 was the deadliest year for children in armed conflicts, with a 50% increase in the number of deaths compared to 2016 (910 verified deaths, although the final figure could be much higher considering that some organisations estimate that 2,300 children were killed in the same period).¹²

The UN report on children and armed conflicts denounced forced recruitment, which doubled between 2015 and 2016 in countries like Somalia and Syria

By the end of 2016, a total of 65.6 million people had been forced to leave their homes because of conflict, persecution, violence and/or human rights violations

The UN Secretary-General's report drew attention to another worrisome trend in current armed conflicts: the blockade of access to humanitarian aid that directly harms children in besieged areas without necessary access to water, food, medical assistance and medicine, including vaccines. It also expressed concern about continuous attacks against civilian infrastructure that affect children, like schools and hospitals. The report also denounced the forced recruitment of minors, a phenomenon especially prevalent in countries like Somalia and Syria, where it doubled in 2016 compared to 2015. The analysis of armed conflicts in 2017 also reveals that this scourge was especially well known in the DRC (in the Kasai region, armed groups have recruited children extensively) and in the Lake Chad area, where the armed organisation Boko Haram continued to use children, quadrupling the frequency of their use to carry out attacks compared to 2016. According to the UN Secretary-General's report, children also continued to be subjected to sexual violence in various armed conflicts, including in Nigeria, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria.

The use of sexual violence was reported in many armed conflicts, though it is generally an under-reported phenomenon. Published in April 2017 and covering the period from January to December 2016, the UN Secretary General's report on sexual violence in conflict highlighted the use of the bodies of women and girls as currency in war economies and called attention to the use of sexual violence as a "terrorist tactic".¹³ The UN report underscored the recurring use of sexual violence by various extremist groups in multiple ways, such as to terrorise and subdue populations, forcibly displace civilians and encourage the recruitment of fighters, who are offered girls and women as a method of compensation. Sexual violence can also become an instrument of war economies by turning women into victims of trafficking and sexual slavery, forcing them into prostitution or forcing their families to pay ransom. The report discussed the deep stigma suffered by those who survive sexual violence in conflicts and condemned the impact of some counter-terrorist measures that also violate the rights and freedoms of people who have been released after periods in captivity, who are sometimes arrested because of their suspected affiliation or collaboration with armed groups.

11. UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary General: Children and armed conflict*, A/72/361-s/2017/821, 24 August 2017.

12. See the summaries on Myanmar and Syria in this chapter and "The impact of conflicts and violence on children in the MENA region" in chapter 5 (Risk scenarios for 2018).

13. UN Security Council, *Report of the UN Secretary General on conflict-related sexual violence*, S/2017/249, 15 April 2017.

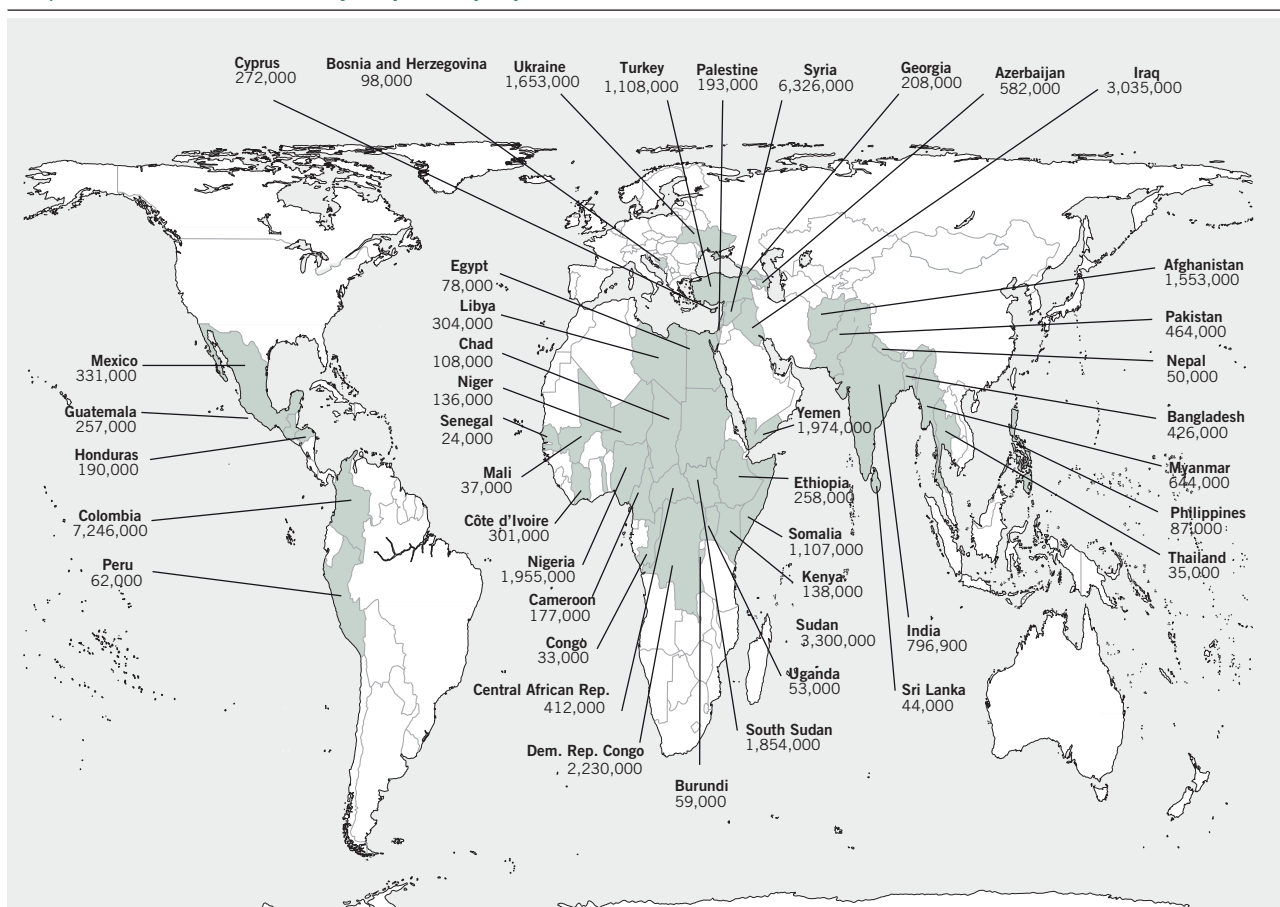
The report also provides information on sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations in 19 countries. Based on this background, the analysis carried out by the ECP indicates that 10 of the 17 armed conflicts in which sexual violence occurred were of high intensity in 2017 (Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (the Houthis)).¹⁴ Aside from the UN report, the analysis of the events that took place throughout 2017 demonstrates that sexual violence persists in many contexts, including South Sudan, where it continued on a massive scale against people of ethnic groups considered rivals; in northern and central Mali, where sexual and gender violence is perpetrated by various armed actors; Myanmar, where there are serious reports of sexual violence used by Burmese security forces against the Rohingya population, especially women and girls; Ukraine, where sexual violence was found as a method of torture to punish and extract confessions; and Syria, where the impact of sexual violence against men and children was documented, as was their sexual exploitation

Serious episodes of forced displacement in 2017 were caused by conflicts in DRC (Kasai), the Philippines (Mindanao), Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere

in situations of forced displacement. Despite these negative developments, some initiatives to respond to sexual violence and combat impunity were also identified during 2017.¹⁵

Finally, **forced displacement continued to be another one of the most serious consequences of armed conflict worldwide** and the significantly rising trend observed in recent years continued upwards. According to a UNHCR report published in mid-2017 that assessed the situation of forced displacement until the end of 2016, a total of 65.6 million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict, persecution, violence and/or human rights violations, around 300,000 more than at the end of 2015. **Of this total of 65.6 million, 22.5 million were refugees (17.2 million under mandate from UNHCR and 5.3 million Palestinians registered by UNRWA), 40.3 million were in a situation of forced internal displacement and 2.8 million were seeking asylum.** According to UNHCR data, 10.3 million people were forcibly displaced for the first time during 2016, of

Map 1.2. Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2016



Source: IDMC, *GRID 2017: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2017.

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

15. Ibid.

which 3.4 million became refugees or asylum seekers and 6.9 fled in search of a safer place within the borders of their own countries. **Minors accounted for 51% of the refugee population in 2016.** Thus, the UN Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict stated that the unprecedented figures on forcibly displaced children are not only the result of wars in general, but also of the brutality with which the parties wage them, in many cases directly attacking children. More than half of the world's refugee population came from just three countries: Syria (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million) and South Sudan (1.4 million). According to UNHCR figures, developing countries continued to host most of the world's refugee population. In 2016, the main receiving countries were Turkey (2.9 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Lebanon (1 million), Iran (979,400), Uganda (940,800) and Ethiopia (791,600). In proportional terms, Lebanon continued to be the country with the highest percentage of refugees as compared to the national population, with a ratio of 1:6, followed by Jordan (1:11) and Turkey (1:28).

This deteriorating trend only threatens to get worse considering the backgrounds of some of the situations of forced displacement in conflict in 2017. For example, **the conflict in the Kasai region in the DRC in 2017 doubled the number of displaced people in the country to 4.1 million, giving it the highest such number in Africa.** In Mindanao (the Philippines), the most serious clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and various armed groups in recent years forcibly displaced more than 600,000 people. In Myanmar, the offensive against the Rohingya population displaced over 660,000 people between August and December, most of whom took refuge in Bangladesh. In Iraq, violence connected to the armed campaign against ISIS displaced 3.2 million people. In Syria, it is estimated that in the first nine months of the year alone, 1.8 million people moved due to the conflict, equivalent to around 6,550 people each day, with many successive displacements. Meanwhile, **the conflict in Libya has given rise to exploitation and violations of the rights of migrants and refugees**, who are subjected to arbitrary arrest, trafficking, torture, forced labour and sexual exploitation. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) denounced slave markets in Libya, whilst various actors, including the UN, warned that European policies were facilitating the violation of these people's rights on Libyan soil.¹⁶

1.3. Armed conflicts: annual evolution

1.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Burundi	
Start:	2015
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, factions of former armed groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

The process of political and institutional transition that got under way with the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in 2000 was formally completed in 2005. The approval of a new constitution (that formalises the distribution of political and military power between the main two communities, the Hutu and Tutsi) and the holding of elections (leading to the formation of a new government), represent an attempted to lay the foundations for overcoming a conflict that began in 1993. This represented the principal opportunity for ending the ethnic-political violence that has plagued the country since its independence in 1962. However, the authoritarian evolution of the government after the 2010 elections, denounced as fraudulent by the opposition, has overshadowed the reconciliation process and led to the mobilization of political opposition. This situation has been aggravated by the plans to reform the Constitution by the Government. The deteriorating situation in the country is revealed by the institutional deterioration and reduction of the political space for the opposition, the controversial candidacy of 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.

The atmosphere of political violence, abuse and human rights abuses persisted, stemming from President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third presidential term, which is considered unconstitutional and had set off a wave of social protests in 2015 and imposed a climate of repression that has become reflected in a low-intensity conflict. Serious human rights violations continued daily with total impunity. Most were committed by the government and the Imbonerakure youth militias belonging to the president's party, the CNDD-FDD. According to a report released in September by a UN commission of inquiry established by the UN Human Rights Council, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture and arbitrary arrests are carried out periodically in settings depriving the victims of their basic rights. The commission's mandate was extended for one year, despite the government's resistance. Meanwhile, the patterns of use of violence could be changing, since grenade attacks in bars and other gathering places had traditionally taken place in the capital, Bujumbura, but

16. See the summary on Libya in this chapter.

also affected other places outside the capital throughout the year. Most of these attacks may have been politically motivated, as members of opposition parties were often targeted. Nevertheless, ACLED noted that there has been a gradual reduction in acts of violence, since the lowest level of attacks and the second lowest death toll (13) since before the 2015 presidential election was reached in October, whilst the highest number of deaths (34) occurred in June and July.¹⁷ According to UNHCR, 400,000 people are estimated to have left the country since the crisis began in 2015. The UN police component was still not deployed and Resolution 2303's expanded authorisation to promote the deployment of the mission generated controversy at the Security Council, since a declaration by the presidency of the Council was adopted without explicitly including this issue.

In the political sphere, attempts by the EAC and the UN to restart the inter-Burundi dialogue failed due to the government's refusal to recognise the opposition coalition CNARED as a political partner in the dialogue process. In June, the UN appointed its new special envoy for the country, Michel Kafando, the fourth since June 2015, to replace Jamal Benomar, who had a difficult relationship with the Burundian government. The authorities indicated that they hoped the change could reactivate the process, but warned of possible bias towards the political opposition. **President Pierre Nkurunziza officially launched his campaign to change the Constitution** via a referendum on 12 December, which is expected for the first half of 2018. This reform considers allowing the current president to run for a fourth presidential term in the 2020 election. The proposed amendments seek to abolish the two-term limit of the presidency and extend presidential terms to seven years. Furthermore, in late October Burundi finally formalised its departure from the ICC, claiming it was partial and solely focused on crimes committed by Africans. He is the first head of a member state to take this decision, which is a serious blow to international justice, but it does not affect the ICC's jurisdiction over a previous investigation in Burundi. Dated in 2015, the investigation inquires into the death of 430 people in protests that broke out following the announcement that President Pierre Nkurunziza, the former rebel leader of the Hutu community (a majority in the country), decided to seek a third term. The public prosecutor's office will present its conclusions shortly. The United Nations was officially notified of Burundi's departure a year ago.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the ICC's chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, went ahead with her work in the country, investigating a case file that includes the arrest of 3,400 people and the flight of around 230,000 more in search of refuge in neighbouring countries, in addition to killings, torture, sexual violence and forced disappearances.

A UN commission of inquiry has found that extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture and arbitrary arrests are carried out periodically in Burundi

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, MPC, UPC), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, France (Operation Sangaris), MINUSCA, EUFOR, groups linked to the former government of François Bozizé, other residual forces from armed groups (former Armed Forces), LRA armed Ugandan group
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The situation in the Central African Republic experienced since September and October 2016 continued to deteriorate throughout the year and flared up again in May and June 2017 in the vicinities of Bangassou and Bria, worsening security in a large part of the country. Whilst Bangui remained relatively calm, armed clashes and violence against civilians continued in the rest of the country and especially in the southwest, the centre and some western areas (the prefectures of

17. ACLED, *Conflict Summaries – October 2017*, October 2017.

18. See "African countries' withdrawal from the ICC: backsliding in terms of protecting human rights" in chapter 5 (Risk scenarios) of Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2017.

Ouham and Ouham-Pendé), as indicated in the report of the UN Secretary-General. The violence was triggered by rising competition among armed groups for control over resources, which was increasingly aggravated by tensions between ethnic communities and groups, and especially between Muslims and Christians. New armed groups emerged that intensified the clashes and attacks against civilians. The start of the rainy season did not inhibit their actions. In the centre and east of the country, many of the incidents included criminal activities and attacks against Muslim communities by anti-balaka groups. The growing divisive and incendiary rhetoric used by some national stakeholders stoked sectarian tensions, especially in the southeastern part of the country, where Muslims in general and the Fulani in particular were targeted by attacks, according to the UN Secretary-General's report in October. The attacks were conducted on ethnic and religious grounds by increasingly fragmented and disorganised armed groups vaguely associated with anti-balaka or former Séléka factions.

The UN said that the growing divisive and incendiary rhetoric used by some national stakeholders stoked sectarian tensions in the Central African Republic

Despite the signing of the agreement to disarm 13 of the 14 armed groups active in the country promoted by the Community of Sant'Egidio in Rome in June, **the political context continued to be characterised by an upsurge in violence.** There were clashes between former Séléka militias, between former Séléka militias and anti-balaka militias and between armed groups and the UN mission in the country. The armed groups continued competing to strengthen or expand their control over resources and territory. Criticism of the government grew louder and several opposition figures questioned the president and his government for their inability to ensure stability, according to the UN report. Persistent tensions between the executive and legislative branches of government aggravated the situation. Various national and regional peace and reconciliation initiatives failed to gain momentum over the course of the year and the government, led by President Faustin Archange Touadéra, had virtually no form of control over the situation outside the capital. Disarmament efforts only made limited headway and factions of the former Séléka and anti-balaka groups are still armed and controlling large parts of the country. MINUSCA was also criticised for failing to contain the armed groups and for not forcibly disarming them and some even called for rearming the unreformed Central African Armed Forces (FACA). Twenty-five UN peacekeepers lost their lives during the year, 15 of them in combat, making it the third most dangerous currently active UN mission. In November, the mission was extended for another year and expanded with 900 soldiers, reaching a total of 13,000 UN peacekeepers and police officers. Humanitarian workers were also targeted by attacks (12 had been killed by late October), which seriously shrank the humanitarian presence on the ground; in November, MSF evacuated its mission in the

southeastern city of Bangassou, leaving half a million people without aid in this diamond-mining area bordering the DRC. Meanwhile, the number of internally displaced persons rose by 200,000 in 2017, for a total of 600,000. The government demanded a lifting of the weapons embargo to rearm the FACA, claiming that it needed to protect civilians. In this regard, in mid-December Russia asked the UN Security Council to make an exception and allow the shipment of new weapons to the soldiers trained by the EU mission (EUTM CAR). The United States and France agreed on

the condition that the serial numbers are recorded for the purposes of traceability. UNICEF stated that the highly violent atmosphere in the country, ignored by the media, makes it one of the worst places to be a minor.

DRC (east)	
Start:	1998
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Rwanda, MONUSCO
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The current conflict has its origins in the coup d'état carried out by Laurent Desiré Kabila in 1996 against Mobutu Sese Seko, which culminated with him handing over power in 1997. Later, in 1998, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, together with various armed groups, tried to overthrow Kabila, who received the support of Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan and Zimbabwe, in a war that has caused around five million fatalities. The control and exploitation of the natural resources has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict and to the presence of foreign armed forces. The signing of a ceasefire in 1999, and of several peace agreements between 2002 and 2003, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops, the setting up of a transitional government and later an elected government, in 2006. However, did not mean the end of violence in this country, due to the role played by Rwanda and the presence of factions of non-demobilised groups and of the FDLR, responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The breach of the 2009 peace accords led to the 2012 desertion of soldiers of the former armed group CNDP, forming part of the Congolese army, who organised a new rebellion, known as the M23, supported by Rwanda. In December 2013 the said rebellion was defeated. In spite of this, the climate of instability and violence persists.

The situation in the DRC was characterised by a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation and the persistence of the grave political and social crisis as a result of the end of President Joseph Kabila's term of office in December 2016, which gave rise to a

highly tense atmosphere across the country.¹⁹ Violence remained active in different hotspots, such as in the northeastern provinces of Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé, which was linked to the activities of the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA;²⁰ in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika in the eastern part of the country linked to the armed activities of the different Mai-Mai militias, the FDLR and its splinter groups and in the northern part of North Kivu province due to the armed conflict involving the group of Ugandan origin ADF. Finally, the situation deteriorated seriously in Kasai (south-central DRC), where the new conflict caused the displaced population to double, **reaching 4.1 million across the DRC and making it the African country with the highest number of displaced persons.** Over 622,000 Congolese are refugees in neighbouring countries, where 100,000 fled this year. The country also hosted more than half a million refugees from neighbouring Burundi, CAR, Rwanda and South Sudan. Around 7.7 million people suffered from severe food insecurity, a 30% increase compared to a year ago. Approximately 13.1 million people (mostly women and children) will need protection and humanitarian assistance in 2018, a 50% increase compared to 2017.

The provinces of North and South Kivu continued to be the stronghold of dozens of armed groups and Mai-Mai militias, which carried out periodic attacks and acts of looting and extortion against MONUSCO and the FARDC. Human Rights Watch and the Congo Research Group created the Kivu Security Tracker to monitor the violence in North and South Kivu. According to the website, between June and November 2017, at least 526 civilians were killed in North and South Kivu, at least 1,087 people were abducted and there were at least seven incidents of gang rape. In October, the UN raised the emergency situation of the country to level 3, a category only given to three other countries: Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Regarding the exploitation of natural resources, reports continued to be documented related to the smuggling of tin, tantalum and tungsten, violations in the tracking system for those minerals and violations of the arms embargo, with weapons diverted by the FARDC to armed groups coming from Burundi. Infringements on human rights and international humanitarian law remained widespread. The Mai-Mai militias and other groups, like the Nyatura group, **increased their armed activity and expanded the areas under their control after the FARDC sent units stationed in North and South Kivu towards Kasai to deal with the Kamwina Nsapu rebellion.** Despite this situation, the UN announced that it was closing several bases in North Kivu during the year due to cutbacks in peacekeeping activities. In Ituri province, the FRPI continued to pose the greatest threat to the

civilian population and was responsible for many of the human rights abuses documented in the area. In 2016, the FDLR were weakened by the Sukola II operations led by the FARDC and the CNRD splinter group²¹ and continued to shrink due to defections and an almost total lack of new recruits. However, the armed group maintained alliances with Congolese armed groups and generated income through the sale of charcoal and wood produced mainly within Virunga National Park, according to the report of the Group of Experts on the DRC.²² There were less clashes between the CNRD and the FDLR, although the FDLR were involved in several incidents with local armed groups. The FDLR are mainly located in the tribal area of Bwito (Rutshuru territory, the Petit Nord) and are estimated to have between 400 and 600 fighters. The CNRD also continued to weaken under the constant desertions and problems in recruiting new combatants. It had 300 members. In South Kivu province, the resurgence of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba militia and its temporary control of FARDC positions near the gold-mining city of Misisi in late June forcibly displaced 80,000 people. The FARDC managed to repel the armed group with MONUSCO's support. However, Mai-Mai Yakutumba consolidated its position and control over an important stretch of the coast of Lake Tanganyika, engaging in piracy and accelerated smuggling operations that did much to strengthen it. The conflict between Luba and Twa militias intensified around Kalemie (Tanganyika province) during the year, claiming dozens of lives.

DRC (east - ADF)

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

Summary:

The Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) is an Islamist rebel group operating in the northwest of the Rwenzori massif (North Kivu, between DR Congo and Uganda) with between 1,200 and 1,500 Ugandan and Congolese militiamen recruited mainly in both countries as well as in Tanzania, Kenya and Burundi. It is the only group in the area considered a terrorist organisation and is included on the US list of terrorist groups. It was created in 1995 from the merger of other Ugandan armed groups taking refuge in DR Congo (Rwenzururu, ADF), later adopted the name ADF and follows the ideology of the former ADF, which originated in marginalised Islamist movements in Uganda linked to the

19. See the summary on the DRC in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) and in chapter 3 (Peace processes).

20. See the summary on Central Africa (LRA) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

21. See the summary on DRC (east) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) of Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2017.

22. Group of Experts on the DRC, *Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo established pursuant to Resolution 1533 (2004) of the Security Council*, Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2017/1091, 22 December 2017.

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.

The armed conflict continued in the area known as Grand Nord (northern North Kivu province), in the eastern part of the country, involving the armed group of Ugandan origin ADF. **The ADF continued to operate in Beni territory (Grand Nord). Although less civilians were killed, more civilians were abducted** as it intensified its insurgent actions against the FARDC and MONUSCO. In December, **Uganda conducted a major military operation on Congolese soil against the ADF.** Throughout 2017, various UN reports indicated that the ADF continued to practice forced recruitment in the DRC, Uganda and Rwanda, using false promises to lure poor young Ugandans to the eastern region of the DRC, where they were forced to join the armed group. The local population, civil society and the political opposition remained dissatisfied with the government and MONUSCO due to the authorities' inability to control the situation.

The UN may have determined a change in the ADF's modus operandi, from avoiding contact with the FARDC to launching direct attacks on their troops. This change could be related to common interests between some ADF commanders and Mai-Mai groups, which have recently focused their attacks on the FARDC and symbols of the state. MONUSCO continued to be targeted by the ADF. In December, **the deadliest attack by an armed group against UN peacekeeping personnel in the country took place in Semliki (North Kivu), killing 15 Tanzanian soldiers and wounding 44.** The attack was blamed on the ADF. On 22 December, Uganda reported that after consulting with the DRC authorities, its military, the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), had conducted a "surgical attack" on ADF camps in Beni territory. The UPDF attack was launched from Ugandan territory in the border area. On 27 December, the spokesman for the Ugandan Ministry of Defence announced that the UPDF's attacks on 22 December had been directed against eight ADF camps, killing around 100 members of the ADF and wounding several others.

RDC (Kasai)	
Start:	2017
Type:	Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	DRC, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The situation deteriorated severely in the Kasai region in the heart of the country. Clashes between the Kamwina Nsapu militia and the Congolese government and between ethnic militias and groups continued throughout the year and spread to all five provinces that make up Grand Kasai.

The militias act independently and lack clear leadership. Although at first the Kamwina Nsapu militia had focused its attacks against the state security forces and civil servants, new militias gradually emerged and expanded the attacks to target other ethnic groups in the region accused of sympathising with Joseph Kabila's regime. Reprisals were also taken against civilians accused of supporting the insurgent groups. Throughout the year, the UN identified at least 80 mass graves and blasted the serious abuses that are being committed in the area, partially by the security forces, which are seemingly acting indiscriminately against the civilian population. The representative of the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights in the DRC, Jose María Aranaz, said that the country should identify the police and other security forces involved in the massacres in the Kasai region. Consisting of members of the Tchokwe community, the Bana Mura militia is receiving support from the FARDC and the police to combat the Luba militias. Bana Mura has killed Luba and Lulua civilians accused of supporting Kamwina Nsapu or any of the militias and independent groups fighting against the FARDC, with the support of the security forces and even fighting alongside them. Bana Mura is accused of atrocities and serious human

rights violations against women and children. The UN reported that 251 extrajudicial killings had been committed by Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu and the FARDC since the conflict began in August 2016. **In June, the Catholic Church placed the death toll since the beginning of the conflict at 3,383** and denounced that at least 20 villages had been burned and destroyed, half of them by the FARDC. The UN's figures for the first six months of 2017 put the death toll at 428. Some of the most notable events included the killing and beheading of at least 40 police officers on 24 March. MSF warned that the Kasai region had turned into one of the main humanitarian crises in the world. As a result of the violence, 1.4 million people have been forcibly displaced from the five provinces making up the Grand Kasai region since August 2016, including 850,000 minors. There are a total of 4.1 million displaced persons across the DRC, making it the country with the highest number of displaced persons in Africa.

Internal divisions in both the government and insurgent blocs aggravated the conflict in South Sudan

Four years after the conflict began, the situation in the country remained extremely grave among the different players on the South Sudanese stage. **The dire humanitarian situation persisted, along with systematic violations of human rights (arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, pressure on political opposition figures) and a prevailing climate of insecurity.** With regard to security, clashes between the government and the opposition were ongoing in many parts of the country, including the regions of Equatoria and Upper Nile. An increase in violence is feared due to the coming dry season (November-April) and better mobility, which traditionally translates into rising levels of violence. During the rainy season, which lasts from May to October, the conflict lost intensity. According to OCHA, 1.86 million people are internally displaced and there are 2.1 million refugees from neighbouring countries. These numbers continue to climb. Approximately 4.8 million people face a serious situation of food insecurity. By early 2018 this figure is predicted to rise to 5.1 million, of which 1.1 million will be children, according to Save the Children.

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

Summary:

The peace agreement reached in 2005, which put an end to the Sudanese conflict, recognised the right to self-determination of the south through a referendum. However, the end of the war with the North and the later independence for South Sudan in 2011 did not manage to offer stability to the southern region. The disputes for the control of the territory, livestock and political power increased between the multiple communities that inhabit South Sudan, increasing the number, the gravity and the intensity of the confrontations between them. The situation became even worse after the general elections in April 2010, when several military officials who had presented their candidature or had supported political opponents to the incumbent party, the SPLM, did not win the elections. These military officers refused to recognise the results of the elections and decided to take up arms to vindicate their access to the institutions, condemn the Dinka dominance over the institutions and the under representation of other communities within them while branding the South Sudan government as corrupt. Juba's offerings of amnesty did not manage to put an end to insurgence groups, accused of receiving funding and logistical support from Sudan. In parallel, there was an escalation of violence in late 2013 between supporters of the government of Salva Kiir and those of former Vice President Riek Machar, who has the support of some of these disaffected soldiers and militias.

Despite declaring a unilateral ceasefire in May, the government launched military operations against positions of the SPLA-IO and regained control over certain areas that the opposition group had held. Visible rifts within pro-government and insurgent factions risk further undermining the security situation, according to the ACLED conflict analysis project. First, discontent among the security services because the government did not pay their salaries amidst economic difficulties and food shortages has led to increasing levels of crime. In Juba, armed robberies were reported regularly in the final months of the year, as well as the looting and burning of civilian property in agricultural areas. Second, growing internal tensions in the Dinka community are dividing the government's base of support. Violence between the Dinka communities has continued in Aweil, in northern Bahr el Ghazal, and in Warrap (President Kiir's home state) since Kiir declared a state of emergency in both states in July. The government's confinement of former Army General Paul Malong to Juba aggravated tensions between his community of origin in Aweil and the country's military (SPLA), prompting desertions. Third, the SPLA-IO was limited by increased competition with new rebel groups. New groups continued to form, underscoring the incoherence within the insurgent movement. Even though the warring factions in South Sudan signed a ceasefire agreement in December 2017, the fighting did not end and would probably get worse during the dry season. At the beginning of the year, the US initiative to possibly establish a weapons embargo returned to the table. The regional organisation IGAD continued to carry out initiatives to promote dialogue between the parties throughout the year. At the end of the year, the IGAD held consultations ahead of preparing to hold the High-Level Revitalization Forum in the opening months of 2018.

Sudan (Darfur)	
Start:	2003
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary units, Janjaweed, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, it includes JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-M), other groups, UNAMID
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

Summary:

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

There was less violence linked to the armed conflict, though clashes still continued to take place. In January, the government extended the ceasefire in Darfur (as well as in South Kordofan and Blue Nile) for six months, then extended it again in July for four months and extended it a third time in October until 31 December. At different times of the year the government considered the conflict in Darfur over, in contrast with the violence, including attacks against civilians, clashes between insurgents and security forces and fighting among insurgents, and the difficulties of the peace process. Eight people lost their lives and around 60 were wounded by uniformed men in Jebel Marra in January. The SLA-MM insurgency blamed pro-government forces. Clashes between the RSF and the armed group SLM-AW in April claimed around 20 lives, also in Jebel Marra. Violence rose in May, with new clashes between the Sudanese Army and the RSF and the SLM-MM and SLM-TC rebels that displaced thousands. Regarding the outbreak of violence, the government and the RSF accused the insurgency of trying to take Jebel Marra again, opening two fronts, with combatants that had returned from Libya and South Sudan. Fighting also took place in North Darfur in November between the RSF and combatants loyal to Musa Hilal, the former advisor to Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, leaving around a dozen fatalities. This incident had been preceded by tensions and clashes in previous

months in connection with implementation of the weapons collection campaign announced in July. In November, the government demanded that all armed groups in Darfur surrender their weapons. Clashes were also reported between security forces and the displaced population in Kalma camp in North Darfur in September, in protest of al-Bashir's visit, killing three and wounding around 30.

Meanwhile, in June the UN Security Council approved a 30% cut in the troops and police officers of the UNAMID mission and the reconfiguration of its operations amidst alerts from human rights organisations about the risks to the security of the civilian population in light of the regime's continuing abuses. As part of the withdrawal, in October UNAMID reported that it was closing 11 operational bases in Darfur. According to the approved plan, the mission will shrink to 11,395 soldiers and 2,888 police officers by January 2018. After evaluating the conditions in Darfur, it will be cut further to 8,735 soldiers and 2,500 police officers by June 2018. Meanwhile, the United States approved the final lifting of the trade embargo and other sanctions from Sudan, some of which had been in place for 20 years. This move came with claims of progress in the fight against terrorism and in human rights, though it was criticised by human rights organisations.

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

Summary:

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

Violence dipped in the armed conflict between the Sudanese government and rebels in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Like in Darfur, the government extended the ceasefire during the year, renewing it in January, July and October until December. Even so, fighting was reported at different times of the year, including clashes between

insurgent factions. Battles broke out between the Sudanese Army and the SPLM-N after the death of seven herders near the capital of South Kordofan, Kadugli, on 10 February. The SPLM-N blamed the attack on the government and pro-government militias and claimed they were trying to drag local tribes into the conflict, whereas the Sudanese Army accused the group of initiating hostilities. Despite the tensions, in early March the armed group released 125 prisoners, most of them soldiers held in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, via mediation by Uganda and with the support of the ICRC. This gesture was accompanied days later by the government's release of 259 rebels of various origins. Nevertheless, there were clashes and accusations of ceasefire violations between the Sudanese Army and the SPLM-N at other times of the year, like in late June and September.

Meanwhile, **tensions grew within the SPLM-N**. The group's deputy chairman, Abdel-Aziz al-Hilu, resigned in March due to disagreements with top leader Malik Agar, and with the group's negotiating position, which is opposed to the issue of self-determination for the Nuba Mountains, whereas al-Hilu defended it. In June, the Nuba Mountains Liberation Council, the political body of the SPLM-N, relieved Agar and appointed al-Hilu its new leader and commanding general. It also relieved the secretary general and top negotiator, Yasir Arman, and blocked both men from entering areas under its control. The political body justified these moves by referring to Agar and Arman's refusal to include the issue of self-determination for the Nuba Mountains in negotiations with the government. The tension led to clashes between factions loyal to Agar and al-Hilu in late July in the state of Blue Nile, which prompted combatants following Agar to move to the state of Upper Nile and South Sudan. New clashes took place in Blue Nile in August, with dozens of combatants killed. The general conference held by the SPLM-N in October confirmed al-Hilu as the new leader and repeated the demand for self-determination, whilst the door closed to rapprochement with the faction led by Agar. At the end of the year, the Sudanese president extended the state of emergency to the state of North Kordofan and Kasala, joining the existing measure in South Kordofan and Blue Nile and the five states of Darfur.

Horn of Africa

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

23. Human Rights Watch, *Ethiopia: No Justice in Somali Region Killings*, 5 April 2017.

24. In 2008, the Liyu Police became a powerful counterinsurgency group led by the regional security chief, Abdi Mohammed Omar, also known as Abdi Illey, who became president of the Somali Regional State in 2010, although the Liyu Police remained under his command. HRW, *Ibid.*

25. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project's, *Ethiopia*, November ACLED-Africa Conflict Trends Report, November 2017.

Summary:

Ethiopia has been the object of movements of a secessionist nature or of resistance against the central authority since the 1970s. The ONLF emerged in 1984 and operates in the Ethiopian region of Ogaden, in the south east of the country, demanding a greater level of autonomy for the Somali community that lives in this region. On various occasions, the ONLF has carried out rebellious activities beyond Ogaden, in collaboration with the OLF, which has been demanding greater autonomy from the government for the region of Oromia since 1973. The Somali government has supported the ONLF against Ethiopia, which it confronted for control over the region between 1977 and 1978, a war in which Ethiopia defeated Somalia. The end of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2000, led to the increase of the government operations to put an end to the rebel forces in Ogaden. Since the elections that were held in 2005, confrontations between the Ethiopian Armed Forces and the ONLF increased, especially in 2007 when the ONLF attacked Chinese oil exploration facilities, killing 74 people, though the intensity of the conflict has ebbed in recent years.

The escalation of insecurity and government repression that hit the country in 2016 persisted throughout 2017. This atmosphere of violence further strained the situation suffered by different regions of Ethiopia, especially in the Ogaden region (officially known as the Somali Regional State), a scene of conflict since the 1980s. Despite the lifting of the state of emergency across the country in August, the situation did not improve. The Liyu Police ("Special Police"), a paramilitary government militia involved in counterinsurgency tasks in the region, continued abusing and committing serious human rights violations against the civilian population. There are no figures for how many insurgents, members of state security forces or civilians have died due to the government's opacity and information blackout regarding media access to the area, so there are no official sources available that could be compared with reports linked to the insurgency or to the pro-independence movement. Exceptionally, a HRW report published in April 2017 denounced the extrajudicial killing of 21 people and the looting and burning of shops and homes in the village of Jaamac Dubad in June 2016.²³ The Liyu Police²⁴ was created to take action against opposition groups in the Ogaden region, where its activity is focused, though in recent years it has also supported actions of the African Union mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in the border area between both countries. It has especially expanded its operations in the Oromia region since December 2016, where it has been accused of committing serious human rights violations against border area communities. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED),²⁵ 64 attacks and clashes took place between

militias from the Oromia region and the Liyu Police from January to November 2017 in which 434 people lost their lives. In late August, the Somali authorities handed over Abdikarim Sheikh Muse to the Ethiopian government. A member of the executive committee of the armed group ONLF, Abdikarin Sheikh Muse lived in Mogadishu and had been arrested in Galkayo on 23 August, according to Reuters.

Somalia	
Start:	1988
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, US, 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.

In 2017, Somalia continued to suffer one of the most serious conflicts in all of Africa in recent years. The Somali Islamist armed group al-Shabaab stood as the most lethal in 2016, above the Nigerian group Boko Haram,²⁶ soaring from 3,046 fatalities in 2015 to 4,281 in 2016. This figure could be even higher in 2017, since 3,287 people were killed from January to September 2017, according to ACLED, not including

a serious attack in October. Indeed, 14 October saw **the bloodiest attack in the history of the country, when 512 people lost their lives, 300 were injured and 70 remained missing according to figures compiled in December**, so they could also have died in the attack, according to official sources. A large truck loaded with 350 kg of explosive material was detonated in the area known as PK5, near the Safari Hotel, in one of the busiest streets in Mogadishu. Though it shocked the country and overwhelmed the health services for several weeks, nobody claimed responsibility for the attack. The authorities blamed al-Shabaab, however. Given the magnitude of the events, analysts said that the organisation may not want to undermine its popular support by being linked to such a heavy loss of civilian lives. In any case, the attack was committed amidst the escalation of US interventions in the country and only two days after the head of AFRICOM visited the Somali president and may have been intended to increase US involvement in Somalia, which intensified during the Obama administration and has risen even more since Donald Trump's rise to power. Thousands of Somalis demonstrated in the streets of the city to condemn the events.

The centre and south of the country were seriously affected by continuous attacks by al-Shabaab, the military operations of the Somali Armed Forces supported or led by AMISOM and US counterinsurgency activity and air strikes. Action by al-Shabaab gradually expanded northwards, a prominent trend in recent years along with the rise in insurgent actions carried out by small ISIS groups in Somalia and clan-based factionalism. ACLED indicated that actions by clan militias against civilians, like the militias of the Habar Gedir, Jejele and Darood-Marehan clans and sub-clans, was a growing factor of violence in 2017. According to various analysts, the climate of optimism following the election of Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmajo" Mohamed to the presidency in February was overshadowed by the persisting violence, the resilience of al-Shabaab, the chronic weakness of government security forces and, ultimately, the failures in governance underpinning the instability gripping the country, according to the International Crisis Group. This situation was joined by recent tensions between Mogadishu and the regional authorities belonging to the Somali federation, exacerbated by the crisis between Saudi Arabia and its allies against Qatar, including Qatar's main international ally, Turkey, which is one of the main donors to Somalia. Meanwhile, AMISOM's announced withdrawal from the country, planned for 2020, began in December 2017 when 1,000 soldiers were removed from the 22,000-man mission. This gave rise to an air of concern given the security challenges still facing the country (including reform of the security sector) and possible backsliding in the progress made against al-Shabaab due to making a hasty withdrawal.

26. See the controversy raised over the issue following the report of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Map of Africa's Militant Islamist Groups*, 26 April 2017; *Al-Shabab and Boko Haram: Patterns of Violence*, ACLED, 2017; and Solomon, Salem and Frechette, Casey, "No, al-Shabab is not deadlier than Boko Haram. Here are better numbers", *The Washington Post*, 21 July 2017.

Meanwhile, there was an unprecedented increase in the US presence and US air strikes in the country. In May, a US special forces soldier was killed and two others were wounded, the first American combat death in the country since 1993. US President Donald Trump authorised new prerogatives to AFRICOM in the country in April, which led to 34 air operations during 2017, most of them in the second half of the year and more than twice as many as those conducted in 2016 (14) and triple those in 2015 (11). There were eight air strikes in November alone. The US air strikes targeted al-Shabaab and ISIS. However, over 50 civilians have been killed or wounded in five strikes since July, including children. At least 500 members of the US Department of Defense are in the country (including civilians, special forces and contractors), over twice the 200 people who were there in March 2017, according to AFRICOM. The United States estimates that there are between 3,000 and 6,000 al-Shabaab fighters in Somalia and less than 250 members of ISIS. In addition to the deaths of various al-Shabaab commanders in military operations, on 13 August the former deputy leader and spokesman for al-Shabaab, Mukhtar Robow Ali, also known as Abu Mansur, defected in Bakool after surviving another attempt by al-Shabaab to kill or capture him. Abu Mansur criticised al-Shabaab for not being of service to the population, apologised for what he had done and asked the group's members to follow in his footsteps. Abu Mansur had been one of the group's founders since its inception and fled in 2013 after falling out with the new leadership under Ahmed Godane. Since then, al-Shabaab had made many attempts to capture and kill him to prevent him from possibly revealing sensitive information about the group.

The bloodiest attack in Somalia's history took place on 14 October, killing 512 people and injuring 300, with 70 still missing in December

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

The armed conflict in Algeria maintained a trend similar to that of 2016 and previous years, with low-intensity acts of violence that according to official data left around 100 dead. According to figures published by the Algerian Ministry of Defence, **in 2017 the Algerian Army killed 91-suspected militants and recovered the bodies of six more, in addition to arresting 40, including nine women.** Another 200 people were also arrested on charges of forming part of armed group support networks, over 600 weapons were confiscated, along with ammunition and propaganda products, and explosive material was destroyed. Media sources also reported actions by armed militants against the Algerian security forces that may have resulted in casualties. These included an attack by AQIM fighters that killed three soldiers in the northern province of Ain Defla in May and the bomb attacks claimed by AQIM that killed four soldiers in the northeastern cities of Tebessa and Batna in June and July. The ISIS branch in Algeria also claimed responsibility for some attacks against police officers and police stations that wounded some people. Some attacks were claimed by both AQIM and ISIS. The leader of the ISIS branch's Ghoraba squadron was reportedly killed during a military operation in Constantine province in March 2017 and the authorities dismantled a cell headed by a former AQIM leader that was allegedly planning attacks in Algiers.

AQIM remained the most important armed group in the North African country. Throughout 2017, various analysts called attention to how it had evolved 10 years after it became affiliated with al-Qaeda. Though the group maintains its operations in Algeria, strategic circumstances, including the military operations that have limited its activities, have weakened it in the country and motivated a growing focus towards the south and the Sahel in a process of "Africanisation". Therefore, AQIM and its branches' most significant actions during the year took place beyond Algeria's borders and especially in Mali.²⁷ In April, in an interview

Maghreb – North Africa

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

Summary:

The armed conflict has pitted the security forces against various Islamist groups since the beginning of the 1990s following the rise of the Islamist movement in Algeria due to the population's discontent, the economic crisis and the stifling of political participation. The conflict began when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was made illegal in 1992

27. See the summary on Mali (north) in this chapter.

published by AQAP (al-Qaeda's branch in Yemen), **AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel acknowledged the difficulties that the group is facing in Algeria due to a lack of support, in contrast with what he describes as a "jihadist awakening" in Libya, Tunisia and parts of the Sahel.** According to security sources, in total there are between 800 and 1,000 active militants in Algeria, mainly in mountainous and border areas, and the armed groups operating in the country are facing growing problems in recruiting new combatants. According to security sources, this may have led these organisations to ask cells in Tunisia and Libya for reinforcements. According to media reports, cells that had previously maintained their bases in the mountains of Kabylia and Jijel moved to the southeast, near the Tunisian border.

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, armed factions linked to Operation Dignity (Libyan National Army, LNA), armed groups linked to Operation Dawn, militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades, ISIS, AQIM, among other armed groups; USA, France, UK, Egypt, UAE, and other countries
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The situation in Libya continued to deteriorate throughout the course of 2017 as a result of the **persistent political crisis, institutional fragmentation and the activity of countless armed groups of different**

kinds that led to multiple centres of violence across the country. Despite the initiatives of the UN and regional and international stakeholders to intervene in the progress of the political process in the North African country, including the EU, the AU and neighbouring and European countries, the year was beset by persistent disagreements and difficulties in implementing the Skhirat agreement signed in December 2015. Thus, the two-headed seat of power continued with a *de facto* government in the eastern part of the country, based in al-Bayda, and another in Tripoli, linked to the Presidential Council and headed by Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj. This latter one, created according to the provisions of the Skhirat agreement, enjoys very fragile international recognition and controls a limited share of government military forces. As in the previous year, groups connected to Khalifa Ghweil and the self-styled National Salvation Government (NSG), which operated in Tripoli in the past, returned to defying Sarraj's government in the Libyan capital, creating a parallel National Guard and trying to seize control of parts of the city. The internal differences were also reflected in the House of Representatives, where some questioned the UN-sponsored dialogue. Amidst the convulsive political atmosphere, the various dynamics of the conflict led to armed clashes across the country and especially in areas like Benghazi, Derna, Misrata, Sirte, Tripoli, the Gulf of Sirte petrol zone and the south-central districts of Sabha and al-Jufrah. **The fighting, explosive attacks and bombardments killed hundreds of people in 2017,** although the total number of the hostilities' victims was difficult to ascertain.

The most significant episodes of violence included clashes between General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) and the armed coalition Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB) over petrol facilities in Sidra and Ras Lanuf that led to over 40 deaths in March; fighting between Serraj's government forces and the NSG opposition that claimed more than 50 lives in Tripoli in May; an attack by the group Third Force (from Misrata) and the BDB against the southern Brak al-Shati air base that killed between 80 and 130 members of the LNA, as well as civilians, also in May; hostilities in the south central areas of Sabha and Jufrah, including LNA air strikes against rival groups that left dozens dead in the middle of the year; the LNA's continuous fighting with armed groups in the eastern city of Benghazi, including the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries, which ended up getting expelled from the city in June and the LNA's siege of the eastern city Derna as part of its struggle against Islamist militias, which led to a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the second half of the year. After being expelled from its stronghold in Sirte in 2016, the armed group ISIS also remained active in Libya in the form of small cells in different parts of the country. The organisation launched several attacks during the year, mainly against the forces of Operation al-Bunyan al-Marsous (BAM). Moreover, **other countries continued to intervene in Libya. The United States launched attacks against ISIS positions,**

one of which caused the deaths of around 90 of the group's members south of Sirte in January and another 17 in September. Egyptian air strikes supported actions by the LNA in south central Libya and Cairo launched an offensive in Derna in May in the wake of an attack against Coptic Christians for which ISIS claimed responsibility.²⁸ In general, regarding the battlefronts, the LNA consolidated its position in Benghazi and advanced westward and toward the centre of the country. Haftar continued to promote himself as a key figure in the future of Libya. The general held some meetings with Serraj, who proposed a road map to resolve the crisis in July. Following a meeting in Paris, both signed a declaration committing to a ceasefire and pledging to work to restore security in the country and to hold presidential and parliamentary elections. Yet shortly thereafter, **Haftar cast doubt on whether the agreement could be implemented and at year's end he publicly rejected the political agreement of 2015 and called the institutions stemming from it obsolete, including Sarraj's government.** In this context, the UN Security Council defended the agreement as valid and the new special envoy to Libya, Ghassan Salamé (appointed in July to replace Martin Kobler), continued to promote a plan to solve the crisis that included reformulating some aspects of the Skhirat agreement.

In addition to this complex political and security situation, **the human rights scene in Libya remained critical.** NGOs and successive reports by the UN mission in the country (UNSMIL) denounced the repeated violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated by many Libyan armed actors, including summary execution, kidnapping, torture, the killing of civilians, forced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and attacks on healthcare facilities. **An issue of special concern was the vulnerability of the migrant and refugee population in Libya, which was subjected to extreme conditions:** arbitrary arrest in crowded centres run by the official Libyan Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), by armed groups or human trafficking networks; insufficient access to food, water and sanitary facilities; torture, forced labour and sexual exploitation. In April, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported the existence of slave markets in Libya. These allegations were made alongside the adoption of a series of measures to curb migrant and refugee population flows towards Europe based on Libyan authorities' agreements with the European Union and Italy that led to a 67% reduction in the arrival of people to the Italian coasts between July and November, as compared to the same period in 2016. **The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described the EU's policies of assisting the Libyan Coast**

The situation of the migrant and refugee population in Libya caused special concern in 2017, particularly after IOM reported the existence of slave markets in the country

Guard to intercept and return immigrants in the Mediterranean as "inhumane". Amnesty International accused European governments of being complicit in the abuse, warned of collusion between members of the Libyan Coast Guard and human trafficking networks and stated that around 20,000 people remained in detention in centres managed by the DCIM, where extortion and torture are commonplace.²⁹

West Africa

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Boko Haram (BH), MNJTF (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Summary:	
The Islamist sect Boko Haram demands the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria and considers that Nigeria's public institutions are "westernised" and, therefore, decadent. The group forms part of the fundamentalist branch initiated by other groups in Nigeria following independence in 1960 and which, invariably, triggered outbreaks of violence of varying intensity. Despite the heavy repression to which its followers have been subjected—in 2009, at least 800 of its members died in confrontations with the army and the police in Bauchi State—the armed group remains active. The scope of its attacks has widened, aggravating insecurity in the country as the government proves incapable of offering an effective response to put an end to the violence. International human rights organizations have warned of the crimes committed by the group, but also on government abuses in its campaign against the organization.	

The regional strategy of military pressure on Boko Haram **pursued by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon through implementation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) since mid-2016 reduced its capacity and impact in the region and in late 2016 the insurgent group was even ousted** from much of its base of operations in Sambisa Forest. After this defeat, government forces concentrated their efforts on destroying the group's remaining strongholds in the nearby Lake Chad region, which was accompanied by the release of hundreds of hostages and the surrender or arrest of dozens of fighters. According to data reported by the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST)³⁰, by December **954 people had died in Nigeria as a result of the conflict**

28. See the summary on Egypt in this chapter.

29. Amnesty International, *Libya: European governments complicit in horrific abuse of refugees and migrants*, 12 December 2017.

30. Council on Foreign Relations, *The Nigeria Security Tracker*, 20 January 2018.

with Boko Haram, in addition to 874 people killed in direct clashes between Boko Haram and the security forces, for a total of 1,828 deaths between January and December 2017. This is 12% higher than the 1,605 deaths that took place in 2016, according to figures of the NST, but it remains much lower than in 2015, when 8,410 people lost their lives. The uptick in 2017 contradicts the Nigerian government's claims that Boko Haram had virtually unravelled, according to an Amnesty International publication in September 2017. The figures vary according to the organisation. For example, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies indicates that the violence springing from Boko Haram's activities caused around 3,499 deaths in 2016, much less than the 11,519 deaths the year before.³¹ It is estimated that over 20,000 people have died across the region since the conflict began in 2009 and 2.6 million people have been displaced as a consequence of the violence.

The group continued carrying out small-scale suicide attacks predominantly against civilian targets in rural areas and camps for displaced persons, mainly in Borno State in Nigeria and in Cameroon's Far North Region. Around 2,000 people are estimated to have died in the Far North Region since the conflict began and another 170,000 have been displaced as a result of the violence. Military offensives in September and October 2017 were considerable and ostensibly succeeded in weakening the insurgent group. The Nigerian Armed Forces stepped up their attacks and air strikes in the northeast throughout the year. In light of the progress made in the fight against Boko Haram, the United States and Russia decided to sell various fighter planes to support the offensive. The security forces also executed or captured several high-profile targets, like Mallama Fitdasi, the wife of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, who was targeted in an air strike in the area of the local government of Konduga in October; and Idris Ibrahim Babawo, one of Shekau's top lieutenants, who was arrested in Ondo State in late September. According to ACLED, various intelligence reports indicated that a large number of Boko Haram combatants fled Adamawa State in Nigeria to avoid the thick presence of security forces in Borno, which prompted the deployment of security forces by the governor of Adamawa in Madagali. Boko Haram's violence in Nigeria fell in general from early 2017. As a result of the weakening of the group, its attacks have remained at a low level against civilian and military targets. **In 2017 there was a radical change in the use of minors to carry out these attacks, quadrupling their frequency compared to 2016, according to UNICEF.** The government announced that Boko Haram's commander, Shekau, would be captured soon, citing an air strike in late August that killed five of his top lieutenants. Analyses by ACLED indicated that Boko Haram's actions in the short

UNICEF said that there was a radical change in Boko Haram's use of minors to carry out attacks in 2017, quadrupling their frequency compared to 2016

term would probably be determined by its financial capacity and said that its current funds are limited, so kidnappings in exchange for ransom may become more frequent again during 2018.³²

Mali (north)	
Start:	2012
Type:	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The situation in Mali deteriorated in comparison with the previous year, with the dynamics of violence mainly affecting the north and centre of the country intensifying and difficulties in implementing the peace agreement signed in 2015. Informal body counts based on media reports indicate that at least 350 people died due to the conflict during 2017. Throughout the period, attacks continued against local security forces, members of the UN mission in the country (MINUSMA), soldiers participating in France's Operation

31. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Map of Africa's Militant Islamist Groups*, 26 April 2017.

32. ACLED, *Nigeria – September 2017 Update*, September 2017.

Barkhane, armed groups that signed the peace agreement and civilians and took the form of suicide attacks, bomb attacks and shootings. Groups that did not sign the peace agreement claimed responsibility for many of these acts of violence (though some were not claimed), especially jihadist organisations linked to al-Qaeda. Thus, for example, al-Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for an attack against a camp of military forces and armed groups in Gao that killed 61 people in January. The forces in Gao had been preparing for joint patrols as part of efforts to implement the peace process. In March, **the leaders of al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine and the AQIM branch in Mali announced that their forces were uniting and creating a new organisation called the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), which pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda. Thereafter, GSIM claimed responsibility for many attacks**, including an assault on Malian soldiers that killed 11 people in March in the Mopti region; an attack on a tourist complex in Bamako in June in which five people lost their lives, including four of the assailants; and an attack in the Ménaka region in November against a MINUSMA-Malian Army joint patrol that caused four fatalities. According to the United Nations, around 150 Malian soldiers lost their lives in different acts of violence in 2017. MINUSMA continued to be one of the most dangerous UN missions in the world, with 42 members losing their lives during the year. Jihadist forces also suffered casualties in the clashes and attacks, including an Operation Barkhane attack in October that caused the deaths of 15 GSIM combatants, 11 Malian soldiers and three guards who had been abducted by the group. **Episodes of inter-community violence also took place during the year**, including clashes between Fulani and Bambara groups that killed 21 people in the Ségou region in February and violence between members of the Dogon and Fulani communities in the Mopti region in June that claimed around 30 lives. GSIM was also involved in clashes with the Bambara community in Ségou that may have left dozens dead in March. A branch of ISIS operating in the area, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, was also exploiting intercommunity tensions in the border area between Niger and Mali.

At mid-year, there was also **a surge in violence between the groups that signed the peace agreement**, mainly between GATIA, which is part of the national pro-unity platform, and parts of the separatist CMA alliance in the Kidal region. The violence was preceded by problems in implementing aspects of the peace agreement, including delays and objections to the appointment of interim authorities, and only cooled off after the signing of ceasefires in August and

Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine and the AQIM branch in the Sahel joined forces to form the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), which claimed responsibility for various incidents in northern Mali

September and the signing of a new agreement for the Kidal region in October. The truce was upheld as the year ended and attention was focused on the regional elections, which were supposed to be held in December but were postponed until April 2018, and on proposals to reform the Constitution, including a controversial provision to strengthen the powers of the president. Bearing in mind that the interim period provided for in the peace agreement adopted in 2015 formally ended in June 2017, MINUSMA and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report on the period beginning in 2016. Their joint report documented 608 cases of human rights abuse,

including illegal detention, torture, extrajudicial killing, forced disappearance, the recruitment of minors and sexual violence in the regions of Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu and in the district of Bamako, with a total of 1,481 victims.³³

Implementation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force also made headway during the year. Conceived by France in 2014 and formalised in February 2017, the initiative brings together Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania to respond to regional security challenges. G5-Sahel launched its first operation

(“Hawbi”) in late October in the border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. According to reports, the joint military force will have about 5,000 troops and will be fully operational during the first quarter of 2018. Some analysts pointed out that this force emulates the MNJTF, which operates in the Lake Chad region against Boko Haram. There are many questions about the problems and challenges that G5 Sahel Joint Force will face, including its operational ability, the level of coordination among its members and other forces already active on the ground (MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the United States, which has an undetermined number of troops in the region). In addition, the regional force will face strategic aspects of a scenario characterised by the presence of around 20 armed groups, unlike the MNJT scenario where just one armed group is operational.³⁴

1.3.2. America

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

33. MINUSMA – Nations Unies Droits de l’Homme Haut Commissariat, *Human Rights and the Peace Process in Mali (January 2016 – June 2017)*, February 2018.

34. International Crisis Group, *Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force*, Africa Report no. 258, 12 December 2017.

Summary:

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

There was a de-escalation of violence in the armed conflict in a Colombia. Following the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC in 2016, its disarmament and demobilisation ended in a process verified by the UN that culminated with the withdrawal of weapons containers in August. No new clashes were reported between the FARC and the Colombian security forces, leading political, social and international actors to declare an end to the conflict between the FARC and the government. However, as some investigations indicated, the violence did not disappear completely and some risk factors remained.³⁵ For example, around 700 dissident guerrilla fighters remained active, though they were not linked to the new political structures created by the former FARC. Furthermore, violence and homicides increased in 70 municipalities following the withdrawal of the FARC, as they were occupied by the ELN or by armed paramilitary-type organisations. Violence related to the armed conflict with the ELN dropped over the course of the year as a result of the formal beginning of peace negotiations between the guerrillas and the government, and even reached a temporary bilateral ceasefire valid from 1 October 2017 to 9 January 2018, though it was not renewed in the early days of 2018. Despite the dialogue, different episodes of violence broke out during the year. Thus, a police officer lost his life in Bogota in an ELN attack in February, eight ELN members died in a security force operation in the Catatumbo region in April and clashes took place between the ELN and security forces that left dozens dead throughout the year. With the start of the ceasefire, this violence dwindled notably and the fighting stopped, although at least 26 people died in different incidents of violence during the period, according to the CERAC research centre. However, armed activity by different paramilitary groups, like the Clan del Golfo, continued throughout the year. Of special concern was the rise in killings of social leaders and peace advocates, which according to INDEPAZ rose from 117 in 2016 to 170 in 2017.

1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

South Asia

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

Summary:

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

The armed conflict in Afghanistan maintained high levels of intensity throughout the year, with many armed clashes, attacks and serious human rights violations across the country. UNAMA documented 10,453 civilian victims (3,438 dead and 7,015 wounded). Many attacks took place in Kabul throughout the year, killing hundreds, many of them civilians. In January, two explosions in the vicinity of the Afghan Parliament caused the deaths of at least 30 people in an attack for which the Taliban insurgency claimed responsibility. At last 20 people lost their lives in February during a suicide attack on the Supreme Court building in Kabul. There were at least three serious attacks in the capital in March. Two occurred on 1 March, killing 15 people and wounding 50. The first was a car bomb that exploded near a police station and the second occurred in the vicinity of an office belonging to the Afghan intelligence services, the National Directorate for Security. The Taliban claimed responsibility for both attacks. Days later, the Sardar

35. Valencia Agudelo, León, *Terminó la guerra, el postconflicto está en riesgo: a un año del acuerdo de paz*, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2017.

Daoud Khan Hospital in Kabul was targeted in an attack that killed 50 people. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, though some analysts said that the organisation was not capable enough to carry out an attack of this magnitude in Afghanistan. If ISIS were behind the attack, it would be the most complex one that it has ever conducted. **The most serious attack of the year and possibly since the US invasion in 2001 took place on 31 May, when 150 people were killed, presumably mostly civilians, and nearly 500 were wounded in an attack that took place near the German Embassy** on the road leading to the US Embassy and the general barracks of the UN and NATO, so it is unclear whether the assailants intended to attack the German Embassy or these other targets. Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban insurgency denied its involvement, although the intelligence services accused the Haqqani network of being behind it. Another extremely grave incident took place in Kabul in December, when a suicide attack against the Shia cultural centre Tebyan, which is also the headquarters of an Iranian news agency, caused the deaths of 50 people and wounded over 80. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban distanced themselves from it. Meanwhile, fighting intensified in different parts of the country. One of the most serious episodes took place in April, when 10 Taliban rebels attacked the Afghan military base Camp Shaheen, in Balkh province, killing 160 soldiers. The Taliban insurgency also demonstrated its military ability through its growing control over parts of the country. For example, in July the Taliban took over the district of Janikhel in Paktia province after several days of fierce fighting. The Taliban also gained control over the district of Kohistan, in Faryab province, though it was recovered two days later by Afghan security forces in an operation that claimed 20 Taliban lives, according to official reports. The third district captured by the Taliban in July was Taywara, in Ghor province.

The Afghan capital was the scene of many attacks during the year that killed hundreds of people, many of them civilians

Embassy on the road leading to the US Embassy and the general barracks of the UN and NATO, so it is unclear whether the assailants intended to attack the German Embassy or these other targets. Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban insurgency denied its involvement, although the intelligence services accused the Haqqani network of being behind it. Another extremely grave incident took place in Kabul in December, when a suicide attack against the Shia cultural centre Tebyan, which is also the headquarters of an Iranian news agency, caused the deaths of 50 people and wounded over 80. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban distanced themselves from it. Meanwhile, fighting intensified in different parts of the country. One of the most serious episodes took place in April, when 10 Taliban rebels attacked the Afghan military base Camp Shaheen, in Balkh province, killing 160 soldiers. The Taliban insurgency also demonstrated its military ability through its growing control over parts of the country. For example, in July the Taliban took over the district of Janikhel in Paktia province after several days of fierce fighting. The Taliban also gained control over the district of Kohistan, in Faryab province, though it was recovered two days later by Afghan security forces in an operation that claimed 20 Taliban lives, according to official reports. The third district captured by the Taliban in July was Taywara, in Ghor province.

In August, the US government acknowledged that it has 11,000 US soldiers deployed on the ground, a higher number than what it had previously publicly claimed, which was 8,400.³⁶ US Defense Secretary James Mattis announced an additional deployment of 3,000 troops, which would make for a total of 14,000 US soldiers in the country, not counting the civilian staff and contractors working alongside the US Armed Forces. This new deployment came as part of **the new strategy for the country announced by President Donald Trump, in which he pledged not to leave Afghanistan and revealed that the military operation would not focus on issues linked to the promotion of democracy and support for state building, but on using military means to combat terrorism.** Trump said that withdrawing the

troops would create a vacuum that would be filled by al-Qaeda and ISIS. He also said that the US would get tougher with Pakistan, which he accused of harbouring terrorist organisations on its soil. This allegation was met with widespread rejection in Pakistan.

The UN Secretary-General's evaluation report on UNAMA,³⁷ submitted to the General Assembly in August, recognises the deteriorating security situation in the country in recent years, during which the Taliban have increased their ability to control territory, whilst broad sectors of the insurgents refuse to consider the possibility of a negotiated solution to the armed conflict given their growing military power. The report also warns of the growing power of ISIS in the country. Despite its small number of insurgents, ISIS complicates the situation and fuels insecurity because it was responsible for several serious attacks during the year. Meanwhile, UNAMA denounced a rise in attacks on religious centres, especially Shia places of worship, which claimed dozens of civilian lives.³⁸

India (CPI-M)	
Start:	1967
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Summary:	
The armed conflict in which the Indian government confronts the armed Maoist group the CPI-M (known as the Naxalites, in honour of the town where the movement was created) affects many states in India. The CPI-M emerged in West Bengal at the end of the sixties with demands relating to the eradication of the land ownership system, as well as strong criticism of the system of parliamentary democracy, which is considered as a colonial legacy. Since then, armed activity has been constant and it has been accompanied by the establishment of parallel systems of government in the areas under its control, which are basically rural ones. Military operations against this group, considered by the Indian government as terrorists, have been constant. In 2004, a negotiation process began which ended in failure. In the following years there was an escalation of violence that led the government to label the conflict as the main threat to national security. Since 2011 there has been a significant reduction in hostilities.	

There was a slight decrease in violence in the armed conflict pitting the Naxal armed opposition group CPI-M against the Indian security forces in several states of the country. According to the conflict's body count collected by the South Asia Terrorism Portal,

36. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, October 2017.

37. UN Security Council, *Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan – Report of the Secretary-General A/72/312-S/2017/696*, 10 August 2017. CLACSO, 2017.

38. UNAMA, *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Attacks against Places of Worship, Religious Leaders and Worshippers*, UNAMA, 7 November 2017.

332 people died in 2017 (109 civilians, 74 members of the Indian security forces and 149 insurgents). Clashes with fatalities took place in eight Indian states, the most affected being Chhattisgarh with 169 dead, followed by Jharkhand (56), Odisha (36), Maharashtra (25), Bihar (24), Telangana (13), Andhra Pradesh (9) and Madhya Pradesh (1). However, despite this overall drop in violence, 2017 witnessed some of the most serious episodes in recent years. Two occurred in the district of Sukma, in Chhattisgarh. In March, an insurgent attack killed 12 members of the Central Police Reserve Force, which is responsible for conducting counter-insurgency operations. **April saw the worst attack of the year when as many as 300 insurgents ambushed 100 police officers patrolling an area where infrastructure works were under way, killing 25.** According to the police, 12 insurgents were also killed in the attack, one of the deadliest in recent years, but their bodies were not found later. There were also women among the insurgent fighters. The Sukma area is heavily affected by the presence of insurgents and the security forces' military operations. This attack was followed by a large-scale security operation in which at least 12 insurgents were killed. Known as Operation Prahar, it is one of the largest in recent months and took place in an area considered a stronghold of the Naxal insurgency. More than 1,500 police officers were deployed as part of this operation. Meanwhile, civil society organisations continued to complain about the serious human rights violations perpetrated by the security forces and mining companies operating in the states affected by the conflict.

Violence escalated in Jammu and Kashmir with the start of "Operation All Out" and reports of serious human rights violations by the security forces

India (Jammu and Kashmir)	
Start:	1989
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, All Parties Hurriyat Conference, United Jihad Council
Intensity:	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 adherence 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 the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir heated up throughout the year with a rise in fatalities, in keeping with the trend of escalation in 2016. According to figures gathered by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 358 people lost their lives in connection with the armed conflict over the course of 2017 (57 civilians, 83 members of the security forces and 218 insurgents), the highest toll since 2010. However, other sources raised this

figure, such as the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, which brings together various human rights organisations and claimed that 451 people had been killed in 2017 (108 civilians, 125 members of the security forces and 218 insurgents). **Organisations also denounced the persistence of serious violations of human rights, such as the government's refusal to investigate forced disappearances that have taken place in recent decades, as well as cases of torture, arbitrary arrest and more.** There were also attacks specifically targeting women, such as the phenomenon known as "braid chopping", which affected hundreds of women.³⁹ In the middle of the year, the security forces announced the start of Operation All Out, with which they intended to kill the most visible leaders of the Kashmiri insurgency. At the end of the year, the head of the operation and Inspector General of the Jammu and Kashmir Police told the media that 18 high-level commanders of different insurgent organisations had been killed, including leaders of LeT, Hizbul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammad.

One of the most serious events of the year was an attack on a police station in Pulwana in September, in which eight policemen lost their lives. Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for the attack, the gravest since September 2016, when an assault on a military camp killed 18 members of the security forces. The attack was followed by a robust security operation that demonstrators publicly protested in several towns. Serious restrictions similar to a curfew were imposed in July, on the anniversary of the death of Burhan Wani, a member of the armed group Hizbul Mujahideen, whose death in 2016 triggered serious riots and clashes. The new restrictions were aimed at making street protests more difficult. Still, various episodes of violence were reported, including an exchange of fire on the

39. Hundreds of women were attacked by unidentified men who physically assaulted them and cut off their hair, generating an atmosphere of terror among the women of the state. Some accused the Indian security forces of instigating these attacks.

Indo-Pakistani border that claimed seven lives. Both countries traded blame for the incident.

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

Summary:

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

Pakistan was the scene of high levels of violence, although the trend that began in 2015 continued and there was a drop both in violent incidents and in deaths connected with them. According to figures reported by the Center for Research and Security Studies in Pakistan, 2,048 people died as a result of all the armed conflicts and socio-political crises in the country in 2017. In the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab and in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the hotspots of Taliban insurgent activity, 1,090 people lost their lives. **ISIS expanded its armed activity and was responsible for some of the most serious attacks reported during the year.** These include the attack in February against the Sufi Sehwan shrine in Sindh province in which at least 88 people died, 20 of them children. Hundreds of other people were injured. This was the deadliest suicide bombing since the December 2014 attack on a school in Peshawar that killed more than 150. The security forces said at least 39 people were killed in security operations launched after the attack that led to the closure of two border crossings with Afghanistan. ISIS also claimed responsibility for

an attack on a church in Quetta in December that killed nine people and injured over 40. Two suicide bombers attacked the church when hundreds of people were inside attending a religious ceremony to celebrate Christmas.

The Taliban insurgency was also responsible for several attacks, some of them conducted by the Taliban Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction. **Parachinar, the predominantly Shia capital of Kurram Agency, was hit particularly hard by the violence and suffered several attacks.** One took place near a Shia mosque in March, claiming 23 lives and wounded 73. In collaboration with the Taliban faction led by Shahryar Mahsud, the Sunni armed group Lashkar-e-Jhanvi carried out another attack on a market in Parachinar that killed 22 people in January. Around 90 people were injured by the explosion, which took place in a mainly Shia area. One of the most serious attacks of the year took place in Parachinar in June, when 72 people were killed and more than 200 were wounded. Lashkar-i-Jhangvi's al-Alami faction claimed responsibility.

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

Summary:

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

The province of Balochistan continued to be affected by the armed conflict there throughout the year, although the violence was less intense than in previous years and the number of fatalities fell. According to data compiled by the Center for Research and Security Studies in Pakistan, 489 people died as a result of the armed conflict in Balochistan in 2017, compared to 805 deaths in 2016. The dip in fatalities especially

benefited the insurgents and members of the security forces, but the number of civilian casualties did not fall very much. The most active armed opposition group was the BLA. Balochistan was also a scenario in the armed conflict pitting the Taliban insurgency against the security forces, whilst ISIS continued to expand its activities. Sectarian attacks were also repeated against the Hazara population, which has been the target of multiple acts of violence.

One of the most serious events of the year took place in August, when a suicide attack carried out by a motorcyclist killed 15 people and injured 25 in Quetta, the provincial capital. The target of the attack was a military truck. Eight of the victims were soldiers and seven were civilians. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, which occurred on the eve of the celebration of Pakistan's independence. A few days later, eight members of the Pakistani Border Corps were killed in an attack that the Balochi armed opposition group BLA claimed to have conducted. The Border Corps members were killed by an improvised explosive device that detonated when their vehicle passed by on a patrol in Harnai District. In October, the BLA claimed responsibility for another attack that killed four members of the security forces in the Panjgur area. In the same area there were attacks on infrastructure linked to the multimillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, which has been repeatedly attacked by the Balochi insurgency.

South East Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups (KNU/KNLA, SSA-S, SSA-N KNPP, UWSA, CNF, ALP, DKBA, KNPLAC, SSNPLO, KIO, ABSDF, AA, TNLA, HaY, MNDAA)
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 severely, with an escalation in violence unprecedented in recent years. The main focus of conflict was in Rakhine State, where violence increased throughout the year, but especially since August, when several attacks by the Rohingya armed opposition group ARSA (formerly known as HaY)⁴⁰ prompted a large-scale military operation that generated a very serious humanitarian and human rights crisis. The year began with the forced displacement of more than 20,000 Rohingya people to Bangladesh as a result of the military operations that began in 2016.⁴¹ In February, UN Special Rapporteur for Myanmar Yanghee Lee denounced the serious abuses and human rights violations suffered in Myanmar by groups of Rohingya refugees displaced to Bangladesh since October 2016, including summary executions, sexual violence, the burning of homes with people inside and other serious incidents. In March, the United Nations Human Rights Council approved sending an international investigative mission to Myanmar, focusing on human rights violations by security forces in Rakhine State. The situation became tense there in June and July, with intercommunity clashes between groups of Buddhists and Rohingya. However, the most serious episodes of violence started in August when ARSA attacked at least 30 police stations on the same morning. In response to attacks carried out by hundreds of insurgents, the authorities launched a large-scale military operation. **The organisation Doctors without Borders reported that at least 6,700 Rohingya died as a result of the violence that occurred during the first month of the military operation, including many minors (over 700 children under five), and more than 660,000 people fled between August and December to seek refuge in Bangladesh.** At the end of the year, the ICRC warned of the living conditions of the 180,000 Rohingya remaining in Rakhine State amidst serious intercommunity tensions. ARSA decreed a one-month unilateral ceasefire in mid-September, but the military operation remained active until late October, when the Burmese Armed Forces began to partially withdraw troops deployed in Rakhine after the US and the EU announced possible sanctions against the country. The humanitarian crisis was aggravated by the government's blockade of aid from the UN and NGOs, preventing humanitarian access to the population, though by late October the Burmese authorities reportedly agreed to resume distributing food aid from the UN.

40. Named used by Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Icaria, 2017.

41. See the summary on Myanmar in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) by Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Icaria, 2017.

Amnesty International accused the security forces of crimes against humanity, reporting that hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people had been made victims of systematic persecution that forced them to flee in extremely poor conditions to Bangladesh. Amnesty International noted that some of the most serious events took place in the village of Tula Toli, which was the scene of a massacre documented by media outlets like *The Guardian*. Amnesty International reported that the Burmese Armed Forces acted against the entire civilian population with a desire to get revenge for the actions of the armed group. The United Nations also reported that half a million people had been displaced after the security forces burned houses, fields and entire villages. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the Burmese authorities to cease military operations and the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that it could not be ruled out that in the future a court might classify acts committed against the Rohingya population as genocide. He added that these attacks were carefully designed and planned and demanded greater forcefulness from Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi to halt the military action. In November, after failing to achieve Russian and Chinese agreement to adopt a resolution, the UN Security Council issued a presidential statement condemning ARSA attacks against the Burmese security forces and the latter's systematic and widespread violence against the Rohingya population in subsequent military operations. The text urged the government not to use excessive force and to investigate all human rights violations, including sexual violence. However, the UN's role in managing the crisis also came under fire, which led to the appointment of a new resident coordinator for the country to replace Renata Lok-Dessallien, who was accused of suppressing a report commissioned by the UN to an independent consultant who warned of the risks of the conflict deteriorating and advised that the UN should be more vociferous in its complaints about human rights violations in Rakhine State. The report predicted that Myanmar's security forces would act indiscriminately and with extreme harshness, as was the case months later. The Burmese government rejected accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing at the UN. Internationally, criticism intensified against State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi for her inaction in the face of the human rights violations against the Rohingya population. She did not visit the northern area of Rakhine State, which was most affected by the conflict, until November.

Armed clashes with other insurgent organisations took place at different times of the year. In February, the Burmese Armed Forces said that over 100 soldiers had been killed in fighting with armed groups under the umbrella of the Northern Alliance (MNDAA, AA, TNLA and KIA) in Shan State in November and December 2016. This fighting resumed in March, forcing thousands

The military operation against the Rohingya population in Myanmar set off an unprecedented cascade of violence and a severe human rights crisis with accusations of crimes against humanity and genocide

of people to flee from their homes for camps on the Chinese border and the city of Mandalay. The clashes centred on the city of Laukkai, the administrative capital of the Kokang region in Shan State and very close to the Chinese border. The armed groups said that the fighting had resumed in March due to the government's refusal to let them participate in the peace process and in response to its military offensives in territory controlled by the MNDAA and the TNLA. Clashes also broke out in Kachin State between the Burmese Armed Forces and the KIA at different times of the year.

Philippines (Mindanao)	
Start:	1991
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlah Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The current situation of violence in Mindanao, where several armed groups are confronting the Government and, occasionally each other, is closely linked to the long-lasting armed conflict between Manila and the MNFL, and later the MILF, two organizations fighting for the self-determination of the Moro people. The failure to implement the 1996 peace agreement with the MNLF meant that some factions of this group have not fully demobilized and sporadically take part in episodes of violence, while the difficulties that emerged during the negotiation process between the MILF and the Government encouraged the creation of the BIFF, a faction of the group that opposes this process and was created in 2010 by the former commander of the MILF, Ameril Umbra Kato. On another front, since the 90s, the group Abu Sayyaf has been fighting to create an independent Islamic state in the Sulu archipelago and the western regions of Mindanao (south). Initially this group recruited disaffected members of other armed groups like the MILF or the MNLF, but then moved away ideologically from both of these organizations and resorted more and more systematically to kidnappings, extortion and bomb attacks, which lead the group to be included on the USA and EU lists of terrorist organizations. Finally, it is important to note that the emergence of ISIS on the international scene lead to the emergence of many groups in Mindanao that swore allegiance and obedience to ISIS. In 2016, this group claimed authorship for the first large attack in Mindanao and announced its intentions to strengthen its structure and increase its attacks in the region.

The armed conflict in Mindanao underwent the most severe escalation of violence in recent years, especially due to five months of intense fighting between the Philippine Armed Forces and the Maute group and other armed organisations in Marawi (Lanao del Sur province) that caused the deaths of more than 1,100 people and forcibly displaced over 600,000. In addition

to the violence in Lanao del Sur, clashes between the Philippine Army and several groups continued to occur in other parts of Mindanao. These groups included the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), especially in the province of Maguindanao and North Cotabato, Abu Sayyaf, particularly in the Sulu archipelago and Ansar Al Khilafah, especially in Sarangani province. Some of these groups also fought against members of the MILF, a group involved in a peace process with the government. Sporadic clashes related to clan or family disputes (known locally as *rido*) also reportedly involved members of some of these armed organisations. In light of the violence in the southern part of the country, President Rodrigo Duterte imposed martial law in Mindanao shortly after clashes broke out in Marawi in May. This decision was extended by the legislature on several occasions and was criticised by certain political forces and by human rights organisations. The clashes began in Marawi at the end of May following a failed military and police operation to arrest Abu Sayyaf's historical leader Isnilon Hapilon, who according to many reports had recently emerged at the top leader of Islamic State (ISIS) in the region. In response to this operation, around 100 fighters mainly from the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf took over parts of the city, destroyed buildings, took dozens of hostages and freed prisoners in a modus operandi similar to the one used in the Maute group's capture of the town of Butig in 2016. During the first few days of the fighting, which included many air strikes by the Philippine Armed Forces, around 130 people died and more than 170,000 were forced to flee. In the following months, it emerged that up to 40 foreign fighters (from countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and Yemen) were taking part in the clashes and that some of them played a decisive role in supposedly redirecting resources from ISIS, which claimed responsibility for armed actions in Marawi and facilitated the recruitment of combatants through various calls to fight in Mindanao. Both the government and the president recognised the solid ties between ISIS and the Maute group and other armed organisations in Marawi, but Duterte also said that part of their funds came from drug trafficking. By the end of the military offensive in Marawi in late October, some 50 civilians, more than 160 soldiers and about 1,000 fighters had been killed, including group leaders and founders Isnilon Hapilon, Omar and Abdullah Maute, as well as several of their brothers and Mahmud Ahmad, a fighter of Malaysian origin who according to Philippine intelligence had played an important role in the relations between ISIS and several of the groups operating in Mindanao. Following the death of Isnilon Hapilon, the police speculated about the possibility that Malaysian-born Mohammad Mon Bacchus had been designated his successor, but the Philippine Armed Forces said that he had died in combat. Shortly thereafter, the government indicated that Esmael Abdulmalik, aka Abu Toraife, a leading leader of the BIFF, may have assumed the functions that Hapilon had exercised until then. In November, Amnesty International accused both parties of committing many human rights violations and war crimes during the clashes in Marawi.

Before the fighting broke out in May, some signs had already been detected that armed groups were boosting their presence in Lanao del Sur. In January, some intelligence reports indicated that Isnilon Hapilon had moved from his traditional stronghold of Sulu to the province of Lanao del Sur to coordinate and strengthen the footprint of ISIS in the area. Also in January, several clashes occurred in Lanao in which 15 people died and Isnilon Hapilon was wounded. At around the same time, the leader and founder of the Ansar Al-Khilafah group, Mohammad Jafaar Maguid, also known as Tokboy, was killed in an operation targeting it in the province of Sarangani. Ansar Al-Khilafah had sworn allegiance to ISIS and according to several sources had a solid alliance with the Maute group. According to the government, Tokboy's death was significant because it would surely prompt the breakup of Ansar Al-Khilafah (also known as Ansar al-Khalifa, Ansarul Khilafa and Ansar Khilafa) and sever his close ties with ISIS combatants in Syria. In this regard, Manila estimated that there were 50 ISIS cells in Mindanao and warned of the possibility that members of ISIS who had thus far fought in Syria and Iraq would move to Mindanao. In fact, during the fighting in Marawi, some military intelligence reports indicated that the modus operandi of the armed groups in Marawi was similar to that of the insurgency in Iraq. Finally, in April, shortly before the start of the fighting in Marawi, Manila reported the death of 36 men fighting for the Maute group and Jemaah Islamiyah during clashes in Lanao del Sur that ended with the capture of one of the group's main camps.

Regarding the armed conflict in other parts of Mindanao, the BIFF increased its activity in the west. **According to official data collected by the media, at least 100 people died in episodes of violence involving the BIFF.** Some of the most prominent included the deaths of 21 fighters in Maguindanao in mid-March; the deaths of 31 BIFF members in the same province (in the town of Datu Salibo) in early May; an attack on a helicopter that was transporting the governor of Maguindanao in late July; clashes between the BIFF and the MILF in Maguindanao in late August that claimed the lives of 25 combatants (five of them from the MILF) and the Philippine Armed Forces' offensive against two different factions of the BIFF in late December in the provinces of Maguindanao and North Cotabato, which killed over 20 combatants.

Abu Sayyaf continued its armed activity mainly in its traditional bastion in the Sulu archipelago and continued to engage in practices like kidnapping, like in recent years. Times of the year when the group captured the most political and media attention included its attack on a Vietnamese ship and the beheading of a hostage in February; its assault on the tourist island of Bohol in April, with the presumed intention of kidnapping people and attacking an ASEAN meeting, which led to several clashes that killed a dozen people; a Philippine Armed Forces' operation to rescue Vietnamese hostages in early April in which about 10 Abu Sayyaf members

were killed and over 30 soldiers were wounded and the deaths of around 20 insurgents in Basilan in early May, shortly before the fighting began in Marawi. Clashes continued regularly in the second half of the year in which an undetermined number of people lost their lives, but these were overshadowed by the violence in Marawi. Finally, some media outlets reported an alleged internal split in the group as a result of Isnilon Hapilon's decision to swear allegiance to ISIS, thereby eroding his historical links with al-Qaeda and making him the top ISIS officer in Mindanao, as well as his decision to move the main core of Abu Sayyaf's activities to Lanao del Sur.

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.	

Violence rose significantly compared to the previous year as a result of the successive crises affecting the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the NDF and the declaration of martial law imposed in late May (and later extended) by President Rodrigo Duterte. In early December, the government said that since the peace talks were cancelled in February, 264 NPA fighters had been killed or arrested, another 573 had surrendered voluntarily and 622 weapons had been seized. In the same vein, in early November the Philippine Armed Forces stated that from 1 January to 6 November, the NPA committed 353 crimes in eastern Mindanao alone and may have caused 2.18 billion pesos in damage, a substantial increase compared to the previous year, in which the figure was around 100 million pesos. During the same period, the NPA was responsible for the deaths of 70 civilians and 64 soldiers, police officers and CAFGU (Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit) troops. In addition, 127 police officers and

military personnel were injured, whilst 28 civilians were reported missing. These data clearly contrast with the low levels of violence reported in the second half of 2016, following the resumption of negotiations between Duterte's new government and the NDF after several years of inactivity under the previous administration of Benigno Aquino. As for the dynamics of the conflict, violence increased at precisely those times of the year when the negotiations underwent crises. In February, for example, the number of armed incidents increased drastically compared to previous months. The NPA and the government scrapped their respective unilateral ceasefires at the beginning of the month (the NPA doing so by killing six soldiers and kidnapping two others) and President Duterte announced the government's withdrawal from negotiations and the start of total war against the NPA. In late February, Manila said that 14 NPA fighters and seven soldiers had died in several clashes. After the ceasefire agreement was declared dead, Duterte called the NPA terrorists and ordered the arrest of several NDF members who had participated in the negotiations, especially those who had been temporarily released for that purpose. The minister of defence compared the NPA to Abu Sayyaf for practicing extortion and kidnapping and conducting bomb attacks. The government also accused the NPA of using the ceasefire in force during the second half of 2016 and the beginning of 2017 to step up its recruitment of new troops until once again totalling around 5,000. However, at a congress held in late March to mark the 48th anniversary of the founding of the NPA, the group said it had 70,000 members across the country. Also during the congress, the Communist Party of the Philippines announced that it had notably renewed and rejuvenated its central committee. The NPA justified its decision to end the ceasefire in early February, claiming that the government refused to release what it considers political prisoners and order the withdrawal of state security forces and corps from the group's traditional strongholds.

The tension between the parties and the levels of violence on the battlefield rose substantially again in late May. Following violence in the city of Marawi (Lanao del Sur), Duterte imposed martial law in Mindanao, the region where most of the NPA's recent armed activity has been focused. This led to the cancellation of the fifth round of negotiations scheduled for late May and early June in the Netherlands after resuming the dialogue with several talks in March and April and reactivating temporary unilateral ceasefires. Though the NPA unsuccessfully offered its support in the fight against the armed groups that took over parts of Marawi, the relationship between both sides continued to deteriorate during the second half of the year. The Communist Party of the Philippines ordered the NPA to step up its military activity and its recruitment campaigns. On several occasions, Duterte said that he would use extraordinary powers under martial law to combat the NPA and use the existence of this group (along with others such as Abu Sayyaf, the BIFF and the Maute group) to ask Parliament to extend

martial law. He also announced that after concluding the military offensive in Marawi, which occupied most of the government's military efforts in 2017, he would wage total war against the NPA. In late November, a few days before the fifth round of negotiations were set to start in Oslo, Duterte signed a presidential proclamation that officially ended peace negotiations with the NDF. A few days later, he signed another presidential proclamation declaring that he considered the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines to be terrorist organisations. A few months earlier, Duterte had unsuccessfully asked the US government to remove both organisations from its list of terrorist groups. In the wake of these decisions, levels of violence resurged in November and December. The NPA announced that it would intensify its operations in northern Mindanao and said that it carried out 27 military actions that killed 13 members of the state security forces and wounded 12 in the first half of November alone. The government declared that it would intensify its operations against the NPA and said that 119 NPA fighters had been neutralised (69 surrendered, 29 were arrested and 21 were killed in combat) and that one of the group's main camps had been captured in November. The government reported the death of 14 NPA fighters in the Batangas region in late November and another 15 near Manila in December.

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.

Levels of violence in southern Thailand not only decreased substantially compared to 2016, but reached their historical lows since 2004, when the armed conflict in considered to have resumed. Since then, some 7,000

people have died (including 87 children) and another 13,000 have been wounded (including 553 children). According to the research centre Deep South Watch, 235 people died and another 356 were wounded in 545 episodes of violence in 2017, figures much lower than in 2007, when 892 people died and another 1,681 were wounded, and even in 2016, when 309 people lost their lives. On average, 455 people have died each year since 2004. Moreover, levels of violence during the first half of the year were significantly lower than those in the second, since by late June 50 people had been killed and 138 had been wounded. This comes out to a monthly average of 8.3 fatalities and 23 wounded, a sharp drop compared to the monthly averages in 2016, with 12.8 deaths and 35.2 people wounded. According to Deep South Watch, the dip in levels of violence observed in 2017 is in line with the general decrease in violence observed in the south of the country since former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra began peace talks in 2013 that were later resumed in 2015 by the military junta that deposed her. Some authors argue that the main reasons for the sustained reduction in violence in recent years include the government's increase in security measures and the greater presence of informants in the field; the fact that there is an active negotiating process under way and that the main item on its substantive agenda is the establishment of so-called security zones and limited ceasefire agreements; the government's demand that Mara Patani demonstrate its control over the levels of violence or its influence over the armed groups responsible for the violence; the armed insurgent groups' desire to be more selective in choosing their targets and the change in the military strategy of the main armed group in the region, the BRN, after one of its historical leaders, Sapaesing Basor, died in exile in January. Sapaesing Basor's funeral was attended by thousands of people and took place a few months after the death of another historical leader, Masae Using, which made the BRN's former military commander, Abdullah Wan Mat Noor (or Doonloh Wae-hand), its new top leader.

Despite the clear decrease in the levels of violence, the military junta expressed concern about the instability in the south of the country on several occasions, as evidenced by the hike in the 2018 military budget (over 5% more than in 2017) and the re-extension of the emergency decree prevailing in the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat since 2005 (which has been extended 45 times), prompting criticism from numerous human rights organisations. Thus, several armed incidents took place during the year that demonstrated the military capacity of the insurgent groups in the south of the country. Particularly noteworthy were a series of attacks that occurred in February, shortly after the government and Mara Pattani agreed on their intention to establish five security zones; more than 20 coordinated bomb attacks on 6 and 7 April; 13 simultaneous attacks a few days later (on April 19) in the southern Muslim-majority provinces; and an attack on a shopping centre in Pattani in May that wounded 80

people, almost all of them civilians. Finally, following the Malaysian police's discovery of a BRN armament factory in January and the apparent consolidation of Islamic State in southeast Asia (especially in Mindanao), some media outlets warned that the Malaysian government could become more assertive regarding the conflict in southern Thailand. Historically, Kuala Lumpur has been accused of collusion with Thai armed groups.

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Ukraine (east)	
Start:	2014
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, pro-Russian armed actors in eastern provinces, Russia
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Summary:	
<p>Considered in transition since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and a country of great geostrategic importance, Ukraine is undergoing a major socio-political crisis and armed conflict in its eastern regions as the scenario of the most serious crisis between the West and Russia since the Cold War. Preceded by a cluster of hotspots across the country (mass pro-European and anti-government demonstrations, the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich and his regime, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, anti-Maidan protests and the emergence of armed groups in the east), the situation in eastern Ukraine degenerated into armed conflict in the second quarter of 2014, pitting pro-Russian separatist militias, supported by Moscow, against state forces under the new pro-European authorities. Over time, issues such as the status of the eastern provinces were added to the international geostrategic dimension (political, economic and military rivalry between Russia and the West in Eastern Europe and Russia's demonstration of force for the benefit of its own public opinion, among other issues). Affecting the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, the war has had great impact on the civilian population, especially in terms of forced displacement. The parties to the conflict are participating in negotiations led by the Trilateral Contact Group (OSCE, Russia and Ukraine).</p>	

The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine remained at levels of violence similar to those in 2016, while the conflict resolution process remained at a standstill. The war claimed around 600 lives, including members of the Ukrainian security forces, fighters from Donetsk and Luhansk and civilians. The number of civilian deaths was close to 100 (98, according to the toll kept by the OHCHR until mid-November), making it similar to 2017, when 92 civilians died. Around 2,000 people were also wounded, 450 of them civilians. In addition,

239,075 people of Ukrainian origin had refugee status or were in a similar situation and 1.8 million were still displaced within Ukraine, according to the latest figures for 2016 collected by UNHCR. **The security situation was unstable and volatile, with recurrent violations of the Minsk ceasefire** and the additional ceasefires agreed during the year in April, June, August and late December, after a steep escalation that month. The OSCE observation mission reported around 400,000 ceasefire violations and about 4,000 cases of weapons prohibited by the Minsk agreements. The main causes of civilian casualties in the conflict in 2017 included the proliferation of mines, explosive remnants, booby traps, improvised explosive devices and bombings.⁴² Furthermore, the UN documented the use of sexual violence during the conflict, with most of the cases occurring when the victims were deprived of their liberty by government forces or armed groups, mainly between 2014 and 2015, although the OHCHR continued to receive testimonies indicating that sexual violence continued on the contact line and in Crimea.⁴³ The most intense violence of the year was concentrated around Avdiivka, Yasynuvata and the Donetsk airport; as well as the south and southeast of Svitlodarsk (Donetsk); the east of Mariupol (Donetsk); the west, southwest and north of Horlivka (Donetsk) and areas near Popasna and Pervomaisk, in Luhansk. At the end of the year, the OSCE warned that the armed actors were still deployed very close to each other.

The UN voiced concern about the impact of the hostilities on the population and the periodic escalations of violence alongside infrastructure to supply water, electricity and gas that had humanitarian impacts and ran environmental risks. Throughout 2017, there were 135 incidents in which sanitation facilities and water pipes were damaged, according to UNICEF. Moreover, the political and social tension related to the conflict increased at different times. In March, the government formalised the blockade of the railway lines connecting to Donetsk and Luhansk, imposed since January by Ukrainian nationalist groups. After the blockade, the authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk nationalised Ukrainian companies in the areas under their control. The leader of the Luhansk region, Igor Plotnitski, resigned in November following the escalation of an internal power struggle that involved the deployment of armed men in the city, the barricade of administrative buildings and the use of military vehicles. However, the Russian government stated that the situation was one of continuity. The UN continued to document human rights violations on both sides of the contact line and in Crimea throughout the year. Despite the deadlock in the peace process, some progress was made, such as the exchange of 300 prisoners from Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk at the end of the year, the largest to date.

42. OHCHR, *Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. 16 May to 15 August 2017*, OHCHR, 12 September 2017; and OHCHR, *Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. 16 August to 15 November 2017*, OHCHR, 12 December 2017.

43. OHCHR, *Conflict Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine, March 2014 to 31 January 2017*, OHCHR, 16 February. See chapter 4 (Gender, peace and security).

Russia and Caucasus

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

Summary:

Dagestan –which is the largest, most highly populated republic in the north of the Caucasus, and with the greatest ethnic diversity–, has been facing an increase in conflicts since the end of the 1990s. The armed rebel forces of an Salafist Islamist, which defend the creation of an Islamic state in the north of the Caucasus, confront the local and federal authorities, in the context of periodical attacks and counterinsurgency operations. The armed opposition has been articulated around various structures, such as the network of armed units of an Islamist nature known as Sharia Jamaat, and later through Vilayat Dagestan, both integrated into the insurgency of the North Caucasus (Caucasian Emirate). From the end of 2014 various commanders from Dagestan and the North Caucasus declared their loyalty to ISIS, splitting from the Caucasian Emirate and establishing a Caucasian branch linked to ISIS (Vilayat Kavkaz). In addition, part of the insurgency has moved to Syria and Iraq, joining various armed groups. Armed violence in Dagestan is the result of different factors, including the regionalization of the Islamist insurgency from Chechnya as well as human rights violations in Dagestan, often under the “fight against terrorism”. All of this takes place in a fragile social and political context, of social ill due to the abuses of power and corruption and the high levels of unemployment and poverty, despite the wealth of natural resources. This is made even more complicated by interethnic tensions, rivalry for political power and violence of a criminal nature.

Violence in the republic of Dagestan cooled significantly and dropped below armed conflict levels, in keeping with the trend in recent years. Around 50 people died and about a dozen were wounded in incidents linked to the conflict between security forces and the Islamist insurgency during the year, according to figures collected by Caucasian Knot. The toll underscores the fall in casualties over the course of previous years (136 fatalities in 2016, 111 in 2015, 188 in 2014, 341 in 2013, 405 in 2012 and 423 in 2011). Even so, warnings continued of the risk of future increases in violence associated with the return of insurgents from the north Caucasus who have been fighting in Syria and Iraq. According to the Dagestani Interior Ministry, about 1,200 people from Dagestan were fighting for ISIS out of a total of about 4,000 fighters from Russia, including parts of the diaspora. Several security incidents occurred during the year, including shootings at checkpoints and clashes during anti-terrorist operations. As in previous years, there were human rights violations, including the disappearance of various people and relatives of suspected combatants. The authorities also continued

to conduct raids against and mass arrests of Salafists during prayer or upon leaving mosques in various districts, though they were subsequently released. For example, the authorities arrested 30 worshippers in a mosque in the capital in early June and arrested 90 other people in raids on mosques and coffee shops days later. Around 15 people were arrested in a mosque and released in August. At the end of the month, 17 other worshippers were arrested after prayer and later released. Twenty-five worshippers from various mosques in the capital and district of Khasavyurt were transferred to a police station in early November. People accused of being members of ISIS were also arrested. ISIS claimed responsibility for some incidents of violence during the year, such as an attack in August in which a policeman was killed. On the political level, the governor of Dagestan, Ramazan Abdulatipov, resigned from office and was replaced by Vladimir Vasiliyev, who was appointed by the Russian president in October.

South-east Europe

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

Summary:

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

There were many less deaths linked to the conflict between Turkey and the PKK after the severe urban and rural violence in 2016. However, high levels of

militarisation and social and political tension persisted under the umbrella of the state of emergency, which was renewed in April and October, and the polarisation associated with the constitutional referendum.⁴⁴ Around 800 people were killed (1,900 in 2016), according to International Crisis Group, of which 66% were PKK fighters, 21% were members of the security forces and 13% were civilians (45%, 34% and 14%, respectively, along with 7% of unknown affiliation in 2016). In addition, 57,925 Turkish nationals had refugee status or were in a similar situation, and 23,228 were awaiting a response to their request for asylum, according to UNHCR's latest figures for 2016. The government intensified military operations in southeastern areas in the winter of 2016-2017. In March, Ankara launched a very large military operation in Diyarbakir province, deploying 7,000 troops whilst continuing to declare special security zones. The PKK conducted less attacks in the run-up to the April referendum, but resumed them in later months, including against civilians and several local officials of the ruling AKP. The PKK's leaders announced that they had stepped up their guerrilla activities in June and had captured two high-ranking officers of the Turkish intelligence services (MIT) in northern Iraq in September, alongside other MIT officers. Additional acts of violence included a PKK bomb attack against a police bus in Mersin in October that wounded 18 people. The Kurdish armed group TAK also threatened attacks on tourist sites.

Turkey intensified its fight against the PKK within Turkey and in neighbouring countries. As part of this, the Turkish Army bombed PKK positions in Sinjar (northern Iraq) for the first time, which also caused Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga casualties. Turkey stepped up its military presence on the border with the Kurdish region of Afrin (Syria) in August, which was under the control of the PKK-linked YPG/YPJ, and agreed with Iran that month to strengthen control of their mutual border by building a barrier. In October, Ankara launched a ground military operation against the PKK in northern Iraq, the first since 2008. Also in October, the Turkish government warned of the possibilities of a corridor in Syria connecting Afrin to other Syrian areas under Kurdish control and threatened to make the moves necessary to prevent it. These threats came amidst rising tension between Ankara and Washington due to US military support for the YPG. In the final months of the year, Turkey announced that large-scale operations against the PKK would continue in the winter and claimed in December that the end of the PKK was nigh. Arrests of politicians, journalists and Kurdish movement activists continued throughout the year, with hundreds of people in prison. The central government also continued to directly rule 94 of 102 Kurdish BDP municipalities.

Turkey intensified its fight against the PKK within Turkey and in the region, though the death toll associated with the conflict fell significantly compared to 2016

1.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

Egypt (Sinai)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), other armed groups (Ajnad Misr, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis, Katibat al-Rabat al-Jihadiya, Popular Resistance Movement, Liwaa al-Thawra and Hassam), Israel
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

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

North Sinai governorate continued to be the epicentre of the armed conflict pitting Egyptian security forces mainly against the armed group ISIS (Sinai Province). There were also episodes of violence in other areas of the country (including, but not limited to Alexandria, the Nile Valley, around Cairo, the Red Sea coast and Ismailia governorate) and some minor actions were carried out by other armed organisations like Ansar al-Islam, Jund al-Islam (presumably linked to al-Qaeda) and Hasm, which has connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. **Problems in comparing data on the impact of the conflict persisted in 2017, but partial informal accounts indicate that at least 900 people may have died as a result.** In Sinai, the areas with the highest levels of armed activity were al-Arish, Sheikh Zuweid and al-Barth. ISIS continued its attacks against security forces throughout the year in the form of

44. See the summary on Turkey in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

shootings, bomb attacks, armed attacks and ambushes against military convoys, police stations and roadblocks. As in previous years, ISIS also claimed responsibility for firing some projectiles at Israel. ISIS also stepped up actions against Christians in Egypt, forcibly displacing more than 100 families from the Coptic community in North Sinai governorate. One of the most prominent incidents occurred in April, when two attacks on Coptic churches killed 48 people in the space of three hours, one in Tanta (north of Cairo) and another in Alexandria. The attacks occurred days before Pope Francis' trip to Egypt. The government of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, which continued to be criticised in 2017 for the human rights situation in the country,⁴⁵ decreed a state of emergency for three months. After being renewed in July and October, the state of emergency remained in effect as the year ended. Another ISIS attack on a bus in Minya (south of Cairo) left 29 people dead in May and triggered Egyptian air strikes against alleged ISIS bases in Libya.⁴⁶

The bloodiest attack of 2017, unprecedented in terms of its magnitude and target, and the worst perpetrated by armed militants in Egypt's recent history, occurred in November, when a bomb attack and subsequent shoot-out conducted by around 30 militiamen killed 305 people, including 27 children, in a mosque in Bir al-Bed in northern Sinai.

The attack, for which no group claimed responsibility, but which was blamed on ISIS, was the first on a mosque. Sufis, whom ISIS considers heretical, frequented the place. According to media reports, the Sufi community may also have been chosen as a target for refusing to cooperate with the militants operating in the region. After the attack, Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi called on security forces to respond with "brutal violence" and military aircraft launched a series of strikes on alleged armed militant positions. The Egyptian government forces' raids, operations and clashes with combatants and suspected members of armed organisations caused dozens of deaths and led to many arrests throughout the year. Some warned of extrajudicial killings in Sinai and claimed that in some cases they were presented as casualties during antiterrorist operations. Human Rights Watch released videos about the practice and denounced a pattern of abuse against the Sinai population by security forces.⁴⁷

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

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

46. See the summary on Libya in this chapter.

47. Human Rights Watch, *Egypt: Videos Show Army Executions in Sinai*, 21 April 2017.

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.

Iraq continued to the theatre for one of the most intense armed conflicts in the world in 2017, a year marked by the expulsion of ISIS from Mosul and most of Iraq after a campaign mainly involving the Iraqi Armed Forces and other security forces, Shia militias (Popular Mobilisation Units, or PMU), Kurdish fighters (peshmergas) and the US-led anti-ISIS coalition. The hostilities linked to the campaign to take back Mosul, military operations in other parts of the country and suicide attacks conducted by ISIS in Baghdad and elsewhere killed thousands of people. At the end of 2017, death toll estimates were still partial and focused on civilian casualties. According to data from the UN mission in Iraq (UNAMI), at least 3,300 civilians had died due to the violence during the year, though it warned that this figure should be considered an "absolute minimum" due to the difficulties in verifying information about the lethality of the conflict. The figure provided by Iraq Body Count (IBC) was much higher, estimating that **at least 13,187 civilians were killed in the war in Iraq in 2017**. IBC highlighted the provisional nature of this figure since efforts to document casualties in and around Mosul would still take months; mass graves of ISIS victims were still being discovered and work to exhumate corpses from the ruins was ongoing. Therefore, the final civilian death toll in 2017 may have remained in line with what was reported in previous years (16,361 in 2016, 17,518 in 2015 and 20,218 in 2014), amidst a significant surge in violence in the last four years.

The high number of civilian casualties prompted calls for attention from the UN and human rights organisations throughout the year. Amnesty International reported that around 5,800 civilians had lost their lives in the offensives launched by the Iraqi forces and the US-led coalition during the campaign in Mosul, evidencing the lack of precautions taken to avoid harming the population. This was especially notable on 17 March, when a US air

strike on the city killed more than 150 civilians (a group of people had entered a building to take refuge from fighting between ISIS and the Iraqi security forces). In October, **Washington acknowledged that its campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria had killed at least 800 civilians since 2014. Other sources indicated much higher figures, however.** According to the Airwars organisation, 5,961 civilians had died in the same period, whilst a *New York Times* investigation into 150 areas hit by coalition bombings in Iraq concluded that they had killed 31 times more civilians than was officially reported. **Meanwhile, reports from the UN mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that the highest number of civilian victims of the conflict resulted from deliberate and sustained policies conducted by ISIS against the population.** During 2017, the group's practices included indiscriminate attacks; the deliberate use of civilians as human shields to protect its combatants, bases and other strategic locations; violence against people trying to flee the territories it controlled; reprisals against those who did not abide by the rigid doctrines it imposed; aggression against religious leaders, community leaders and medical and educational professionals, particularly women, and sexual violence, especially against women and minors of ethnic and religious minorities.⁴⁸

After months of intense violence, in July the Iraqi government announced that it had defeated ISIS in Mosul, the city where the armed group had proclaimed the establishment of a caliphate in 2014

The Mosul campaign, which began in October 2016, was the main focus of battlefield hostilities during the first half of the year. The offensives focused on the western part of the city and the surrounding towns in an attempt to block ISIS' escape and supply routes. Throughout this period, the armed group continued to claim responsibility for armed attacks and suicide attacks in other parts of the country, especially Baghdad, but also in other areas like Nasiriyah and Kirkuk. **In July, after months of intense violence, the Iraqi government announced that it had defeated ISIS in Mosul in a strategic and symbolic blow to the armed group that had declared the caliphate there in 2014,** the second-largest city in the country. The loss of ISIS' main stronghold in Iraq, where it imposed tight control for three years, was a prelude to the fall of Raqqa, its capital in Syria, also in 2017.⁴⁹ In the second half of the year, fighting continued in various locations around Mosul and in cities in the northwest, near the Syrian border. In December, after three years of bloody fighting, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared that the fight against ISIS had ended, which at the time of its greatest power came to control one third of the country's territory. Despite this declaration

of "final victory" over ISIS, the Iraqi government faced many challenges at the end of the year, including the possibility that ISIS could remain active in the country, launching a guerrilla war and suicide operations through cells of combatants. Challenges also include the uncertain and controversial future of the Iran-backed Shia militias that actively participated in the campaign against ISIS (USA and other Western countries like France called for dismantling the UMP); the investigation of abuses perpetrated by the different armed actors; the enormous task of reconstruction in the areas that were under the control of ISIS; the situation of the 3.2 million Iraqis displaced by the violence, of thousands of people who were being forced to return and of the 11 million people who required humanitarian assistance at the end of 2017⁵⁰ and the possibility that the new scenario will pave the way for a new escalation of tensions between the Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities in the country. In fact, growing tension between the Baghdad authorities and the Kurdistan Regional Government during 2017 resulted in a major military deployment of Iraqi troops and their allied militias in territories disputed between Baghdad and Erbil.⁵¹ Turkey also attacked PKK positions in Iraq.⁵²

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International ⁵³
Main parties:	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLF, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, Ahfad al-Sahaba knaf Bayt al-Maqdis (linked to ISIS)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Summary:	
The conflict between Israel and the various Palestinian actors started up again in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, favoured by the failure of the peace process promoted at the beginning of the 1990s (the Oslo Accords, 1993-1994). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict started in 1947 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 divided Palestinian territory under British mandate into two states and soon after proclaimed the state of Israel (1948), without the state of Palestine having been able to materialise itself since then. After the 1948-49 war, Israel	

48. UNAMI-OHCHR, *Report on Human Rights in Iraq, January to June 2017*, 2017.

49. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.

50. UNOCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin: Iraq, November 2017*, 8 December 2017.

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

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

53. Despite the fact that Palestine (whose Palestine National Authority is a political association linked to a given population and to a territory) is not an internationally recognised state, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is considered "international" and not "internal", since it is a territory that is illegally occupied and its intended ownership by Israel is not recognised by International Law or by any UN resolution.

annexed West Jerusalem and Egypt and Jordan took over control of Gaza and the West Bank, respectively. In 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza after winning the “Six-Day War” against the Arab countries. It was not until the Oslo Accords that the autonomy of the Palestinian territory would be formally recognised, although its introduction was to be impeded by the military occupation and the control of the territory imposed by Israel.

The Israeli-Palestinian armed conflict reached levels of violence similar to previous years, with incidents that intensified at the end of the year following the US decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

According to OCHA data, 88 people were killed directly in the conflict in 2017, of which 75 were Palestinians and 13 were Israelis. This figure is slightly lower than in 2016 and 2015, when 122 and around 200 people died, respectively. The bloodiest months of 2017 were January (10 fatalities), July (14), October (13) and December (14). In January, the incident with the highest number of Israeli casualties occurred when a Palestinian living in Jerusalem drove his truck into a group of soldiers, killing four. In July, three Palestinians with Israeli citizenship shot two Israeli policemen dead at the entrance to the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem, after which they were killed. The attack prompted Israeli authorities to install metal detectors at the entrance to the esplanade, which sparked protests in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in what was seen as an attempt by Israel to increase its control over the site. Various acts of violence took place in the weeks that followed (six Palestinians were killed in clashes with security forces in the West Bank and three Israelis were stabbed to death in the Halamish settlement) and Israel arrested dozens of Palestinians. In this context, the Palestinian Authority (PA) announced that it was suspending its security coordination with Israel, but in practice the agreement continued. Another major incident occurred in October after Israeli forces destroyed a tunnel in Gaza, killing between seven and 12 Palestinians (the number varied according to the source), including a commander of the Islamic Jihad and two Hamas members.

The greatest escalation of violence began in 6 December, after the Trump administration announced that it would recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and that it would move its embassy to the city, defying the international consensus on the issue. The announcement was harshly criticised around the world, triggered mass protests by Palestinians and encouraged the launching of rockets from Gaza, to which Israel responded with air strikes. According to OCHA data, around 20 Palestinians and one Israeli were killed between 6 December 2017 and 30 January 2018 and nearly 5,000 Palestinians were wounded, primarily due to inhaling gas and being struck by rubber bullets. In this context, the Palestinian Authority said that it would not accept the United States as a mediator and asked the UN to take charge of the peace process. **Israel also upheld its policy of expanding Israeli settlements**

in the occupied Palestinian territories throughout the year, despite the UN resolution that condemned the practice in late 2016 and that was approved with the consent of the Obama administration. The case of the 16-year-old Palestinian girl Ahd Tamimi, who was arrested after confronting and slapping an Israeli soldier, was spread internationally and drew attention to the situation of Palestinian minors in Israeli jails in 2017. According to Palestinian sources, nearly 4,000 minors had been detained by Israeli forces since October 2015 and around 300 remained in Israeli jails by the end of 2017.

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

Summary:

Controlled by the Ba'ath party since 1963, the Republic of Syria has been governed since the 1970s by two presidents: Hafez al-Assad and his son, Bashar, who took office in 2000. A key player in the Middle East, internationally the regime has been characterised by its hostile policies towards Israel and, internally, by its authoritarianism and fierce repression of the opposition. The arrival of Bashar al-Assad in the government raised expectations for change, following the implementation of some liberalising measures. However, the regime put a stop to these initiatives, which alarmed the establishment, made up of the army, the Ba'ath and the Alawi minority. In 2011, popular uprisings in the region encouraged the Syrian population to demand political and economic changes. The brutal response of the government unleashed a severe crisis in the country, which led to the beginning of an armed conflict with serious consequences for the civil population. The militarisation and proliferation of armed actors have added complexities to the Syrian scenario, severely affected by regional and international dynamics.

The armed conflict in Syria continued to be characterised by its complex dynamics of violence and many battlefronts; by the diversity of local, regional and international armed actors involved and by its many severe impacts on the civilian population. Although hostilities cooled to a certain extent in some parts of the country in 2017, overall the war continued to rage at high levels of intensity and claimed thousands of lives. Problems in counting and verifying the total number of fatalities persisted, though some organisations with information networks in Syria provided estimates.

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), at least 10,000 civilians died as a result of the conflict in 2017, including around 1,500 women and 2,300 children, a relatively lower number than the one it provided for 2016 (17,000). In March 2017, which marked the sixth anniversary of the conflict, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that around 465,000 people had died since the fighting began. Of the total victims, according to SOHR, around 96,000 were civilians, whilst the SNHR raised this figure to more than 200,000 since March 2011. According to several periodic reports issued by the UN, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and various NGOs, the country continued to be the scene of many violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including sieges, forced displacement, sexual violence, the manipulative use of humanitarian aid, the destruction of civil infrastructure, torture and summary executions. An Amnesty International report released in 2017 stated that in the first five years of the armed conflict in Syria, at least 13,000 government opponents had been executed through mass hangings in the Saydanya military prison as part of a strategy to exterminate dissidents ordered by the highest authorities of the country.

According to estimates compiled by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, at least 10,000 civilians died as a result of the conflict in Syria in 2017

Indiscriminate and/or deliberate attacks against the Syrian population by many armed actors involved in the war continued to be reported throughout the year. Significant incidents in 2017 included a double suicide attack in the centre of Damascus that killed more than 100 people in March (including 43 Iraqi Shia pilgrims) in an attack carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a new alliance of rebel forces led by the Fath al-Sham group (formerly the Nusra Front), and **the chemical gas attack by Bashar Assad's government against the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun, in Idlib governorate, which killed more than 80 people in April, most of them women and children.** In response to the gas attack, US forces bombed the government base from where it was launched. The forces of the international coalition led by Washington were also cited as responsible for various attacks that killed civilians in Syria. The United States admitted that from August 2014 and until October 2017, its campaigns against ISIS had killed at least 800 civilians in Syria and Iraq, but other sources say that the figure is much higher and could be around 6,000 people.⁵⁴

As in previous years, in 2017 the war in Syria remained active on multiple fronts alongside diplomatic efforts that yielded few results. The decision to create four de-escalation zones in Syria following an agreement between Russia, Turkey and Iran in Astana (Kazakhstan), in May, as part the process parallel to the

UN-sponsored negotiations, led to a slight dip in the fighting. However, their development and consequent impact on the civilian population was unequal. In southern Syria, for example, there was a reduction in hostilities; but in other areas, such as Idlib province and northwestern Syria, there was an initial decline that later led to a further increase in violence. Taking this into account, **at least three dynamics of the conflict during 2017 should be highlighted: the impact of the signing of a series of local truces, the intensification of violence in eastern Ghouta and the expulsion of ISIS from Raqqa.** Various ceasefire agreements signed at the local level between the Syrian government and armed groups throughout the year included provisions regarding the evacuation of the population. This caused the displacement of thousands of civilians, who survived in fragile conditions at the end of the year. Some warned that populations that had suffered severe siege conditions, intense bombings and other forms of violence had no alternative but to

leave their homes en masse as part of these "reconciliation" agreements and denounced that the regime was using a strategy that offered no choice but to surrender or die of hunger.⁵⁵ According to UN data, the number of civilians affected by siege situations in Syria fell by half a million people in 2017. However, by the end of the year another half million were still living in around 10 besieged areas. Ninety-five per cent (95%) of them were

still being under siege by Government forces in the area of eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus held by the opposition. Violence continued in this area throughout the year, but intensified in the fourth quarter, turning it into a scenario reminiscent of the situation in Aleppo in 2016. **By the end of 2017, some 390,000 people remained trapped in Ghouta, where they were surviving in extreme conditions** and had serious problems in accessing food and medicine. Raqqa, the main ISIS stronghold in Syria, was another epicentre of armed activity in 2017, especially starting in the middle of the year when the campaign to expel the armed group from the city intensified. After taking control of adjacent territories, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) coalition, headed by the Kurdish YPG fighters and backed by the US-led international alliance, started an operation to drive ISIS from Raqqa that took several months and involved intense levels of violence in the area. **Until ISIS was declared expelled from Raqqa in October (a severe blow to the group, which also lost control of Mosul in Iraq in 2017), the fighting and bombings caused a high number of civilian deaths and displaced almost the entire population of the city.** The destruction of infrastructure and the presence of explosives across the entire area made it difficult for the inhabitants to return. Several mass graves of victims of ISIS were also discovered in the area.

54. See the summary on Iraq in this chapter.

55. Amnesty International, *Syria: 'Surrender or starve' strategy displacing thousands amounts to crimes against humanity*, 13 November 2017.

The Syrian regime also competed with US-backed forces in its territorial disputes with ISIS and by the end of the year one of the most active fronts in terms of military operations involving multiple armed actors was the northeastern governorate of Deir al-Zour. According to UN data, hostilities in this area forcibly displaced almost 400,000 people in October and November alone. Some analysts stated that the future of Deir al-Zour, large areas of which are controlled by ISIS, will be especially decisive for the future of the group and for the course of the war, given its strategic location (between Raqqa and the Iraqi border) and its oil fields, which are the largest in the country.⁵⁶ Fighting raged between various armed actors active in Syria throughout the year, including between armed non-governmental groups of various kinds, such as, for example, between Fath al-Sham and Ahrar al-Sham or Jaish al-Mujahideen early in the year, between the forces of the regime and the US-supported SDF, between Turkish and YPG forces (as part of Ankara's dispute with the PKK and its attempts to block Kurdish forces from growing and dominating in northern Syria and in Iraq⁵⁷ and between Israel and Hezbollah, including the former's bombing of the latter's positions in Syria.⁵⁸ As a result of these dynamics of violence, the overall levels of forced displacement caused by the conflict remained in line with those of the previous year. Thus, **it is estimated that there had already been 1.8 million movements of displaced persons in just the first nine months of the year, equivalent to about 6,550 per day, with many cases of successive displacements.** Meanwhile, the number of refugees of Syrian origin reached 5.5 million. Many other indicators helped us to gauge the magnitude of the armed conflict's impact on the Syrian population. According to data from OCHA at the end of the year, 13.1 million people (seven out of every ten people in the country) required humanitarian aid, 5.6 million of which needed it urgently.⁵⁹ Minors accounted for 40% of the population in need of assistance. Sixty-nine per cent (69%) of the Syrian population was living in conditions of extreme poverty. Amidst this dramatic panorama, the regime continued to present itself as winning the war, supported by Russia and Iran. The Western powers have gradually ceased to immediately demand Bashar Assad's removal from power and Moscow has continued to exercise great influence over the negotiations through the process that it has promoted and that runs parallel to the UN-sponsored ones. In this context, the Russian president visited Syria at the end of the year and triumphantly announced the withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria (although similar announcements were not fulfilled in the past).

The Gulf

Yemen (AQAP)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Summary:	
With a host of conflicts and internal challenges to deal with, the Yemeni government is under intense international pressure –mainly the USA and Saudi Arabia– to focus on fighting al-Qaeda's presence in the country, especially after the merger of the organisation's Saudi and Yemeni branches, through which al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was founded in 2009. Although al-Qaeda is known to have been active in Yemen since the 1990s and has been responsible for high profile incidents, such as the suicide attack on the US warship USS Cole in 2000, its operations have been stepped up in recent years, coinciding with a change of leadership in the group. The failed attack on an airliner en route to Detroit in December 2009 focused the world's attention on AQAP. The group is considered by the US government as one of its main security threats. Taking advantage of the power vacuum in Yemen as part of the revolt against president Ali Abdullah Saleh, AQAP intensified its operations in the south of the country and expanded the areas under its control. From 2011 the group began to carry out some of its attacks under the name Ansar Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law). More recently, particularly since mid-2014, AQAP has increasingly been involved in clashes with Houthi forces, which have advanced their positions from the north of Yemen. AQAP has taken advantage of the climate of instability and the escalation of violence in the country since March 2015 in the framework of the conflict between the Houthis and the forces loyal to the Government of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi. The al-Qaeda branch has faced both sides. Yemen's conflict scenario has also favoured the rise of ISIS, which has begun to claim various actions in the country.	

The conflict involving AQAP and, more recently, the ISIS branch in Yemen (ISIS/Yemen Province), remained active during the year in the central, southern and eastern regions of the country alongside the hostilities linked to the struggle between the Houthis and the forces of deposed President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, which were concentrated in the north and on the west coast.⁶⁰ Fewer people were killed in the conflict than in the previous year, though definitive figures are difficult to specify due to the lack of access to systematised information on its impact. Partial death tolls based on media accounts allow us to conclude that at least

56. ICG, *Fighting ISIS: The Road to and Beyond Raqqa*, Middle East Briefing no. 53, 28 April 2017.

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

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

59. UNOCHA, *2018: Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic*, November 2017.

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

170 people lost their lives as a result of this conflict in 2017. Throughout the year, ISIS and AQAP claimed responsibility for fewer high-impact attacks and bomb attacks than in 2016. **US operations in Yemen intensified against AQAP and ISIS positions in 2017, which were triple what they had been the previous year.** As reported by the US Central Command (CENTCOM) in December, US forces launched more than 120 attacks in 2017 (compared to 38 drone strikes in 2016 and 23 in 2015). The expansion of the US campaign in Yemen took place after an eventful episode at the beginning of the year. Days after his inauguration as president of the United States, Donald Trump authorised sending SEAL commandos to raid an AQAP complex in the al-Bayda governorate in the southern part of the country. The raid, which was the first public action by US forces on the ground in Yemen since 2014, led to heavy fighting and ended with the death of one of the SEALs, in addition to 14 AQAP fighters and around 30 civilians, including eight women and seven children.

In the months that followed, the US launched another series of air strikes against al-Qaeda and also targeted ISIS, a group that has also tried to capitalise on the instability and power vacuum in Yemen, mainly in the governorates of al-Bayda, Shabwah and Marib. According to media reports, US commandos have participated in operations together with Yemeni forces and troops from the UAE, a country that is part of the international coalition led by Riyadh and has played an active role in the fight against AQAP in Yemen since 2016. **In August, between 2,000 and 4,000 Yemeni soldiers (the figures vary according to the source) supported by UAE and US advisers launched an operation to expel AQAP from Shabwah governorate,** one of its strongholds in south-central Yemen. Yemeni troops claimed to have won, but local sources said that AQAP fighters had evacuated the area before the military operation began, in a withdrawal similar to the one in Mukalla in 2016. In the following months, Yemeni forces announced that they had captured or killed several AQAP militants in Shabwah and in al-Bayda governorate. AQAP also claimed responsibility for various actions throughout the year, including a car bomb attack and an armed attack on a military camp in the eastern governorate of Hadramawt that claimed around 10 lives in June and a suicide attack by five fighters on a roadblock in the southern governorate of Abyan that killed four Yemeni soldiers. **ISIS also claimed responsibility for several attacks against pro-government forces in the port of Aden that left 56 dead in November,** as well as an attack on the Ministry of Finance building in the same city in which five other people lost their lives. Despite the campaign against AQAP and its setbacks in Yemen, security and military analysts said at the end of the year that the group was far from being defeated, highlighting its resilience (according to media reports, the group has around 3,000 members) and its ability to exploit the conflict and sectarian tensions in the country to attract new recruits and establish itself in the territory.

Yemen (Houthis)	
Start:	2004
Type:	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Armed forces loyal to Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), armed factions loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias, armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Iran
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The situation in Yemen continued to deteriorate in 2017, with a severe impact on the civilian population, in a year marked by the death of one of the key players in the armed conflict and the country's strongman for more than three decades, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The violence caused hundreds of fatalities during the year, though it was not possible to specify the final figure. The UN continued to use its body count from the previous year as a reference, citing at least 10,000 lives lost since the intensification of hostilities in March 2015, although this estimate was considered too low. In addition to the direct deaths of civilians and combatants, the conflict continued to have other severe consequences, making the poorest economy in the Arab world even more fragile and turning **the scenario in Yemen into the worst humanitarian crisis worldwide. At the end of 2017, several NGOs and UN agencies warned that 22.2 million Yemenis required aid, 3.4 million more than the previous year.** Of this total, 11.3 million people needed urgent help to survive.

UNICEF and OCHA especially warned of the impact of the conflict on children, since 1.8 million children under five were malnourished, including around 400,000 who suffered from severe malnutrition, and almost two million were not attending school. Furthermore, the conditions created by the conflict facilitated the expansion of an outbreak of cholera that had already infected one million people by the end of the year and caused the deaths of more than 2,000, leading analysts to consider it the worst cholera outbreak in contemporary history. Meanwhile, around three million people remained forcibly displaced, mainly internally.

Throughout the year, the hostilities mainly pitted the international coalition led by Saudi Arabia that supports deposed President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi against the Houthi forces, in alliance with groups close to former President Saleh. As in previous years, the conflict affected different parts of the country that went hand in hand with other dynamics of tension and violence, such as the secessionist aspirations of groups in the south⁶¹ and the presence of a branch of al-Qaeda and ISIS in the country,⁶² and was also influenced by regional tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The most active fronts of the conflict in 2017 were various points along the Red Sea coast, including the port of Hodeida, in the governorate of the same name, and Mocha, in Taiz governorate; the northern regions, bordering with Saudi Arabia (Hajja, Saadah and al-Jawf); and the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, and its surroundings. **Some of the offensives caused many civilian casualties, especially as a result of air strikes in residential areas, areas close to mosques and markets.** Houthi forces attacked Saudi border areas and also launched missiles capable of reaching the capital, Riyadh, which were intercepted by Saudi forces. Riyadh claimed that the missiles launched by the Houthis had been supplied by Iran, an accusation that was supported by the US and was being investigated by the UN. Saudi Arabia also accused Hezbollah of training the Houthis. In response to these actions, in early November the Saudi Arabia-

Internal struggles within the parties to the conflict in Yemen complicated the scenario of violence in the country and led to former President Saleh's assassination by the Houthis at the end of the year

led coalition imposed an ironclad blockade on the port of Hodeida, a strategic site for the entry of supplies to Yemen, which imports more than 90% of the food, fuel and medicine it consumes. Riyadh maintained the blockade for several weeks and did not lift it until late December, in the face of growing international criticism that it was further aggravating the humanitarian crisis.

The parties to the conflict also showed internal divisions, further complicating the scenario of violence. Thus, supporters of Hadi clashed with Yemeni groups in the southern part of the country supported by the UAE. The most significant split, however, occurred on the side of the Houthis and Saleh, ending their alliance of convenience active since 2014, when the former president supported his former adversaries to control Sana'a and drive Hadi from power. Friction between Saleh and the Houthis started to intensify in the middle of the year and ended in an open fight in the fourth quarter, which culminated in December

with **Saleh's assassination by Houthi forces after the former president publicly said that he was willing to switch sides and negotiate with the Saudis.** The coalition headed by Riyadh then intensified its attacks in Yemen in an apparent attempt to take advantage of the destabilisation on the Houthi alliance, prompting international criticism regarding their impact on the civilian population. According to UN data, 225 civilians died as a result of the violence from 6 to 28 December alone. Thus, as the year ended the conflict was in the midst of an escalation. In September, the UN approved launching an international investigation into the abuses committed by the different warring sides in Yemen. During 2017, the situation in Yemen also provoked criticism of countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain for continuing to supply arms to Riyadh despite protests against the coalition in its actions in Yemen. After the inauguration of Donald Trump, the US also took a more active role in supporting the Saudis in the offensive in Yemen, intensifying logistical support for its operations.

61. See the summary on Yemen (south) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

62. See the summary on Yemen (AQAP) in this chapter.

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2. Socio-political crises

- 88 socio-political crises were reported worldwide during 2017, most of them in Africa (37) and Asia (18). The other crises took place in Europe (13), the Middle East (12) and America (eight).
- The situation in Cameroon escalated as a result of the crackdown on the secessionist movement, leading to the emergence of militias engaged in armed struggle to achieve independence for the English-speaking provinces
- More than 120 people were killed and several thousand wounded and detained during massive anti-government demonstrations in the first half of the year in Venezuela.
- Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif resigned after the Supreme Court disqualified him from holding public office as a result of the information revealed by the Panama Papers.
- Relations between India and Pakistan were marked by military clashes at the border that left dozens dead.
- Tensions rose on the Korean peninsula stemming from North Korea's nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests.
- Human rights defenders reported a serious increase in kidnappings and disappearances by security agents in the Chechen Republic.
- The worst protests in Iran since 2009 resulted in acts of violence that killed around 20 people at the end of the year.
- Lebanon was affected by the repercussions of the war in Syria and the complex domestic political scene, including the surprise resignation of the prime minister from Saudi Arabia.

The present chapter analyses the socio-political crises that occurred in 2017. 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 2017. 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 2017.

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.

Tabla 2.1. Summary of socio-political crises in 2017

Socio-political crisis ¹	Type ²	Main parties	Intensity ³
			Trend ⁴
Africa ⁵			
Angola (Cabinda)	Internal	Government, armed group FLEC-FAC, Cabinda Forum for Dialogue	3
	Self-government, Resources		↑
Burkina Faso	Internationalised internal	Government, political opposition, state security forces, civil society, armed groups operating in the Sahel region, France	3
	Government		↑
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	Internal	Government, political and social opposition of the English-speaking provinces of North West and South West, armed groups ADF, SOCADEF and SCDF	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Central Africa (LRA)	International	AU regional force (RTF, composed of the Ugandan, Congolese and South Sudanese Armed Forces), Operation Observant Compass (USA), self-defence militias from DRC and South Sudan, LRA, the former Central African armed coalition Séléka	2
	Resources		↓
Chad	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		=
Congo, Rep. of	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		=
Côte d'Ivoire	Internationalised internal	Government, militias loyal to former President Laurent Gbagbo, mercenaries, UNOCI	2
	Government, Identity, Resources		↑
Djibouti	Internal	Government, armed group FRUD, political and social opposition (UAD/ USN coalition)	1
	Government		↑
DRC	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
DRC – Rwanda ⁶	International	Governments of DRC and Rwanda, ADF, M23 (former CNDP), LRA, armed groups operating in Ituri	1
	Identity, Government, Resources		=
DRC – Uganda ⁷	International	Governments of DRC and Rwanda, ADF, M23 (former CNDP), LRA, armed groups operating in Ituri	1
	Identity, Government, Resources, Territory		=
Equatorial Guinea	Internal	Government, political opposition in exile	1
	Government		=
Eritrea	Internationalised internal	Government, internal political and social opposition, political-military opposition coalition EDA (EPDF, EFD, EIPJD, ELF, EPC, DMLEK, RSADO, ENSF, EIC, Nahda), other groups	2
	Government, Self-government, Identity		↑
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Internationalised	Eritrea, Ethiopia	2
	Territory		=

1. This column includes the states in which socio-political crises are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. This last option is used in cases involving more than one socio-political crisis in the same state or in the same territory within a state, for the purpose of distinguishing them.
2. This report classifies and analyses socio-political crises using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the internal or international policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). Regarding the second type, the socio-political crises may be of an internal, internationalised internal or international nature. As such, an internal socio-political crisis involves actors from the state itself who operate exclusively within its territory. Secondly, internationalised internal socio-political crises are defined as those in which at least one of the main actors is foreign and/or the crisis spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Thirdly, international socio-political crises are defined as those that involve conflict between state or non-state actors of two or more countries.
3. The intensity of a socio-political crisis (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation, decrease, no changes) is mainly evaluated on the basis of the level of violence reported and the degree of socio-political mobilisation.
4. This column compares the trend of the events of 2017 with 2016, using the ↑ symbol to indicate that the general situation during 2017 is more serious than in the previous one, the ↓ symbol to indicate an improvement in the situation and the = symbol to indicate that no significant changes have taken place.
5. Las situaciones de tensión relativas a Camerún, Chad y Níger presentes en el 2016 debidas a la inestabilidad generada por el conflicto armado de Boko Haram se analizan en el capítulo 1 (Conflictos armados) en el caso Región Lago Chad (Boko Haram).
6. This title refers to international tensions between DRC–Rwanda–Uganda that appeared in previous editions of this report. Even though they share certain characteristics, DRC–Rwanda and DRC–Uganda are analysed separately since Alert 2016!
7. Ibid.

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Africa			
Ethiopia	Internal	Government (EPRDF coalition, led by the party TPLF), political and social opposition, various armed groups	3
	Government		=
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Internal	Central government, regional government, political opposition (OFDM, OPC parties) and social opposition, armed opposition (OLF, IFLO)	3
	Self-government, Identity		=
Gambia	Internal	Government, factions of the Armed Forces, political opposition	1
	Government		↓
Guinea	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, political parties in the opposition, trade unions	1
	Government		↑
Guinea-Bissau	Internal Internationalised	Transitional government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties, international drug trafficking networks	1
	Government		↑
Kenya	Internal Internationalised	Government, ethnic militias, political and social opposition (political parties and civil society organisations), armed group SLDF, Mungiki sect, MRC party, Somali armed group al-Shabaab and groups that support al-Shabaab in Kenya, ISIS	3
	Government, System, Resources, Identity, Self-government		↑
Lesotho	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, opposition political parties	2
	Government		↑
Madagascar	Internal	High Transitional Authority, opposition leaders, state security forces, dahalos (cattle rustlers), self-defence militias, private security companies	1
	Government, Resources		=
Morocco	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Morocco – Western Sahara	International ⁸	Morocco, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), armed group POLISARIO Front	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		=
Mozambique	Internal	Government, former armed group RENAMO, islamist armed group al-Shabaab	3
	Government, System		↓
Niger	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, external and internal armed groups (Sahel region)	3
	Government, System		↑
Nigeria	Internal	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, farmers and livestock raisers, community militias, IMN, IPOB, MASSOB	3
	Identity, Resources, Government		↑
Nigeria (Delta Níger)	Internal	Government, armed groups MEND, MOSOP, NDPVF and NDV, Joint Revolutionary Council, militias from the Ijaw, Itsekere, Urhobo and Ogoni communities, private security groups	2
	Identity, Resources		↑
Rwanda	Internal Internationalised	Government, Rwandan armed group FDLR, political opposition, dissident factions of the governing party (RPF), Rwandan diaspora in other African countries and in the West	1
	Government, Identity		=
Senegal (Casamance)	Internal	Government, armed group MFDC and its various factions	1
	Self-government		↑
Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland)	Internal	Republic of Somaliland, autonomous region of Puntland, Khatumo State	1
	Territory		=
Sudan	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
Sudan – South Sudan	International	Sudan, South Sudan	1
	Resources, Identity		=

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

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Africa			
Togo	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Tunisia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including the Uqba bin Nafi Battalion and the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigades (branch of AQIM), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS	2
	Government, System		↓
Uganda	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
Zimbabwe	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
America			
Bolivia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition (political parties, authorities and civil society organisations from the eastern regions)	1
	Government, Self-government, Resources		=
El Salvador	Internal	Government, state security force groups, gangs (Mara Salvatrucha-13, Mara/Barrio/Calle 18, 18 Revolucionarios, 18 Sureños)	2
	Government		↓
Guatemala	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, gangs	1
	Government		=
Haiti	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, MINUSTAH, former military officers	1
	Government		↓
Honduras	Internal	Government, political opposition, social movements, organised crime structures (drug trafficking, gangs)	2
	Government		↑
Mexico	Internal	Government, political and social opposition (peasant and indigenous organisations, unions, students), armed opposition groups (EZLN, EPR, ERPI, FAR-LP), cartels	2
	System, Government		↑
Peru	Internal	Government, armed opposition (remnants of Shining Path), political and social opposition (farmer and indigenous organisations)	1
	Government, Resources		=
Venezuela	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		↑
Asia			
Bangladesh	Internal	Government (Awami League), political opposition (Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami), International Crimes Tribunal, armed groups (Ansar-al-Islami, JMB)	2
	Government		↓
China (Xinjiang)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition	1
	Self-government, System, Identity		=
China (Tibet)	Internationalised internal	Chinese government, Dalai Lama and Tibetan government-in-exile, political and social opposition in Tibet and in neighbouring provinces and countries	1
	Self-government, Identity, System		=
China – Japan	International	China, Japan	1
	Territory, Resources		↓
India (Assam)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups ULFA, ULFA(I), NDFB, NDFB(ICS), KPLT, NSLA, UPLA and KPLT	2
	Self-government, Identity		↓
India (Manipur)	Internal	Government, armed groups PLA, PREPAK, PREPAK (Pro), KCP, KYKL, RPF, UNLF, KNF, KNA	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
India (Nagaland)	Internal	Government, armed groups NSCN-K, NSCN-IM, NSCN (K-K), NSCN-R, NNC, ZUF	1
	Identity, Self-government		↓

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Asia			
India – Pakistan	International	India, Pakistan	3
	Identity, Territory		↑
Indonesia (West Papua)	Internal	Government, armed group OPM, political and social opposition (autonomist or secessionist organisations, indigenous and human rights organisations), indigenous Papuan groups, Freeport mining company	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		=
Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea	International	DPR Korea, Rep. of Korea	2
	System		↓
Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea ⁹	International	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia	3
	Government		↑
Kyrgyzstan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	1
	System, Government, Identity, Resources, Territory		↑
Nepal	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Pakistan	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed opposition (Taliban militias, political party militias), Armed Forces, secret services	3
	Government, System		↓
Sri Lanka	Internal	Government, political and social opposition, Tamil political and social organizations	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Tajikistan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, former warlords, regional armed groups, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan	2
	Government, System, Resources, Territory		=
Thailand	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		=
Uzbekistan	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, regional armed groups, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan	1
	Government, System		↓
Europe			
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	International	Government of Azerbaijan, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, government of Armenia	3
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Belarus	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Internationalised internal	Central government, government of the Republika Srpska, government of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation, high representative of the international community	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Cyprus	Internationalised internal	Government of Cyprus, government of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Greece, Turkey	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Georgia (Abkhazia)	Internal Internationalised	Government of Georgia, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Georgia (South Ossetia)	Internationalised internal	Government of Georgia, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Macedonia	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	1
	Government		↑

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

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Europe			
Moldova, Rep. of (Transdnistria)	Internationalised internal	Government of Moldova, government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Transdnistria, Russia	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Russia	Internationalised internal	Government, social and political opposition, armed groups including ISIS	2
	Government, System		↑
Russia (Chechnya)	Internal	Federal Russian government, government of the Chechen Republic, armed opposition groups	2
	System, Government, Identity		↑
Serbia – Kosovo	International ¹⁰	Government of Serbia, government of Kosovo, political and social representatives of the Serbian community in Kosovo, UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX	1
	Self-government, Identity, Government		↑
Spain (Catalonia)	Internal	Government of Spain, Government of Catalonia, pro-independence and anti-independence political parties, civil society actors, judiciary	1
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Turkey	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, ISIS, Fetullah Gülen organization	2
	Government, System		↓
Middle East			
Bahrein	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government, Identity		↑
Egypt	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	3
	Government		=
Iran	Internal	Government, political and social opposition	2
	Government		↑
Iran (northwest)	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group PJAK and PDKI, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)	2
	Self-government, Identity		=
Iran (Sistan and Balochistan)	Internal Internationalised	Government, armed groups Jundullah (Soldiers of God / People's Resistance Movement), Harakat Ansar Iran and Jaish al-Adl, Pakistan	2
	Self-government, Identity		=
Iran – USA, Israel ¹¹	International	Iran, USA, Israel	2
	System, Government		↑
Iraq (Kurdistan)	Internal Internationalised	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran, PKK	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources, Territory		↑
Israel – Syria – Lebanon	International	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah (party and militia)	2
	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	3
	Government, System		↑
Palestine	Internal	PNA, Fatah, armed group al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Hamas and its armed wing Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Salafist groups	1
	Government		=
Saudi Arabia	Internationalised internal	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including AQAP and branches of ISIS (Hijaz Province, Najd Province)	2
	Government, Identity		=

10. The socio-political crisis between Kosovo and Serbia is considered “international” because even though its international legal status remains unclear, Kosovo has been recognised as a state by over 100 countries.

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

Socio-political crisis	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Middle East			
Yemen (south)	Internal	Government, secessionist and autonomist opposition groups from the south (including the South Yemen Movement/al-Hiraak al-Janoubi)	2
	Self-government, Resources, Territory		=

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

2.2. Socio-political crises: analysis of trends in 2017

This section is devoted to a global and regional analysis of the general trends observed in contexts of socio-political crisis throughout 2017.

2.2.1. Global trends

Eighty-eight (88) scenarios of socio-political crisis were identified worldwide in 2017. As in previous years, the largest number of socio-political crises was in Africa, with 37 cases, followed by Asia (18), Europe (13), the Middle East (12) and Latin America (8).

Although the total number of socio-political crises is very similar to that of the previous year (87), the cases varied considerably. Specifically, seven cases were no longer considered socio-political crises in 2017 due to a clear and sustained reduction in the levels of tension, such as Indonesia (Aceh), Kazakhstan, Thailand-Cambodia, Armenia, Russia (Ingushetia) and Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria). Seven cases also were added to the list of crises due to rising levels of violence or social mobilisation: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Morocco, Togo, Belarus, Spain (Catalonia), Iran and China (Xinjiang). The latter had been considered an armed conflict until 2016, and was no longer viewed as such due to the drop in violence there in 2016 and 2017.

Although these crises can be explained by multiple factors, the analysis of the global situation in 2017 enables one to identify trends in their main causes or motivations. In line with the data observed in previous years, **the 68% of the socio-political crises around the world included among their main causes the opposition to domestic or international policies implemented by the respective governments**, leading to conflicts to gain or erode power, or opposition to their political, social or ideological systems. In Latin America, for example, all the crises identified were linked to one of these two variables. **Half the crises (45%) included among their main causes demands for self-government and/or identity aspirations, but this proportion was clearly higher in Europe (nearly 70%) and Asia (over 55%).** Disputes over the control of territory and/or resources

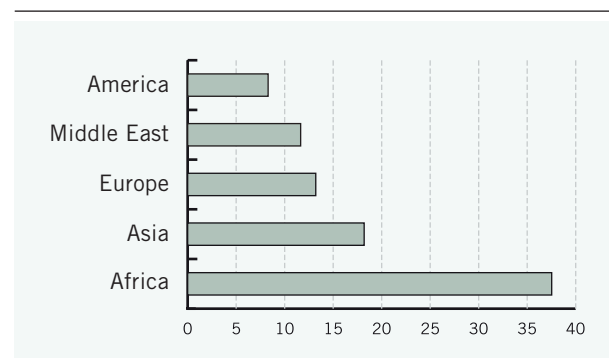
were particularly important in about one third of the crises (34%), though this is a factor that fuels many crisis situations to varying degrees.

In keeping with previous years, **slightly over half the crises in the world were internal (48 cases or 54%).** Latin America was particularly paradigmatic in this regard, as practically all cases there (except Haiti) were of this type. Furthermore, **almost one third of the crises worldwide were internationalised internal (26 cases or 30%),** but this percentage was clearly higher in Europe (54% of cases) and the Middle East (42%) and significantly lower in Africa (19%) and Latin America (13%). Finally, **one sixth of the crises were international (14 cases, or 16%),** though none of this type was identified in Latin

America. The trends of 40% of the crises did not change significantly, whereas there was a certain improvement in 18% and the remaining 42% worsened in comparison with 2016. In every part of the world, except in Asia, there were many more cases of crises worsening than improving. This was especially true in Africa, where 16 crises got worse and only four got better, Europe (nine and five, respectively) and the Middle East (five and zero, respectively). In aggregate terms, the number of crises that worsened was comfortably double the number of those that improved.

Nearly half the socio-political crises in 2017 were of low intensity (47%, well below the 54% reported in 2016), one third were of medium intensity (compared to 22% the previous year) and one fifth (18 cases) had high levels of tension, more than half of them in Africa. Compared

Graph 2.1. Regional distribution of the number of socio-political crises in 2017



to the previous year, the number of serious crises fell slightly (20% in 2017 compared to 24% in 2016) because several that had experienced high levels of tension in 2016 de-escalated during 2017. This was the case of Tunisia, El Salvador, North Korea-South Korea, India (Assam), Bangladesh, Turkey and Israel-Syria-Lebanon. However, three scenarios that had reported medium levels of tension in 2016 had substantially higher levels of conflict and were considered high-intensity in 2017: Burkina Faso, Niger and Venezuela.

The most serious crises in Africa in 2017 took place in **Angola (Cabinda)**, where armed clashes between the Angolan Armed Forces and the FLEC-FAC continued in the enclave of Cabinda whilst tensions rose across the country due to the legislative and presidential elections and demonstrations and protests over economic and social issues; **Burkina Faso**, where attacks by jihadist armed groups increased markedly, especially in the north of the country; **Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)**, where the proclamation in October of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, bringing together two English-speaking regions, caused an unprecedented increase in violence in North West and South West provinces and pushed the country to the brink of armed conflict; **Ethiopia**, where what has been described as the largest anti-government demonstration in the last decade continued following a government crackdown on protests, causing the deaths of hundreds of people and the arrest of 23,000 by the end of 2017; **Ethiopia (Oromia)**, where several hundred people lost their lives as a result of increased operations by the so-called Liyu Police in the Oromia region, a hotspot of protest against the Ethiopian regime that began in late 2015; **Kenya**, where a serious and complex situation of tension and violence took hold, including political demonstrations linked to the elections held in 2017, the actions of the Islamist armed group al-Shabaab, the counterinsurgency operations of the Kenyan Armed Forces and security forces, the growing presence of ISIS since 2016 and persistent intercommunity clashes; **Mozambique**, where despite the progress achieved in negotiations between the government and the opposition group RENAMO, tensions increased at the end of the year when an Islamist-inspired armed group calling itself al-Shabaab emerged in the north of the country; **Niger**, where insecurity increased in several border areas due to attacks by Boko Haram and other jihadist-inspired armed groups; **Nigeria**, where the military campaign against Boko Haram continued in the northeast, tensions rose between the central government and separatist movements in the southern region of Biafra and many acts of violence were reported between Fulani cattle communities and farming communities in the central belt of the country; and the **DRC**, where a notable escalation of violence in the Kasai region joined the serious nationwide political and social crisis stemming from the expiration of President Joseph Kabila's term of office.

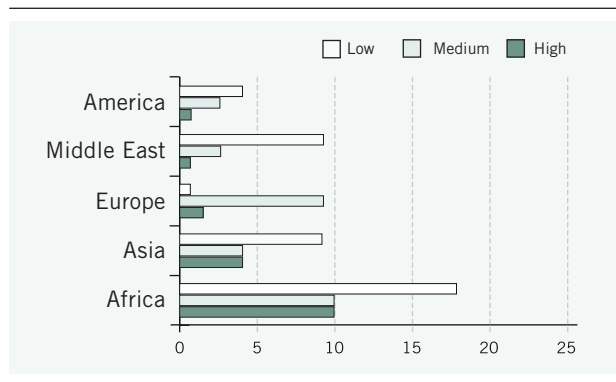
One fifth of the crises worldwide were of high intensity, more than half of which were in Africa

The highest-intensity crises outside Africa were in **Venezuela**, where over 120 people died during the largest anti-government protests in recent years; **Korea, DPR–USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea**, where the tension between North Korea and much of the international community rose due to Pyongyang's progress in nuclear and ballistic capabilities; **India (Manipur)**, where dozens of people were killed in the conflict between the central government and several Manipuri insurgent groups; **India-Pakistan**, where several armed clashes were reported between both countries' security forces along the so-called Line of Control separating them; **Pakistan**, where episodes of violence were linked to several sources of tension, including the national political crisis that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif; **Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)**, where dozens of people were killed in 2017 during ceasefire violations and incidents with heavy weapons around the line of contact; **Egypt**, where repression persisted against the opposition and critical media outlets; and **Lebanon**, where a complex political situation arose linked to the consequences of the armed conflict in Syria and violence within the local Palestinian community.

2.2.2. Regional trends

Africa remained the main setting for socio-political crises around the world in 2017, as it was home to 42%, a figure relatively similar to those in recent years. However, compared to the previous year, three new cases were included where the levels of conflict increased over those in 2016: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Morocco and Togo. As mentioned earlier, **over half the high-intensity crises worldwide (10 out of a total of 18) took place in Africa in 2017: Angola (Cabinda), Burkina Faso, Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and the DRC.** Regarding the most intense crises of the previous year, the political and social conflict relaxed in Tunisia, but increased in Burkina Faso, where attacks by armed jihadist groups operating in the Sahel region escalated, and Niger, where attacks by Boko Haram and other jihadist armed groups led to the creation of the G5 Sahel multinational counterinsurgency force by Niger, Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. About half the socio-political crises in Africa (16) deteriorated, whilst only some improvement in tension was observed in four: The Gambia; Central Africa (LRA), where there was a significant dip in armed activity by the LRA, despite continued military operations to dismantle the group in the triangle between the CAR, the DRC and South Sudan; Mozambique, where tensions fell significantly due to progress in the peace negotiations between the FRELIMO-controlled government and the former armed group RENAMO, including the first direct meeting between the country's president and the leader

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



of RENAMO in recent years;¹² and Tunisia, where several armed groups remained active and political atmosphere remained tense due to the country's economic and social problems in recent years, but with less intensity and less deadly violence than occurred in 2016.

Furthermore, a large majority of the crises in Africa were internal (65%), in a similar vein to previous years. Just under one fifth of the crises showed signs of internationalisation (19%), including the presence and activity of foreign actors, whether various kinds of armed non-state actors, like the armed organisation al-Shabaab (from Somalia) in Kenya, regional or global jihadist groups in Niger and Burkina Faso and the growing establishment of ISIS in countries such as Kenya, the presence of international troops, such as UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire, and the influence of diaspora groups, like in Eritrea and Rwanda, for example. Only six of the 37 crises in Africa were international, most of them in the Great Lakes region, Central Africa and the Horn of Africa: notably, those in Central Africa (LRA), Eritrea-Ethiopia, Morocco-Western Sahara, DRC-Rwanda, DRC-Uganda and Sudan-South Sudan. However, none reported rising tensions in 2017.

Asia was the continent with the highest percentage of international crises, three of which were located in northeastern Asia

The crises were multi-causal in nature, in line with the worldwide trend. **Nearly three quarters of the socio-political crises in Africa (27 of the 37 cases, or 73%) were linked to opposition to the government** and four cases (Kenya, Mozambique, Niger and Tunisia) were also characterised by opposition to the system. Three of these four cases (Kenya, Mozambique and Niger) are among the most intense in Africa, whilst Tunisia was considered a high-intensity crisis the previous year. Moreover, the main causes of 38% of the crises in Africa included identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government, with both variables converging in four contexts: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Eritrea, Ethiopia (Oromia) and Morocco-Western Sahara. The situation in Cameroon is particularly noteworthy, where unprecedented demonstrations in the country's regions with an English-speaking majority, North West and South West, led to the proclamation

of the so-called Republic of Ambazonia and the most intense political standoff in recent years. The struggle for control over resources was also an important aspect in more than one third (specifically 35%) of the crises in Africa.

Asia reported 18 crises, two less than last year. The conflict in the Xinjiang region of China was recategorised as a socio-political crisis (and was no longer considered an armed conflict) due to the clear and sustained reduction of violence over the past two years, even though many argue that the government and certain media outlets friendly to Beijing are covering up a good many episodes of violence that occur in the region also known as East Turkestan or Uyghurstan. However, three other cases stopped being considered socio-political crises due to the falling levels of tension in recent years: Indonesia (Aceh), Kazakhstan and Thailand-Cambodia. **The most intense contexts in Asia were in India (Manipur), Pakistan, India-Pakistan and between several countries and North Korea as a result of its nuclear programme.** In all these cases except Pakistan, the situation deteriorated as compared to the previous year. However, several contexts that were considered high-intensity in 2016, namely Bangladesh, India (Assam) and the dispute between North Korea and South Korea, reported only medium levels of tension in 2017. Unlike in many other parts of the world, where a significant proportion of the crises deteriorated throughout 2017, almost half the cases in Asia (eight) noted no significant change, one third (six) saw an improvement and only four reported higher levels of tension: North Korea and the United States, Japan and South Korea; India (Manipur); India-Pakistan; and Kyrgyzstan. Except for Kyrgyzstan, the rest of the contexts where the situation deteriorated in 2017 already had high levels of intensity.

Asia was the continent with the highest percentage of international crises, three of which were located in northeastern Asia, specifically in the area between the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea: the dispute between China and Japan (mainly over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands) and the tension between North Korea and its southern neighbour, as well as with several other countries regarding its weapons programme. The other international crisis was the historical dispute between India and Pakistan. One third of the crises in Asia were internal, but clearly had an international dimension. In most of these cases, the main internationalising factor was the presence of regional armed groups, such as in three countries in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), or the transnational links of local armed organisations, like in the Chinese province of Xinjiang and the Indian state of Assam. The dispute in the

12. See "Mozambique: a second chance for peace" in chapter 5 (Opportunities for peace in 2018).

Chinese province of Tibet has an international dimension due to the Tibetan government-in-exile in northern India and the demonstrations of the Tibetan diaspora, especially in several countries bordering with China.

The root causes of 10 of the 18 crises in Asia were linked to opposition to the system or to the government. Both variables coincided in four of them (Pakistan and the three former Soviet Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), whilst in three others (the Chinese provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang and the dispute between North Korea and South Korea), only opposition to the system was identified as one of the fundamental sources of tension. The causes of 10 other contexts (55%) were related to identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government. Finally, the control of resources and territory was also a factor in one third of the crises in Asia.

In keeping with previous years, **the Americas** had the lowest number of crises worldwide, with a total of eight in 2018 (9%). Half were of low intensity, whilst only one was of high intensity: Venezuela, which in 2017 witnessed the most serious protests and episodes of violence in recent years. However, **even though Latin America is the part the world with the fewest socio-political crises (and armed conflicts), which tend to be of low or medium intensity, several countries there also suffer some of the highest homicide rates worldwide.** In fact, a large part of the countries in crisis in Latin America suffer high homicide rates, either in relative terms (such as Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala or Venezuela) or in absolute terms (like Mexico). Furthermore, all the crises in Latin America were internal, with the exception of Haiti, where MINUSTAH has played a leading role in political and social tension for many years. Mention must also be made of the transnational links of some actors (such as the so-called *maras* or “gangs”) in the countries of the so-called Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras). In fact, in some cases it could even be said that a single structure (such as Mara Salvatrucha or M18) has a stable presence in several countries of the region.

Three crises deteriorated in the Americas during the year: Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela. Honduras experienced the worst socio-political crisis in recent years when the disputed results of the November presidential election provoked mass protests in which at least 30 people died. In Mexico, the homicide rate rose by 27% over the previous year and reached the highest figure in the last 20 years, according to public data, whilst in Venezuela more than 120 people were killed and over 2,000 were injured in anti-government protests reported in the first half of the year. Tensions eased in two other cases (El Salvador and Haiti). Special mention should be made of the case of El Salvador, which despite being

In Latin America, Venezuela witnessed the most intense anti-government protests in recent years

The political and social situation worsened in nine of the 13 crises in Europe

the Central American country with the highest rates of violence, saw the homicide rate drop significantly (about 25%) as compared to the previous year, establishing the trend of a falling homicide rate over the last two years. **The main causes of the eight crises identified in Latin America included opposition to government policies,** which took the form of protests of different types and various levels of intensity, such as those in Venezuela and Honduras. In some cases, this factor combined with other causes, such as demands for self-government (Bolivia) and disputes over access to or the use of resources (Bolivia, Peru).

In line with the trend of previous years, the vast majority of the crises in **Europe** (almost 70%) were of low intensity, but it was also the continent where the highest percentage of crises deteriorated. Specifically, the political and social situation worsened in nine of the 13 crises. Special mention should be made of the situation in Russia, where the armed activity of organisations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda increased and where political tension spiked after the presidential election of March 2018, which led to the largest anti-government protests in recent years. Also in Russia, in the conflict between the government and several jihadist organisations in the Chechen Republic, episodes of violence became deadlier and more frequent, causing the deaths of around 60 people, alongside the largest rise in the number of kidnappings since the Second Chechen War of the 1990s. In other cases like Spain (Catalonia), which was not considered crises in 2016, political and social tensions rose sharply. Conversely, the Caucasian republics of Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria ceased to be considered crises due to the clear drop in tension as compared to previous years. Also worthy of note was the decrease in armed hostilities in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. This conflict is the most intense in the entire region. Although over 50 people were killed as a result of ceasefire violations and armed incidents (some with large-calibre weapons) around the line of contact, the situation improved significantly as compared to the previous year, in which more than 200 people lost their lives. Finally, Turkey presents a case of a crisis in Europe whose intensity decreased in 2017. Although the state of emergency was upheld and episodes of violence and serious and massive violations of human rights continued, the crisis subsided as compared to 2016, when an attempted coup caused the deaths of over 260 people and scores of people were killed in several attacks for which the armed group ISIS claimed responsibility.

Regarding the root causes of the crises, Europe is where disputes were related to identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government at the highest rate. Specifically, nearly 70% were linked to these factors, in

line with previous years. Furthermore, the main causes of over 60% of the socio-political crises in Europe included certain groups' opposition to government policies or to the system as a whole. In the three cases where both opposition to the government and opposition to the system were reported, Russia, Russia (Chechnya) and Turkey, jihadist groups sought to establish religious political systems, such as ISIS and the Caucasian Emirate. Finally, control of territory was a factor present in two of the most enduring crises in the region: the dispute between the government of Cyprus and the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan. **Over half the tensions in Europe were internationalised internal, underscoring the role that foreign governments play in certain contexts.** Some of the most important examples in the region were the roles of Greece and Turkey in Cyprus and Russia's role in some self-proclaimed independent regions in countries that had been part of the USSR: Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova. At least one third of the crises were internal, whilst two were considered international: Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Serbia-Kosovo.

Not one of the 12 crises reported in the Middle East improved over the previous year

Finally, 12 crises were reported in the **Middle East**, a figure similar to the previous year but joined by Iran due to the rising tensions in late 2017. At the same time, large demonstrations were reported in Iran over economic issues, such as prices, unemployment and corruption, which became more political and turned into one of the major social crises of the decade, as many people were killed and more than a thousand were arrested. The Middle East was the region of the world with the lowest number and percentage of low-intensity crises (only one, or 8%). Most cases were of medium intensity, whilst two experienced high levels of tension: Egypt and Lebanon. Though the region only had these two high-intensity crises, not a single crisis improved over the previous year. The situations of seven crises remained at levels similar to those of the previous year, whilst tensions rose in five others: Bahrain, where there were more demonstrations and episodes of violence, causing the deaths of several people, and the government cracked down harder on opposition groups; Iran, as explained above; Iran-USA, Israel, where tensions rose substantially again after the US government expressed the possibility of revising the 2015 nuclear agreement; Iraq (Kurdistan), where relations between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government were strained after the Kurdish region held a referendum on independence, which provoked reactions from Iran or Turkey; and Lebanon, where the deadliness of the many episodes of violence increased, mainly due to the action taken by Lebanese security forces against several armed groups operating on the Syrian border and to Hezbollah's operations against these same groups on both sides of the border and in close cooperation with the Syrian government.

The situation in the Middle East was characterised by the complexity in terms of the causes of the crises. **The 58% of the crises (seven) included among their main causes the opposition to the government's domestic or international policies or the system.** In half the crises (six), the factor of identity aspirations and/or demands for self-government was also an outstanding motivation. As elsewhere, the dispute over resources and/or territory was also a main cause, applying to one quarter of the cases, and fuelled many different situations to varying degrees. Five of the crises in the region were internal and two were international: the dispute between Iran and the US and Israel over the Iranian nuclear programme, despite the nuclear agreement signed in 2015; and the crisis involving Israel, Syria and Lebanon, linked to the regional dynamics and consequences of the conflicts in Syria and in Israel-Palestine, as well as to the role played by both Israel and Syria in Lebanon. Factors of internationalisation in the five internationalised internal crises in the Middle East included groups with regional or international affiliations (such as ISIS in Lebanon and AQAP in Saudi Arabia), local groups with bases abroad or that launched attacks from abroad (PJAK and PDKI in Iran, among others) and the involvement of foreign governments, such as the roles played by Iran and Turkey in the crisis in the Kurdish region in Iraq.

2.3. Socio-political crises: annual evolution

2.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Angola (Cabinda)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, FLEC-FAC armed group, Cabinda Forum for Dialogue

Summary:

In 1963, during the early years of the war of independence against Portugal, the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) was formed in the oil field region. Since it was founded it demanded the right to self-determination for Cabinda from Portugal, and began the armed struggle against the Angolan government after the country obtained independence in 1975. After the end of the civil war in Angola in 2002, the government focused its efforts on solving the problem of Cabinda by political or military means. Since then, there have been numerous reports of human rights violations in the region. In 2006, the government achieved a peace agreement with the FLEC-R (Renovated) faction, led by Antonio Bento-Bembe, which was rejected by the FLEC-FAC faction led by N'Zita Tiago,

which continued to attack the army's positions in Cabinda. This territory provides 60% of the country's oil production.

The strained atmosphere and sporadic incidents of violence that began in the enclave of Cabinda in 2016 continued, along with rising tensions in the country as a whole resulting from the legislative and presidential elections and demonstrations and protests linked to economic and social grievances. Following the government's announcement of a return to hostilities on 18 February 2016 due to its refusal to resume the peace talks, the worst incidents were reported in Cabinda in years and continued over the course of 2017. Moreover, several analysts pointed out that the death of N'zita Tiago in 2016 had left a vacuum in the leadership of the group that could be exploited by its more belligerent factions to step up activity against the Angolan security forces. Thus, different armed clashes took place **between the FLEC-FAC and the Angolan Armed Forces** over the course of the year. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) confirmed that there was a significant uptick in protests, demonstrations and violence against civilians in 2016 and 2017, though it is challenging to account for real losses because the government of Angola has continued to deny that violence has risen in the enclave.¹³

Notably, the FLEC-FAC reported several ambushes, including one that killed seven soldiers in the Buco-Zau area on 19 June and another that killed eight soldiers in Munenga on 28 February. The bloodiest battle of the year took place between 3 and 10 February in Necuto, claiming the lives of 18 soldiers and wounding 10. In February, the insurgent movement called on the local population to boycott the August elections. Commander Alfonso Nsau repeated that he would not accept any foreign presence in the territory and warned the country's political parties not to conduct an election campaign in Cabinda. The elections were unsurprisingly won by Joao Lourenço, the MPLA candidate to succeed President José Eduardo dos Santos, who had been in power since 1979. However, despite accusations of electoral fraud (four parties pressed for a recount in September), the MPLA obtained fewer seats than in previous elections (150 of 220), as it received 175 in 2012 and 191 in 2008. Likewise, ACLED stressed that the number of protests in 2017 was five times higher than in the 2012 elections and that pressure on dissidents increased with the arrest of activists and journalists. Finally, tensions rose in the Lunda region, where several groups demonstrated, calling for greater autonomy.

In the Cabinda region of Angola, the escalation of tension and violence that began in 2016 persisted

Central Africa (LRA)¹⁴

Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Resources International
Main parties:	AU regional force (RTF, composed of the Ugandan, Congolese and South Sudanese Armed Forces), Operation Observant Compass (USA), self-defence militias from DRC and South Sudan, LRA, the former Central African armed coalition Séléka

Summary:

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

The armed group LRA remained active during the year and military operations to dismantle the group continued in the triangle formed between the CAR, the DRC and South Sudan. The most affected areas were the eastern CAR (Haut Kotto, Mbomou and Haut Mbomou) and the northeastern DRC (the provinces of Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé and Garamba National Park), since no acts of violence were reportedly committed by the LRA on the South Sudanese side of the border between DRC and South Sudan. **According to the LRA Crisis Tracker project, 125 violent incidents were reported during the year (200 in 2016), in which 14 civilians died (22 in**

13. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Dataset ACLED 2016.

14. This name refers to the armed conflict known as "Uganda (north)" in previous reports. Since the end of 2008, the scenario of operations in this conflict has been the border triangle with DR Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Therefore, the armed conflict is considered international, although it shares some elements included in the internationalised internal type.

2016) and 406 people were temporarily or permanently abducted (729 in 2016), indicating an overall drop in activities committed by the LRA.¹⁵ Garamba National Park continued to be a key centre for poaching and gold mining for the LRA. Most of the activities of the active LRA subgroups consisted of looting, ambushes, temporary abductions and sexual violence. The dry season, which runs from March to June, coincided with the intensification of incidents attributed to the LRA.

On 29 March, the US announced that it was ending Operation Observant Compass, which had supported the AU-Regional Task Force that carried out counter-insurgency operations against the LRA because the group had ostensibly been weakened in recent years, shrinking to only around 100 combatants. According to HRW, the cost of the mission was also a decisive factor in its withdrawal. Uganda, the country on which the weight of the operation fell, also announced that it was pulling out of the regional mission, and in May the security of the southeastern CAR was formally handed over to CAR security forces. Although the group no longer poses a military threat, several Central African organisations warned that the withdrawal could have negative consequences for civilians, since former Séléka militias could fill the security vacuum. The drop-off of attacks conducted by the LRA in recent times has been replaced by the kidnappings of civilians, which implies new approaches for protecting civilians. The attacks against MINUSCA by the armed groups restricted the mission's ability to respond to incidents in the areas affected by the LRA. On 4 July, the Task Force completed its withdrawal from Yambio, in South Sudan, and moved its general headquarters to Koboko in Uganda.

Chad	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

The foiled coup d'état of 2004 and the constitutional reform of 2005, boycotted by the opposition, sowed the seeds of an insurgency that intensified over the course of 2006, with the goal of overthrowing the authoritarian government of Idriss Déby. This opposition movement is composed of various groups and soldiers who are disaffected with the regime. Added to this is the antagonism between Arab tribes and the black population in the border area between Sudan and Chad, related to local grievances, competition for resources and the overspill of the war taking place in the neighbouring Sudanese region of Darfur, as a consequence of the cross-border operations of Sudanese armed groups and the janjaweed (Sudanese pro-government Arab militias). They attacked the refugee camps and towns in Darfur, located

in the east of Chad, and this contributed to an escalation of tension between Sudan and Chad, accusing each other of supporting the insurgency from the opposite country, respectively. The signature of an agreement between both countries in January 2010 led to a gradual withdrawal and demobilisation of the Chadian armed groups, although there are still some resistance hotspots. In parallel, Idriss Déby continued controlling the country in an authoritarian way. Finally, the activities of the Nigerian group Boko Haram expanded into Chad, posing a threat to its security.

Chad continued to be shaken by the serious political and social crisis linked to the economic crisis caused by the drop in petrol prices and the actions of the Nigerian armed group Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region.¹⁶ After the 2016 election, which was unsurprisingly won by Idriss Déby, the climate of fragility and social instability dragged on. The Chadian economy remained under great pressure due to high security costs amidst declining petrol revenues, which led to a tense social situation. Attempts at dialogue between the government and the political and social opposition were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, although the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency and counterinsurgent armed actions against it were of low intensity during the year, clashes took place from 23 to 25 June between the Chadian Army and militants of the group in a series of islands of Lake Chad in the Bol region, which caused 170 fatalities (162 militants and eight Chadian soldiers), the highest number of combat deaths in the country in the last decade.

Congo, Rep.	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

Since becoming independent from France in 1969, the country has lived in a climate of political instability and violence. Denis Sassou-Nguesso governed since 1979 –after a military coup– until 1992, a period with a Marxist-Leninist single party regime. After the collapse of the communist block and of the Soviet Union, and due to pressure from its main ally, France, a transition to democracy began, with the creation of a multi-party system that led to elections in 1992 where Sassou-Nguesso was defeated by Pascale Lissouba. Together with the political conflict between Lissouba and Sassou-Nguesso, French interests in Congolese oil, also played a pivotal role. Brazzaville was destroyed by the war and the many militias fighting for power. Among them are the Ninja militias, loyal to Frédéric Bintsamou (Ntoumi pastor) and to the political leader Bernard Kolélas, the Prime Minister after the peace agreement that ended the conflict between 1993 and 1994; the Cocoye militias, loyal to the overthrown president Lissouba; and the Cobra militias, followers of President Nguesso. France's support

15. See Invisible Children – Resolve, *LRA Crisis Tracker*, 13 January 2018.

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

to Nguesso was a crucial factor in this war, which ended with the invasion of Angolan troops and Nguesso's return to power, where he remains until this day. Reverend Ntoumi's Ninja militias remained active in their stronghold, the Pool region, and fought Nguesso from 2002 to 2003. Nguesso's attempts at reforming the Constitution to remain in power led to important mobilization against him under the #Sassoufit movement, which was created in 2014, taking the name of the motto of these mobilizations.

Insecurity and sporadic violence that began in 2016 persisted in the Pool region. The security forces took action against Reverend Ntoumi's militias and insecurity persisted in the Pool region throughout the year. **The country has been immersed in a new cycle of political instability** since the government pushed and broadly passed a constitutional reform in October 2015 to lift the limit of two presidential terms, thereby allowing 74-year-old President Denis Sassou-Nguesso to run for a new term of office in March 2016. The prolonged detention of political leaders without trial after the presidential elections generated concern. Although the government announced that it would guarantee fair trials, initial hearings had yet to be held for two former presidential candidates, Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko and André Okombi Salissa, by the end of 2017. In August, the government authorised the medical evacuation to France of another detained opposition leader, Modeste Boukadia, who had been sentenced to 30 years of forced labour.

Regarding the conflict in the Pool region, one of the most notable events of the year was the operation carried out by the security forces against a militia in March that killed 15 combatants, who according to the government planned to attack operations to build the Congo-Ocean railway. At various times of the year, the situation of insecurity paralysed the construction of this railway, which is supposed to connect Brazzaville to Pointe Noire, the main economic axis of the country. In July, the UN announced that 81,000 people had been displaced by violence and insecurity in the Pool region since 2016. Moreover, the humanitarian situation of around 138,000 people was affected by violence and insecurity in the region, and in July 2017 OCHA called for 23.7 million USD to address the humanitarian situation in the area. The conflict led to the cancellation of parliamentary elections in nine of the region's 14 electoral constituencies in July. However, in mid-November the government released some individuals close to the Reverend Ntoumi that had been detained for several months in a prelude to the signature of the ceasefire agreement between the government and opposition representatives of Reverend Ntoumi in December. Congolese Interior Minister Raymond Zéphyrin Mboulou oversaw the signing of the agreement, which aims to end the rebellion launched against the government in April. According to the agreement, Reverend Ntoumi pledges to facilitate the disarmament of his combatants and restore the state's authority in

Pool, whilst the government promises to guarantee the disarmament, demobilisation and social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as freedom of movement and resettlement of the population displaced by violence in the area. A joint commission is expected to be created to supervise implementation of the agreement.

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

Summary:

Between 1998 and 2003, what has been called "Africa's First World War" took place in DRC.¹⁷ The signing of a series of peace agreements between 2002 and 2003 involved the withdrawal of foreign troops and the creation of a National Transitional Government (NTG), incorporating the former government, the political opposition, the RCD-Goma, RCD-K-ML, RCD-N and MLC armed groups, and the Mai Mai militias. From June 2003, the NTG was led by President Joseph Kabila and four vice presidents, two of whom belonged to the former insurgency: Azarias Ruberwa of the RCD-Goma and Jean-Pierre Bemba of the MLC. The NTG drew up the constitution, on which a referendum was held in December 2005. Legislative and presidential elections were held between July and October 2006, in which Kabila was elected president and Jean-Pierre Bemba came second, amid a climate of high tension and accusations of electoral fraud. The formation of the new government in 2007 failed to bring a halt to the instability and disputes taking place in the political sphere. The elections of November 2011, in which a series of irregularities were committed, fuelled the instability.

The country remained gripped by the serious nationwide political and social crisis as a result of the expiration of President Joseph Kabila's term of office in December 2016 and the postponement of national elections, as well as the serious escalation of violence in the region of Kasai.¹⁸ Although the government and the opposition reached an agreement on 31 December, according to which a transition phase was to begin in which President Joseph Kabila would remain in office until the presidential election was held on December 2017, application of the agreement was slow, incomplete and not inclusive, which further worsened the socio-economic situation and increased repression by national security forces, thereby fuelling discontent in the capital and the main urban centres.

Different factors helped to aggravate the political and social situation. First, the political scenario was rattled by the death of Étienne Tshisekedi, the historical opposition figure who led the opposition party UDPS and a great defender of democracy and multipartyism in the country. He had been recognised as a leader amidst

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

18. See the summary on DRC (Kasai) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

a fragmented opposition and his death set off a struggle for leadership and divisions within the UDPS party and the rest of the opposition in order to lead the new stage, with the presidential majority taking advantage of those divisions. Second, growing violence and insecurity in the Kasai region prompted concern about its consequences for implementing the agreement and calling elections.¹⁹ Third, the political and social opposition tried to keep up pressure on the government and the presidential majority throughout the year with sporadic demonstrations and protests to get it to comply with the 31 December agreement and call elections before the end of 2018, to which the security forces responded harshly and repeatedly in a growing use of force that killed dozens and wounded hundreds. Though the protests were milder than in previous years, the security forces' systematic repression and the fragmentation of the opposition enabled the government to step up pressure. According to the UN, the democratic space continued to shrink and there were violations of civil and political rights, particularly the freedoms of peaceful assembly, opinion and expression. Some journalists, political opponents and civil society activists remained subject to threats, harassment and violence.

In July, the government appointed the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement (CNSA) and the CENI declared that the elections could not possibly be held in 2017, as established in the agreement of 31 December 2016, because even though voter registration was almost finished (due to insecurity-related delays in Kasai), there were still many logistical, technical and financing issues pending to be resolved that impeded further progress. In August, Congolese civil society groups called for a non-violent demonstration to force Kabila to resign if the elections were not held in December 2017. Finally, the CENI published the electoral calendar on 5 November. It provides for holding national (presidential and legislative) and provincial elections on 23 December 2018 and for appointing the president in January 2019, more than one year later than stipulated in the agreement of 31 December 2016. The political opposition and civil society groups unanimously rejected the calendar and the announcement triggered a call for new strikes and demonstrations staged sporadically in various locations to express rejection of the delay in the elections and the perpetuation of Kabila's power. These protests were banned and systematically dispersed. Many members of the opposition were arrested. The government justified delaying the elections due to the security situation and logistical and technical problems. The Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) appealed to Kabila to make a public statement to assure that he would not run for re-election. The UN Security Council approved the election calendar presented and, together with the African Union and CENCO, insisted that there be no further delays. The United States and the European Union imposed sanctions on senior security force officers and various organisations and countries

threatened to interrupt the flow of resources to the country in case of further breaches. On 19 December, a year after the end of Kabila's second and last term, a new demonstration was called but lacked staying power, and the year ended in a climate of concern and pessimism about the negative trend of the situation and the disproportionate action taken by the security forces to break up demonstrations called on 31 December that killed seven people.

Horn of Africa

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

Summary:

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

No notable events in Eritrea suggested a change in the situation in 2017. About 12% of the country has fled due to the oppressive regime and prolonged compulsory military service. According to UNHCR, 52,000 people fled the country in 2016 alone. The most remarkable event of the year took place on 31 October, when the **police broke up an exceptional protest in Asmara after the head of an Islamic school was arrested** for opposing the ban on wearing hijab and on religious education. Shots were fired, according to sources from the US embassy in Eritrea, and **activists said that the police had killed 28 people and wounded another 100**, according to AP sources in Ethiopia, though the Eritrean government denied these reports. After these events, the authorities blocked the Internet and arrested hundreds of students

19. See the summary on DRC (Kasai) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

in connection with the protest, whilst deploying military contingents to the capital. Meanwhile, in March, the Ethiopian government announced that it had repelled an attack by around 20 members of the Eritrean-based group Benishangul Gumuz People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), which made an attempt on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on 28 February. Thirteen BPLM fighters died in the fighting, whilst the remaining seven sought refuge in Sudan, according to Ethiopian sources gathered by Newsweek. On 2 March, the Ethiopian government accused Eritrea of training, arming and managing the group, which Asmara denied. However, the contact number on the manifesto had an Eritrean country calling code. Benishangul Gumuz is a region in western Ethiopia, bordering Sudan. The BPLM is part of a coalition of groups opposed to Ethiopia, the Peoples Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (PAFD), according to an announcement made by the PAFD in 2015.

Finally, following the withdrawal of Qatar's mission to monitor the ceasefire on the Ras Doumeira peninsula in mid-June, Eritrea deployed its troops in the territory on 16 June. This area has been disputed between Djibouti and Eritrea since they faced off to control it in 2008, prompting Qatari mediation. Two years later, in 2010, Qatar established a peacekeeping mission in the area that has been there ever since, though the border dispute remains unresolved. Consequently, Djibouti went to the AU to seek its support to resolve the territorial dispute and asked it to send observers to the area. Eritrea said that it would only recognise Qatar as a possible mediator in the dispute.

Ethiopia	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government (EPRDF coalition, led by the party TPLF), political and social opposition, various armed groups

Summary:

The Ethiopian administration that has governed since 1991 is facing a series of opposition movements that demand advances in the democracy and governability of the country, as well as a greater degree of self-government. The government coalition EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) is controlled by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party, of the Tigrayan minority, that rules the country with growing authoritarianism with the consent of the Amhara elite. There is discontent in the country with the ethnic federal regime implemented by the EPRDF which has not resolved the national issue and has led to the consolidation of a strong political and social opposition. Along with the demands for the democratization of the institutions, there are political-military sectors that believe that ethnic federalism does not meet their nationalist demands and other sectors, from the ruling

classes and present throughout the country, that consider ethnic federalism to be a deterrent to the consolidation of the Nation-State. In the 2005 elections this diverse opposition proved to be a challenge for the EPRDF, who was reluctant to accept genuine multi-party competition, and post-election protests were violently repressed.

The climate of instability and social mobilisation against the Ethiopian regime that began in November 2015 persisted, causing the deaths of hundreds of people. However, in early August the government lifted the state of emergency that had been in force for 10 months, since October 2016, which had allowed it to arrest thousands of activists and impose restrictions on freedom of movement and communication, as reported by HRW in August. **Of the 23,000 people arrested, 8,000 were awaiting trial or were being tried. However, what has been described as the largest anti-government mobilisation in the last decade remained active as a result of the government's crackdown on protests.** The initial reasons for the mobilisation are the grievances that have accumulated among the different communities of the country, which are rooted in the state's authoritarian transformation since 1991. Moreover, protests against the Addis Ababa and the Surrounding Oromia Special Zone Integrated Development (Addis Ababa Master Plan) were quelled harshly, causing dozens of victims, which caused the Ethiopian government to abandon the plan in January 2016.²⁰

The state of emergency was lifted on 4 August. However, even though the mass arrests had led to a return to some degree of normalcy regarding the authorities' powers during the state of emergency, the protests and demonstrations that were resumed in October 2016 reached levels similar to those that prompted the state of emergency, highlighting the Ethiopian government's failure to address the protestors' concerns and to open the political space to the opposition, according to the project Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).²¹ Moreover, even though the use of violence to put down the protests was scaled back due to the ban on holding demonstrations, clashes and military operations led by the Liyu Police increased in frequency and deadliness in remote areas of the Oromia region, the heart of the rebellion.²² Several opposition leaders remained in custody and the security forces continued to act with impunity. In addition, militant activity increased on a par with popular unrest. ACLED noted that since November 2015, around 1,200 civilians had been killed during the protests by the security forces in the country and another 2,000 people died in outbreaks of violence and conflicts not directly related to the protests, such as clashes between the security forces and rebel groups and militias, or in situations of violence by these insurgent groups against the civilian population.

20. See "Rising tension in Ethiopia and its consequences" in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios for 2017), in *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Icaria, Barcelona.

21. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, *Ethiopia*, November ACLED-Africa Conflict Trends Report, November 2017.

22. See the summary on Ethiopia (Ogaden) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) and the summary on Ethiopia (Oromia) in this chapter.

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Type:	Identity, Self-government Internal
Main parties:	Central government, regional government, political opposition (OFDM, OPC parties) and social opposition, armed opposition (OLF, IFLO)

Summary:

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

The atmosphere of instability that began in November 2015 persisted, causing the deaths of hundreds of people in the Oromia region, the epicentre of the protests against the Ethiopian regime. Although there were less anti-government protests during the year due to the harsh imposition of the state of emergency that was in force from October 2016 until August 2017, violence by the security forces increased in remote areas of the region. This conflict originates in the student protests that began in 2014 and escalated at the end of 2015, forcing the government to scrap the development plans for the capital, Addis Abeba, and the Surrounding Oromia Special Zone (Addis Abeba Master Plan) in January 2016. This plan envisaged the expansion of the capital at the expense of several cities in the Oromia region, which would become part of Addis Abeba. The Master Plan aimed to organise the city's demographic and urban growth, though it prompted much criticism for its impact on the Oromia region and the marginalisation of the Oromo people in its design.²³

Thus, the Liyu Police ("Special Police") stepped up its military activities in Oromia in 2017. The

The actions of the Liyu Police in the region of Oromia caused over 400 deaths between January and November 2017

Liyu Police²⁴ was created to carry out action against opposition groups in the Ogaden region, where its activity is concentrated, although in recent years it has also supported the actions of the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in the border area between the two countries and has especially expanded its activities to the Oromia region since December 2016, where it has been accused of committing serious human rights violations against border area communities. Though the use of violence to put down the protests was scaled back due to the ban on holding demonstrations during the state of emergency, clashes and military operations led by the Liyu Police increased in frequency and deadliness in remote areas of the Oromia region. Hundreds of people were detained during the year. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED),²⁵ there were 64 attacks and clashes between militias in the Oromia region and the Liyu Police between January and November 2017 in which 434 people were killed. In addition, violence and clashes broke out sporadically between Oromo and Somali herding communities along the border between the Oromia and Somali regions, though the Liyu Police's hand in quelling these outbreaks raised the levels of violence and prompted suspicion among the political opposition of Oromia, since the Oromo community equates the Liyu Police's increased activity to an indirect way for the government to usurp the lands belonging to the Oromo community and break the dissidence even more, according to ACLED.²⁶ Official regional government sources announced in September that the clashes had displaced 55,000 Oromo from the Somali region. Faced with the rise in violence, the EU called for the creation of a commission to investigate the events and the regional parliament expressed its concern and created a commission of inquiry.

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

23. See the summary on Ethiopia in this chapter and "Rising tension in Ethiopia and its consequences", in chapter 6 (Risk scenarios for 2017), in *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Icaria, Barcelona.

24. In 2008, the Liyu Police became a powerful counterinsurgency group led by the region's security chief, Abdi Mohammed Omar, also known as Abdi Illey, who became the president of the Somali region in 2010, although the Liyu Police remained under his command. HRW, Ibid.

25. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, *Ethiopia*, November ACLED-Africa Conflict Trends Report, November 2017.

26. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, Conflict Trends Num. 60, July 2017. *Ethiopia*, November ACLED-Africa Conflict Trends Report, November 2017.

Summary:

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

The country remained immersed in a serious climate of tension and violence, highlighting the growing strains and political mobilisation linked to holding the **elections in 2017**, the actions of the Islamist armed group **al-Shabaab**, the counterinsurgency operations conducted by the **Kenyan Armed Forces and security forces**, the growing presence of **ISIS in the country since 2016** and **persistent intercommunity clashes**. Thus, the Islamist armed group of Somali origin al-Shabaab continued to carry out insurgent attacks in northeastern Kenya, specifically in the border area between Somalia and Kenya (the counties of Mandera, Wajir and Garissa) and in the coastal zone of Kenya (Lamu county and in Mombasa), which caused dozens of fatalities throughout the year. There was also an increase in al-Shabaab's activities on the eve of the elections that took place in the country on 8 August as a result of increased air strikes on the group's strongholds.

Regarding the elections in August, the climate of political tension and social mobilisation rose throughout the year. Dozens of people died in clashes between security forces and political opponents, as well as between

supporters and opponents of the government coalition. Election day, on 8 August, took place amidst a highly strained atmosphere. Plagued by irregularities, the elections were described as fraudulent to the point that the Supreme Court issued a historic ruling accepting the claims, cancelling the results and ordering new elections to be held on 26 October. Incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta staged protest demonstrations and condemned the Supreme Court's decision, though he had previously said that he respected its rulings. With no improvements made in the conditions that facilitated electoral fraud in the August elections, opposition leader Raila Odinga and his opposition coalition, NASA, boycotted the October elections, which Uhuru Kenyatta won for a second and final five-year term. Kenyatta won with 98% of the votes and a turnout of only 38%, clearly lower than the 80% turnout reported in the August elections, which also generated doubts about its legitimacy. The defeated Raila Odinga threatened to proclaim himself president and form a government on 12 December, coinciding with Independence Day, although regional and international pressures made him put off this decision. NASA called for a civil disobedience campaign in order to get a call for new elections. The country ended the year in a climate of mobilisation and high social polarisation as serious as that of the election period in December 2007, which led to the deaths of more than 1,000 people and forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands, according to various analysts.

The elections in Kenya in August, which had been plagued by irregularities, were cancelled and postponed in a historic Supreme Court decision

Local and international organisations denounced the deaths of dozens of people in clashes between security forces and opposition sympathisers in December. **HRW detailed acts of sexual violence and other serious human rights violations and abuses committed during the election period and the gender impacts that they had caused**, many of which were the responsibility of the security forces.²⁷ The Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights documented the deaths of 92 people as a result of clashes between supporters of political parties and the police and identified at least 86 documented cases of sexual violence during the election period. As such, the number of people who died at the hands of the police rose in 2017, as revealed by Deadly Force.²⁸ One hundred and forty-three (143) people were killed by the police in 2015, though this figure was exceeded by 205 people in 2016 and 243 in 2017, accounting for a 41% rise in two years. Finally, various clashes took place between militias linked to different communities throughout the year, mainly due to the theft of cattle, reprisals for previous attacks and land use and ownership issues.

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

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

Maghreb – North Africa

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

Summary:

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

Tunisia continued to be affected by the activity of armed groups and by a climate of internal political tension as a result of its economic and social problems. **Acts of armed violence were not as deadly as in previous years.** Whereas nearly 100 people were killed in attacks, battles and clashes connected to security force operations in 2015 and 2016, respectively, events in 2017 caused the deaths of around 10 people. The incidents took place throughout the year, mainly in the form of jihadist attacks against police headquarters or patrols, bomb attacks, security force operations against suspected armed cells and clashes between troops and suspected jihadists in different parts of the country, including Kebili (south), Sidi Bouzid (centre), Hassi Ferid and Mount Salloum (west), Mount Mghilla (northeast) and the Kasserine region. In the latter area, bordering Algeria, security forces killed the leader of Oqba bin Nafaa, an armed group aligned with AQIM, in August.²⁹ An alleged ISIS offensive to take control of territory in the south of the country was reportedly disrupted and people allegedly linked to armed groups were arrested throughout the period. Local and international security

The Tunisian security forces were accused of using torture and arbitrary detention whilst imposing the state of emergency

sources warned that fighters who had joined armed organisations in Libya, Syria and Iraq could return to the country. According to UN estimates, around 5,000 Tunisian nationals had participated in armed jihadist activity, though local sources lowered this figure to about 3,000.

The state of emergency in force in the country since 2015 was renewed periodically in 2017, and some critics, including the Tunisian League for Human Rights, alerted that government policies were not guaranteeing due process for terrorist suspects. In this vein, **Amnesty International reported that Tunisian security forces were resorting to tactics from the past, including torture, arbitrary detention and harassment of suspects' relatives.** In a report published in February, the organisation described the arbitrary application of a series of measures as part of the state of emergency and documented 23 cases of torture and mistreatment.³⁰ Meanwhile, Tunisia was the scene of several protests against high levels of unemployment, deteriorating living conditions and corruption during the year, which in some cases led to clashes with the police that killed at least one person and injured dozens. Critics questioned the ruling coalition and the president, who explicitly cast doubt on the political system outlined by the new Constitution on the grounds that it limits the powers of the executive branch and pushed to reshuffle his cabinet to place allies in key positions. Measures that came under the most fire included the approval of the so-called "administrative reconciliation law" in September, which granted amnesty to former regime officials involved in corruption cases and the

announcement of another postponement of municipal elections, which were due to be held in December and were rescheduled for March 2018. These would be the first local elections held since the revolt against the regime of Ben Ali and would be used to choose the leaders of 350 municipalities, administered by provisional bodies since 2011.

Southern Africa

Mozambique	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, System Internal
Main parties:	Government, RENAMO political party, RENAMO militias, islamist armed group al-Shabaab
Summary: The coup against the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and the guerrilla war between the Marxist-Leninist FRELIMO	

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

30. Amnesty International, 'We want an end of fear': Abuses under Tunisia's state of emergency, 10 February 2017.

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

Tensions between the Mozambican Government and the main opposition group RENAMO fell visibly during the year due to the positive development of the peace negotiations. However, political violence escalated in October following the emergence of an armed Islamist group in Cabo Delgado. The tension between RENAMO and FRELIMO derives from the crisis that broke out after the presidential and legislative elections in 2014 and the opposition party's demand to govern in the six provinces in the centre and north of the country where it won the majority of the vote. In late 2016, Mozambican President Felipe Nyusi and Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of the former armed group and current opposition political party RENAMO, held a telephone conversation that contributed to rapprochement and led the opposition to declare a unilateral truce until the beginning of 2017 so that the Mozambican population could welcome the New Year in a peaceful atmosphere. Dhlakama extended this truce during the year, enabling progress to be made in the peace negotiations. In July, the government withdrew troops from eight positions near RENAMO's stronghold in the Gorongosa Mountains, as demanded by RENAMO in June in order to continue the negotiations. In August, Nyusi and Dhlakama held their first direct meeting since 2015. The meeting took place in RENAMO's historical stronghold in the mountainous Gorongosa district and was aimed at supporting the peace process. RENAMO noted that the decentralisation plan had to be submitted to Parliament in December, before the 2018 local elections were held. In addition, in an interview published on 31 August, Dhlakama said that he would

Levels of violence in Mozambique increased starting in October 2017 due to the emergence of an Islamist armed group in Cabo Delgado

sign a peace agreement with the government at the end of November to end the crisis that broke out after the 2014 elections.

However, tensions rose in the country again in October when a suspected Islamist group carried out an attack in the Cabo Delgado region in the extreme north of the country. Calling itself al-Shabaab, like its namesake from Somalia, the group attacked three police stations in the coastal town of Mocimboa da Praia, killing two policemen, and the government's response killed 14, including members of the group and a community leader. Although the governor of the province claimed that calm had been restored, new actions took place elsewhere in the area in October. The attackers allegedly have no connection with the Somali group and their discourse is similar to that of other Islamist groups on the continent, demanding the imposition of Sharia in the region and the abolition of secular education for children and refusing to pay state taxes. The group consists of young Wahhabist Mozambicans who have studied in Koranic schools in Sudan and Saudi Arabia, according to local media. According to the research center Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), there are similarities between this attack and other open conflicts in the country, since Cabo Delgado is a region rich in natural resources and the government has made major investments to develop the capital, Pemba, to expand offshore gas exploitation. Levels of poverty in the rest of the region remain high, however, and it has not benefited from the economic boom in the country since the 2000s. As the violence in Cabo Delgado has risen, peace talks between RENAMO and FRELIMO have led to a significant drop in fighting between the groups. Cabo Delgado is a bastion of government support, since it has established strong relations with the Islamic organisations of the country. According to ACLED's analysis, although this outbreak of violence may not continue over the long term, it is indicative of FRELIMO's failure to address the grievances in the peripheries of the country.

West Africa

Burkina Faso	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, state security forces, civil society, armed groups operating in the Sahel region, France

Summary:

A former French colony, Burkina Faso has faced several military coups and many socio-economic challenges since winning independence in 1960. A landlocked country, it

is vulnerable to volatility in global prices for materials like cotton. The period under President Blaise Compaoré, who came to power through a military coup in 1987 and won successive elections, gradually faced numerous sources of tension linked to the lack of human rights, allegations that the country had participated in conflicts in neighbouring countries, rising prices, a worsening quality of life for the population and criticism of the president's attempts to remain in power. Protests increased in 2011 and there were several military mutinies, generating a serious crisis of confidence between the government and various groups. In late 2014, Compaoré stepped down amidst widespread public protests against his plans to eliminate presidential term limits and after the Army seized power. Given society's rejection of the military coup, it gave way to a transition process under shared leadership including the Armed Forces. At the end of 2015, after the elections, the country closed the transitional period and returned the institutions to the citizenship. However, the activities of the armed Islamist militancy in the north of the country have escalated in recent years.

The election of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré in November 2015 **heralded a new era in the country, ending the transitional period that started with the fall of Blaise Compaoré in late 2014. However, 2017 was characterised by the continued escalation of attacks from armed jihadist groups operating in the Sahel region that had already been experienced in 2016.** Thus, different incidents aggravated the national security situation throughout the year. The serious attack on a hotel in the capital, Ouagadougou, in January 2016, which caused the deaths of three Islamists and 30 civilians, helped to boost regional efforts and to deploy the G5 Sahel rapid counter-terrorism force. Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad created the rapid response force in May 2017. French, Malian and Burkinabe forces carried out joint actions throughout the year. In late April, France executed or captured around 20 fighters near the border between Burkina and Mali. The year 2016 ended with an escalation of activity, including an attack on the border between Burkina Faso and Niger, where an armed group assaulted Burkinabe security forces at the Nassoumbou gendarmerie, killing 12 gendarmes. A new group associated with al-Qaeda and Ansar Dine claimed responsibility for this attack, calling itself Ansar ul Islam.

Thus, the insurgency remained active against the Burkinabe Armed Forces and the civilian population throughout the year, generating a climate of insecurity in the north, mainly in the province of Soum, bordering Mali, and to a lesser extent in the northern province of Oudalan and other western border provinces like Kossi and Sourou. In an attack in Ouagadougou in August, the first since January 2016, two alleged Islamist militants stormed a café and executed 19 people before being shot dead by the security forces. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. In December, after the Climate Summit held in Paris, the presidents of the G5 Sahel and France met with the German chancellor, the Italian prime minister, the Saudi foreign minister and the president of the AU Commission in order to discuss financing the joint anti-terrorist force, which costs 450

million euros. Two thirds of this amount was estimated to have been collected at the end of 2017, with notable contributions from Saudi Arabia (100 million dollars) and the UAE (30 million dollars) and 60 million dollars in bilateral aid from the United States to the member countries of the Sahel G5. The force launched its first operation on the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in October. It is estimated to become fully operational during the first half of 2018 and will consist of 5,000 soldiers from all five member countries.

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition of the English-speaking provinces of North West and South West, armed groups ADF, SOCADEF and SCDF

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 of 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 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.

Tensions escalated in Cameroon during the year, leaving the country on the verge of open conflict.

The crisis emerged in the second half of 2016, with sector-specific protests staged by lawyers (against the appointment of French-speaking judges, a decision perceived as an attempt to eliminate the region's English-speaking identity), teachers and students. These demonstrations led to the demand for substantive political transformations aimed at granting a greater degree of autonomy to the Anglophone-majority parts

of the country, the provinces of North West and South West, and protested the underdevelopment of the regions, their lack of political representation and the perceived erosion of Anglophone cultural heritage. The protests of October 2016, which the authorities at first ignored and then quelled by force, branding the protestors as extremists, were accompanied by the arrest of hundreds of opponents, including several leaders of the independence movements. November 2016 and January and February 2017 were months of intense protest, followed by the government's escalated response. Early in the year, the government cut off Internet access in the mostly English-speaking regions for three months, arguing that social networks were being used to instigate the riots. The social response was a six-month civil disobedience campaign of general strikes and school boycotts that led to the loss of the whole school year. Though the Cameroonian government took some measures to defuse the situation (by withdrawing French-speaking judges and releasing the English-speaking leaders arrested in January), events accelerated with the declaration of independence on 1 October and the proclamation of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, which brings together both English-speaking regions. On the eve of 1 October (the date when Cameroon celebrates Unification Day), the government deployed security forces intensively, imposed restrictions on movement and assembly and cut off access to social networks. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated and proclaimed the independence of the region, known as Ambazonia, on October 1. This triggered a crackdown by the central government, whose repressive action claimed dozens of lives. The secessionist movements formed an interim government and appointed Julius Ayuk Tabe to be the new interim president, who in turn appointed his cabinet in exile.

The Cameroonian security forces' repression and excessive use of force caused dozens of deaths and heightened calls to promote the secession of both regions from Cameroon. Although the central government made several calls for dialogue in October, there was a significant increase in violence in these regions in November and December. The secessionist militants carried out various attacks on checkpoints and explosions, school fires and weapon search operations took place in the homes of alleged members of the secessionist movement, some of whom were wanted by the authorities. Insurgent combatants were recruited and training camps were organised in areas bordering Nigeria, whilst a proliferation of small militias carrying out small-scale attacks emerged alongside three other militias operating on a larger scope: the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF) led by Ayaba Cho Lucas and Ben Kuah, the Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SOCADEF) led by Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga and the homonymous Southern Cameroons Defense

The Cameroonian authorities' repression and excessive use of force against the secessionist movement led to more people supporting the armed struggle for secession

Forces (SCDF) led by Nso Foncha Nkem. The violence was not confined to the provinces of North West and South West, but also reached the capital, Yaoundé. In early 2018, President Ayuk Tabe and six members of his interim government were arrested in Nigeria and remain in custody in a hotel in Abuja. In the closing months of the year, bilateral relations between Nigeria and Cameroon were strained by the flight of thousands of Cameroonians to Nigeria as a result of the violence. In December, Cameroonian troops penetrated Nigerian territory in pursuit of the rebels, though without Nigerian authorisation, leading to a diplomatic conflict between both countries. The ICG think tank called for reforms and for promoting inclusive, high-level talks backed by the UN or the AU.

Niger	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System International
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, external and internal armed groups (Sahel region)

Summary:

The elections in January and May 2011 restored the democratic system in the country after the military junta complied with the timetable set for returning power to civilians. A coup d'état in 2009 toppled the government of Mamadou Tandja after he began a series of constitutional reforms to hold on to power. Despite the normalisation of the situation in the country, instability persisted in the north due to the presence of cells belonging to the Algerian armed group AQIM and especially along the border with Nigeria owing to the impact of the armed activities of the group Boko Haram.

The climate of insecurity continued in several border regions of the country during the year due to attacks from armed jihadist groups. The southern region of Diffa, bordering Nigeria, continued to suffer attacks from the Nigerian Boko Haram insurgency.³¹ On 4 May, the Nigerien government joined its neighbours Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Burkina Faso to create the G5 Sahel joint regional military counter-insurgency force, which took action at the end of the year. The G5 Sahel force conducted its first operation in the border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso between 27 October and 11 November, involving troops from those three countries. The continuity of Boko Haram's (BH) attacks forced the government to extend the state of emergency in the region throughout the year, which had been decreed two years earlier. Important events during the year included the killing of 57 BH fighters in Gueskerou in April by Chadian and Nigerian troops and the killing

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

of 39 BH fighters near Barwa, in the Diffa region, in August, by Nigerien soldiers. Boko Haram's defeat in its stronghold in Sambisa implied that the situation in Niger in the future would depend on how much the group reorganises in Borno State in Nigeria. In October, Chad completed the withdrawal of its troops from the Diffa region that it had announced in late September, officially to strengthen its presence in northern Chad, for which the Nigerien government decreed that the Diffa region was prohibited to Westerners, for fear that they could be targeted for kidnapping.

Meanwhile, the areas sharing borders with Burkina Faso and Mali (the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua), in the west of the country, also suffered pressure from different armed movements linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other jihadist groups at different times of the year. The government decreed the state of emergency in the area on 3 March and renewed it during the year. In this vein, in March it was announced that AQIM, Ansar Dine, Macina Liberation Front and al-Mourabitoun had merged their organisations to create Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen, or Nusrat al-Islam (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims), under the leadership of Iyad-Ag Ghaly, until then leader of Ansar Dine. These organisations continued to actively carry out attacks and ambushes in rural areas in the border area with Mali. By the end of 2016, ISIS was verified as present in the same area, where it also targeted police patrols. This has been noted since 2014 when some AQIM factions promised loyalty to ISIS. One of the most prominent jihadist actions in the area took place on 4 October, when the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) ambushed a joint US-Nigerien military patrol in Tongo Tongo, in the Tillabéri region, killing five Nigerien soldiers and four Americans. On 21 October, 13 gendarmes died in an ambush at the gendarmerie of Ayorou, in the Tillabéri region. On 2 December, the Nigerien government and the United States reached an agreement authorising the US to conduct drone strikes against armed groups in the country.

Nigeria	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Identity, Resources, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political opposition, Christian and Muslim communities, farmers and livestock raisers, community militias
Summary:	
Since 1999, when political power was returned to civilian hands after a succession of dictatorships and coups,	

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

The high climate of instability and violence persisted in various regions, radiating from the military campaign against Boko Haram in the northeast,³² **the violence of Fulani cattle communities against agricultural communities in the country's middle belt and the growing tensions and resurging violence in the Niger Delta and the Biafra region**, which caused the security situation to deteriorate across the country. Finally, President Buhari's trip to the United Kingdom to treat illness between June and August was a factor of fragility. Intercommunity violence between nomadic herders

from northern Nigeria and agricultural communities in the centre and south of the country continued, following the trend in recent years, especially during the dry season between September and May, which pushes livestock communities to the south of the country, increasing pressure on resources and posing a factor of instability. According to a report of the ICG think tank released in September, around 2,000 people have been killed per year as a result of the clashes and reprisals since 2011 and approximately 2,500 died in 2016. The southern states' reactions to these incursions have not been conciliatory. In late 2016, Bayelsa state rejected a federal law to establish reserves for grazing throughout the country and the states of Abia and Ekiti passed anti-grazing laws. The government, which was not very active in trying to stop the situation from escalating, according to the ICG, tried to address the ongoing violence throughout the year by holding talks with Fulani leaders. Fighting broke out again at the start of the new dry season in September. On 31 October, Benue state introduced a law similar to the states of Abia and Ekiti. Aimed at discouraging new attacks, it also provoked an exodus of the Fulani community from that state towards its neighbours, Nasarawa and Cross River, prompting Taraba state to consider enacting similar legislation in 2018. Southern states such as Delta, Abia and Ogun were also affected by the activities of the Fulani militias. In December, Vice President Osinbajo met with Fulani leaders to try to curb the violence.

Tensions between the central government and the pro-secessionist movements in the southern region of Biafra

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

increased throughout the year, after first emerging in August 2015 due to the arrest of secessionist leader Nnamdi Kanu, the head of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Actions and demonstrations were staged ahead of the 50th anniversary of the Biafran war for independence. The security forces harshly suppressed the activities of the Biafra secessionist movement, aggravating the climate of human rights abuses. Biafran civil society organisations called a strike to commemorate the 50th anniversary on 30 May. This was seconded in the southeastern states and accompanied by rising rejection of the Igbo community in the rest of the country. On 6 June, 16 youth organisations in the north denounced the strike and demanded that the Igbo community residing in the north evacuate by 1 October. This ultimatum was condemned by many northern leaders, yet on 10 June eight Niger Delta activist organisations demanded that the government reassign the northerners' oil blocks to the people of the Niger Delta and that all northerners leave the region before 1 October. On 14 September, the Nigerian Army stormed the residence of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of IPOB in Umuahia, the capital of Abia state, and although it denied having detained him, he was missing by early 2018. On 20 September, the government declared the IPOB a terrorist organisation.

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

Summary:

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

The escalation of violence in the southern Niger Delta in 2016 persisted in 2017. The arrival of President Buhari to power in May 2015 brought about a change of focus in policies towards the Niger Delta, as well as cuts in the budget to implement the peace agreements promoted

since 2009 (the DDR and amnesty programmes). This, combined with the scant progress made in addressing underdevelopment and inequalities in the region, led to an escalation of violence in 2016.

Thus, many criminal acts were committed during the year against pipelines and various armed groups threatened to resume attacks on oil infrastructure. There were even sporadic actions by insurgent groups that were put down, killing scores of people throughout the year. A Niger Delta organisation called the Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) continuously urged the implementation of measures they had proposed to President Buhari in November 2016. In August, acting President Osinbajo met with PANDEF to discuss the federal government's plans to develop the region, although the armed groups distrusted the talks and threatened to resume their attacks if the dialogue between PANDEF and the government yielded no concrete results. In mid-November, President Buhari visited the states of Ebonyi and Anambra for the first time since taking office in May 2015.

2.3.2. America

North America, Central America and the Caribbean

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

Summary:

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

The homicide rate fell significantly compared to the previous year, but El Salvador clearly remained the Central American country with the highest rates of violence and concern was raised over the human rights situation and the repercussions that the possible mass deportation of people from the United States may have on stability and security in the country. Indeed, there were 3,954 homicides in 2017, 25% less than

the 5,280 in 2016. In that year, the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants was 81.7, whilst in 2017 it was 60. This indicates a significant decline in levels of violence for the second consecutive year, since the rate stood at 103 in 2015, the year when El Salvador was considered the most violent country in the world. According to the government, the homicide rate for 2017 was similar to that of the period between 2012 and 2014, known as “La Truce”, when the government sponsored a truce between and with the country's main gangs. Despite this fall in levels of violence, the homicide rate in El Salvador remained the highest in Central America and in fact was double the regional average. An analysis of patterns of violence during 2017 reveals that the number of homicides increased throughout the year. Between January and April, there was an average of 9.2 murders per day. This increased to 10.8 between May and August, then jumped to over 12 between September and December. Some analysts think that this has to do with Mara Salvatrucha's unilateral cessation of violence in the early months of the year that accompanied its offer of dialogue and with some gangs' subsequent reaction to the security measures that the government implemented during the year. In September, coinciding with a rise in levels of violence compared to the previous months, the general prosecutors of the three countries of the so-called Northern Triangle carried out a simultaneous operation against Mara Salvatrucha that led to the arrest of hundreds of people. A few days later, the US government said that one of its priorities was to fight against this organisation. Other analysts argue that the murder rate in 2017 fell in historically more violent regions and increased in areas that have traditionally been more stable, suggesting that increasing pressure from the police and the Salvadoran Armed Forces on youth gangs may have displaced some gangs to areas where they had not yet settled.

Furthermore, **some analysts expressed concern about the possible repercussions for the country's security if the US government scraps the so-called Temporary Protection Status, as was made public at various times in the country. Temporary Protection Status has been in force for over two decades in the United States and affects more than 200,000 people of Salvadoran origin residing there** (and more than 270,000 descendants of people with the aforementioned status). This decision, which already affected people of Haitian and Nicaraguan origin in 2017, could lead to a mass deportation of people and increase insecurity in the country, according to some human rights organisations. In fact, the government reported at the end of the year that the number of gang members deported to the country had increased by more than 100% compared to the previous year. Months earlier, it had also warned that every day between four and five gang leaders were returning to the country on average. There were several complaints about human rights violations committed by state security forces and bodies during the year.

In fact, in July, the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights issued a report citing some 800 human rights abuses in which the police and the Salvadoran Armed Forces were involved. Soon after, several media outlets reported that there were civilian self-defence groups in various parts of the country and even death squads within the police. In September, a member of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights denounced that the statistics of fatalities resulting from clashes between several gangs and state security agencies concealed extrajudicial killings. Finally, the government recognised during the year that forced displacement was a nationwide problem and announced that it was preparing a protocol to assist victims of the phenomenon.

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

Summary:

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

Despite a significant drop in the homicide rate in 2017, the country experienced the most important socio-political crisis in recent years after the presidential election on 26 November. Victory was claimed by both candidates competing in the election, incumbent President Juan Orlando Hernández and the opposition candidate, Salvador Nasralla, triggering **several weeks of protests and demonstrations in which over 30 people had lost their lives** (31 according to the National Commission of Human Rights (CONADEH) and 36 according to Nasralla) by the end of the year, with hundreds injured and more than 1,600 arrested. The National Commission of Human Rights reported the arrest of 1,675 people in mid-December and in January 2018 Nasralla called for the release

of 800 political prisoners. In mid-December, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ruled that Hernández won the election by a narrow margin of one and a half percentage points, but the Alliance of Opposition against the Dictatorship refused to recognise the result and urged the population to engage in permanent protest and block Hernández's inauguration. In early January 2018, the government decreed a state of emergency and a curfew, which it suspended a few days later. The opposition complained that in the first count Nasralla obtained 57% of the votes, which finally fell definitively to 41.25% after the count was interrupted several times, for which it demanded a fresh vote recount before an independent international organisation. OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro said that the narrow margin of votes and the irregularities and problems that were evident in the election made it impossible to be certain of who won the election, so he called for a new one. The National Party, which supports Hernández, disapproved of these statements and said that Almagro had crossed the line in his performance of his duties. The EU electoral mission declined comment in order not to interfere in the internal affairs of the country and the US government took note of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's decision, though it did not congratulate Hernández, urged a peaceful resolution to the political and political differences and met with Nasralla in Washington. Organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch criticised measures like the curfew and urged the government to guarantee the right to demonstrate. In addition to Nasralla, the opposition demonstrations were led by former President Manuel Zelaya, who was deposed in 2009 in a coup d'état.

On the other hand, at the end of the year the government declared that **there were 3,791 murders in 2017, 26.4% less than in the previous year, so the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants dropped from 59.1 to 42.8**. The government stated that after reaching a record high of 86.4 in 2011 (the year in which Honduras was considered the most violent country in the world), the homicide rate had continuously declined, tumbling 34 points in the last four years (in 2013 the homicide rate was 77.4). These official figures largely coincide with those published by the Observatory on Violence at the National Autonomous University of Honduras, which at the end of the year indicated that the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants stood at 46.2, with an average of 11 murders per day and 338 per month. Moreover, the police stated that 5,765 firearms had been seized during the year and that 2,976 members of criminal structures had been arrested, including 831 members of Mara Salvatrucha. The government also said that the police action had affected the operational capacity of 726 criminal structures. In April, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) urged the Honduran government to demilitarise its internal security, enhance mechanisms of transparency and strengthen civilian control over security. The opposition and various human rights organisations continued

to denounce numerous human rights violations throughout the year, as well as a campaign to harass and assassinate political and social leaders. Finally, in July the government declared that more than 22,500 undocumented Hondurans (including 2,122 minors) had been deported from the United States, Mexico and Central America in the first six months of the year. Although this is a 32% decrease compared to the same period in 2016, the Honduran authorities estimate that every day about 100 people leave the country for the United States, frequently through criminal organisations. Thus, a regional summit on forced displacement was held in Honduras in late October to agree on mechanisms of protection and address the humanitarian consequences of internal displacement and refugee flows in the countries of the so-called Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador).

Mexico	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition (peasant and indigenous organisations, unions, students), armed opposition groups (EZLN, EPR, ERPI, FAR-LP), cartels.

Summary:

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

The homicide rate increased by 27% over the previous year, reaching the highest level in the last 20 years, according to public data. Although these figures do not specify the causes or perpetrators of the homicides, the government stated that the vast majority of them are related to the activity of drug cartels and other organised crime structures. The increase in levels compared to the previous year is significant, because according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, in 2016 Mexico was the second deadliest country in the world (behind Syria), with more than 23,000 homicides related to criminal violence. In 2017, the states with the highest rates of violence were Guerrero, Baja California, Mexico, Veracruz and

Chihuahua. According to some analysts, **the main reason for the soaring number of homicides, which reached 29,168, was the growing fragmentation in the number of criminal organisations.** According to a study conducted by the weekly magazine *Proceso*, the number of organised crime groups has risen from six in 2007 to more than 400 today, which has increased the violence among drug cartels, as was observed in 2017 with the Sinaloa Cartel and the Gulf Cartel. Thus, in April the National Human Rights Commission declared that 855 clandestine mass graves were identified between 2007 and the end of 2016, from which 1,584 bodies had been exhumed, and that almost 30,000 people had disappeared. However, the report does not specify who is responsible for both the clandestine graves and the forced disappearances. In the same vein, several NGOs indicated during the year that over 300,000 people had been displaced by the violence since 2009. According to press sources, more than 150,000 people have died in Mexico since President Felipe Calderón started the so-called war on drugs.

NGOs complained many times during the year about an increase in violence and human rights violations against journalists, human rights defenders, indigenous leaders and migrants. In December, for example, the special rapporteurs on freedom of expression for the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights warned that the levels of fear and violence suffered by journalists in Mexico are higher than Syria or other countries immersed in armed conflict or under an authoritarian regime. In October, the National Human Rights Commission urged the government to respond to the drastic increase in requests for refuge, especially from people from the so-called Northern Triangle of Central America. According to this commission, the number of requests has soared by 578% compared to the previous year, reaching 10,262. Finally, political parties, human rights organisations, the National Human Rights Commission and even international organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights put up tough opposition to the enactment in December of the so-called Internal Security Law, which provides a legal framework that normalises and legitimises the use of the Mexican Armed Forces in the fight against organised crime, corruption, terrorism and other crimes. Several of the institutions opposed to this law think that public security is the responsibility of the civilian police and not the Mexican Army. In this regard, in August the Ethos Public Policy Lab research centre published a report stating that the 60% increase in the security budget from 2008 to 2015 had not brought about a fall in the homicide rate nor in the high levels of judicial impunity, which stood at 99%. Similarly, in November, WOLA published a report warning that only 16 of the 505 cases of alleged human rights violations in which the Mexican Armed Forces had been involved between 2012 and 2016 had received sentencing.

South America

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

Summary:

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

The political and social tension between the government and the opposition was further strained by the institutional pressure between the Supreme Court and the National Assembly and the four elections held in the country in 2017. In late July, **the Prosecutor General declared that 121 people had died and around 2,000 had been injured since 1 April in the demonstrations and protests staged in most states in the country** following the Supreme Court of Justice of Venezuela's (TSJV) decision to withdraw parliamentary immunity from members of Congress and to take over the National Assembly, controlled by the opposition since the legislative elections of December 2015, on the grounds that it failed to comply with and disregarded several judicial decisions. The National Assembly declared that it would not heed the judicial decision and would ignore all the rulings of the country's highest court, whilst also calling to activate the Democratic Charter of the Organisation of American States (OAS) to expel Venezuela from the regional body, arguing that the ruling was a "coup d'état". Shortly after the Prosecutor General declared that the TSJV's ruling violated several aspects of the Constitution, the court struck down its most controversial measures. Nevertheless, 19 countries voted for an OAS resolution urging the government to restore democracy and respect the separation of powers, whilst OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro described the TSJV's ruling as a "self-inflicted coup". The demonstrations that began in April, the most massive in recent months, were also sparked when Henrique Capriles, the former presidential candidate in 2012 and 2013 and current governor of

the state of Miranda, was barred from politics for 15 years for alleged irregularities committed as governor of Miranda. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a report stating that 124 people had lost their lives between 1 April and late July and echoed data from some NGOs according to which more than 5,000 people were arrested in that same period. The OHCHR also reported that several of these arrests could be considered enforced disappearances, that over 600 of the detainees had been subjected to military jurisdiction, that the various police forces had used violence intentionally and unnecessarily and that the actions of several groups of armed civilians reportedly killed dozens of people.

The tension between the Venezuelan government and the opposition was further aggravated in July by Caracas' decision to call elections to the National Constituent Assembly, an institution promoted by the government that would be empowered to assume the powers of Parliament and the Prosecutor General's Office, as well as to draft a new Constitution. According to the National Electoral Council, turnout was 41.4% (more than eight million people), but the opposition put it at about three million people. In addition, the Prosecutor General said that 10 people had died in actions linked to the 30 July elections. A few weeks earlier, the opposition had called for a unilateral referendum not recognised by the government in which around 7.5 million people had participated, according to the opposition, the vast majority of whom opposed the elections to the National Constituent Assembly and voted to appoint new judges to the TSJV, establish a new electoral authority and form a national unity government. In August, the new National Constituent Assembly voted to assume the powers of the National Assembly (a decision that the latter rejected), dismiss Prosecutor General Luisa Ortega and charge several opposition leaders with treason and with participating in the anti-government protests staged since April. Both the 30 July elections and the decisions of the National Constituent Assembly were condemned by many governments and international organisations such as the OAS and led to the imposition of sanctions by Canada, the United States and the European Union, whilst US President Donald Trump said that he did not rule out the use of force to promote the restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

The last quarter of the year was marked by the regional and municipal elections, held in October and December respectively, as well as by attempts at dialogue between the government and the opposition in the Dominican Republic, which were facilitated by several countries and failed to achieve any significant rapprochement. The regional elections held on 15 October and originally scheduled for December 2016 caused a new escalation of tension between the government and the opposition, with the latter accusing the former of irregularities. Thus, both the opposition and the Lima Group, composed of 12 Latin American countries, called for an independent and international audit of the entire electoral process.

The National Electoral Council declared that the ruling party had won in 18 of the country's 23 states, while the opposition carried the remaining five. Regarding the municipal elections held on 10 December, the National Electoral Council noted that the ruling party had won 308 of the 335 contested municipal offices and that turnout had been 47%, but both the opposition and many analysts said that the turnout had been much lower and that many irregularities and anomalies had been committed, such as coercion, vote buying and the violation of vote confidentiality. Allegedly as a result of the dialogue between the government and the opposition in the Dominican Republic during the first half of December, 44 political prisoners were released in late December, although the opposition claimed the authorities had agreed to free 80.

2.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

Central Asia

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

Summary:

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

The situation remained tense around several focal points, including the repression of political Islam and alerts of security risks from regional insurgencies. Domestically, the authorities continued to persecute actors considered close to the outlawed Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). A key player in the armed conflict of the 1990s and the 1997 peace accords and the target of a government persecution policy since 2015, the IRP was designated

a terrorist organisation that year and was affected by the ban on religious parties in the country in 2016. This ban dismantled the peace accords, which guaranteed the IRP's political participation, in a trend that continued in 2017. **During the year, repression against family members of incarcerated or exiled members of the IRP worsened** when charges were presented that were considered to be fabricated by human rights organisations, including accusations of attempts to overthrow the constitutional order through violent means. 105 political activists remained incarcerated in 2017, according to the Central Asia Labour Rights Monitoring Mission. IRP leader Muhiddin Kabiri estimated that over 100 IRP members were in prison, of which about 20 had been sentenced to more than 20 years in prison, whilst local officials and party activists were serving 10 and 20-year sentences. Kabiri, who was granted political asylum in Germany in February, said he would continue his political activity from exile. Tajik state media warned that the OSCE mission in the country could be closed if Muhiddin Kabiri participated in an OSCE conference on human rights in Poland in September, which Kabiri finally attended. Amnesty International reported beatings, threats, insults and harassment against Buzurgmekhr Yorov, a human rights lawyer and representative of several defendants in the criminal case against the IRP. Following the policy of persecution against non-official expressions of Islam, in January 2018 the authorities closed around 100 mosques in the north of the country.

Meanwhile, **the Tajik authorities remained on alert for perceived risks of violence spilling over from neighbouring Afghanistan into Tajikistan**, as well as the risk of the return of ISIS combatants from Tajikistan. The interior ministry said in January that 36 terrorist attacks had been prevented in the country in 2016 and that 1,100 Tajik citizens were fighting for ISIS in Syria and Iraq, of which 300 had been killed and 60 had returned to Tajikistan under an amnesty. Four relatives of former Tajik Colonel Gulmurod Khalimov, who joined ISIS in 2015 as "minister of war", were killed by security forces in July in the Vose district (in the southwestern Khatlon Region, bordering Afghanistan and Uzbekistan). Other relatives were arrested and imprisoned. A commander of a border unit in Tajikistan was killed and four border guards were wounded in a shooting on the border with Afghanistan in early December. Tajikistan urged the Afghan authorities to reinforce the border. According to the authorities, there were at least 26 armed incidents on the border during the year, killing at least 13 people, who were described as drug traffickers. Tajikistan also hosted large-scale military exercises during the year. In March, 50,000 Tajik and 2,000 Russian troops carried out manoeuvres in the south of the country. Fresh military exercises in May were the first conducted under the umbrella of the Commonwealth of Independent States' Anti-Terrorism Center (CIS ATC). Russia also used the Iskander-M ballistic missile system outside its territory for the first time during the exercises. Meanwhile, tense situations continued to occur along

the border with Uzbekistan. The Tajik border guards denounced the incursion of several Uzbek border guards who reportedly shot at a Tajik citizen, claiming to have acted in self-defence.

East Asia

China (Xinjiang)	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Self-government, System, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed opposition (ETIM, ETLO), political and social opposition

Summary:

Xinjiang, also known as East Turkestan or Uyghuristan, is China's westernmost region. It contains significant hydrocarbon deposits and has historically been inhabited by the Uyghur population, which is mainly Muslim and boasts important cultural ties with Central Asian countries. Following several decades of acculturation policies, the exploitation of natural resources and intense demographic colonisation, which has substantially altered the population structure and caused community tensions since the 1950s, several armed secessionist groups began armed operations against the Chinese government, especially in the 1990s. Beijing classifies such groups, including the ETIM or the ETLO, as terrorist organisations and has attempted to link its counter-insurgency strategy to the so-called global war on terrorism. In 2008, when the Olympic Games were being held in Beijing, there was an increase in armed attacks by insurgent groups, while 2009 saw the most fierce community clashes in recent decades. Over the following years the violence became more intense, frequent and complex, until it peaked in 2014. Afterwards, the growing militarisation in the region and the implementation of counter-insurgency measures led to a drastic reduction in violent episodes, although there was also an increased number of reported cases of human rights' violations.

Although the downward trend in the levels of violence of previous years continued, **the Chinese government expressed its concern about an upturn in armed actions early in the year and about ISIS and al-Qaeda's identification of Xinjiang as a strategic place for the jihadist movements, which led to a remarkable increase in the militarisation of Xinjiang and the consequent rise of denunciations of human rights violations**. During the first quarter of the year, a research centre attached to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published an article indicating that levels of violence had fallen since 2016, though it provided no figures, whilst also recognising that they could rise again due to strong links between local armed groups and foreign jihadist groups. Some civil society organisations believe that it is difficult to rigorously analyse the trend of levels of violence in the region because the government often downplays or does not directly report most armed incidents that occur in Xinjiang. In any case, after several months of relative calm and without significant episodes of violence in East Turkestan, Beijing's tranquillity was disturbed at the beginning of the year

when the Chinese Armed Forces killed three people during an antiterrorist operation. The operation had been active since late December 2016, after five people died in an attempted bomb attack against a Communist Party building in Moyu county. Later, in February, eight people were killed and five others were injured after a group of people armed with knives attacked several civilians in Pishan county, according to the government. At the end of February, ISIS and the Turkestan Islamic Party, which is affiliated with al-Qaeda, released videos directly threatening the Chinese government and calling for more attacks in Xinjiang. According to some analysts, the video issued by ISIS is important because it is the first in the Uyghur language and because it means that China has become a major target of the rhetoric of jihadist organisations, unlike in the past. In the days following the video's release, the Chinese government expressed concern about the transnational ties of the armed groups operating in Xinjiang and announced its intention to increase international cooperation to make it difficult for combatants to travel to or return from Syria. In addition, Chinese President Xi Jinping publicly called for the construction of a steel wall around Xinjiang, and by the end of the month, the legislature passed new anti-terrorist measures that several organisations criticised for being against human rights and against the religious freedom of the Muslim community.

Faced with this situation, in the weeks following the violent incidents early in the year, the government unprecedentedly deployed tens of thousands of members of state security forces and bodies, conducted military parades in several cities of Xinjiang and announced that it was stepping up border control measures. In this vein, according to some media sources, in May the government ordered all students from Xinjiang who were studying abroad to return under the threat of detaining their family members. At around the same time, Beijing announced its intention to start using drones to strengthen border surveillance in Xinjiang, which shares its roughly 5,600-km border with eight countries in Central and South Asia. As part of the new legislation on border control that entered into force in December 2016, the government also announced its intention to install surveillance cameras and barbed wire along the entire border. According to Beijing, one of the main challenges in the region is the possible infiltration of foreign jihadist organisations or Uyghur armed groups into Xinjiang that have received training, sanctuary and financing in countries in the region. In this regard, the Chinese authorities once again voiced concern about the transnational ties of the armed groups operating in Xinjiang and announced their intention to increase international cooperation to make it harder for the combatants to travel to or return from Syria. Finally, in December **Human Rights Watch published a report indicating that the government is using a medical check-up system to create databases with biometric information (such as DNA, fingerprints and blood samples) on millions of citizens in Xinjiang between the ages of 12 and 65 for purposes of control and surveillance.**

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.

Moon Jae-in's election in May led to a substantial improvement in bilateral relations between both countries, although both Seoul and Pyongyang continued to trade accusations regarding the North Korean nuclear programme, the human rights situation in North Korea and the joint military exercises between South Korea and the United States. In May, Moon Jae-in, whose parents were born in North Korea but left the country during the Korean War, won the elections promising rapprochement with North Korea, whilst also reinforcing the country's military capacity to deal with the North Korean nuclear programme. Soon after taking office, delegations from North Korea and South Korea sat down for a meeting of the One Belt, One Road initiative (also known as The New Silk Road) sponsored by China in which the South Korean delegation supposedly expressed its openness to dialogue. Later, **in July, Moon Jae-in proposed holding military talks to reduce tension on the border in the border town of Panmunjom, the first of their kind since December 2015.** Similarly, the new South Korean president also proposed holding humanitarian talks to address the reunions of families separated by the war and the possibility that both countries parade together in the Winter Olympics to be held in the South Korean town of Pyeongchan in February 2018. This offer was made a few days after Pyongyang conducted an intercontinental ballistic missile test and shortly before conducting joint military exercises that drew criticism from North Korea. In August, the South Korean Armed Forces once again conducted joint military manoeuvres with the United States. Both governments also announced that they had successfully tested the new anti-missile defence system

installed by the US in South Korea, which is strongly opposed by both North Korea and China. However, also in August, amidst a full verbal escalation of threats of war between North Korea and the US following the launch of several missiles by Pyongyang, Moon Jae-in recalled that any military action on the Korean peninsula should be decided solely by South Korea and that his government would try to avoid any military confrontation at all costs. In the closing months of the year, the South Korean government imposed sanctions on Pyongyang for the nuclear test it carried out in early September and for launching intercontinental ballistic missiles in late November, but at the same time both governments agreed to hold high-level talks on their shared border early in 2018. In addition, Mae Jae-in got the US to commit not to hold joint military exercises before the Olympic Winter Games if Pyongyang in turn pledges to freeze new ballistic and nuclear tests. According to the South Korean president, this could facilitate talks between North and South Korea, as well as rapprochement between North Korea and the US.

Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government International
Main parties:	DPR Korea, USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea, China, Russia

Summary:

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

Tensions between North Korea and part of the international community rose noticeably following Pyongyang's nuclear test in early September, the one conducted on the greatest scale so far, and its intercontinental ballistic missile test in late November. Earlier this year, **the United States government was already concerned about the progress that North Korea had made in developing its nuclear and ballistic capabilities in 2016**, when Pyongyang carried out the largest number of weapons tests in history: 24 missile tests and two nuclear bomb tests. Pyongyang also conducted several ballistic

missile tests in 2017, prompting criticism and some new sanctions from the United Nations and several countries, but the most troubling were those launched on 4 and 28 July and especially the intercontinental ballistic missile (Hwasong-15) test in late November. Triggering new sanctions by the United Nations and the South Korean and US governments, this test was very worrying because, according to some experts, the missile reached an altitude clearly higher than in previous tests and denotes North Korea's ability to strike anywhere in the continental US. Some scientists pointed out that although the missile only travelled around 4,500 kilometres, it could have a range of about 13,000 kilometres. North Korea also announced that this type of missile could carry large-sized nuclear warheads and declared that with this test the ballistic programme and the task of turning North Korea into a nuclear power were complete. The US government expressed its concern and admitted that this new type of missile could strike almost anywhere in the world and posed a serious threat to international peace and security.

A few months earlier, in early September, **Pyongyang said it had successfully detonated a hydrogen bomb, raising concern among the international community that it was the largest nuclear test so far (the sixth)** and, according to several analysts, because it was the kind of atomic bomb that attaches most easily to ballistic missiles. In the weeks after this test, which led to the imposition of new sanctions by the United Nations Security Council and several countries, the tension in the peninsula increased, especially the rhetoric between the US and North Korea. Thus, during his speech before the UN General Assembly in September, US President Donald Trump warned that he would totally destroy North Korea if it threatened the US or any of its allies. Meanwhile, US bombers flew over eastern parts of North Korea. The North Korean government said that Trump had declared war against it and that it reserved the right to take defensive measures, like shooting down the bombers. Although the US government was generally in favour of a negotiated solution to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, high-ranking government officials and congressmen occasionally publicly declared that they did not rule out a military option to end North Korea's nuclear programme. Thus, tension between Pyongyang and Washington radiated from three other sources. First, from the US military exercises in the region, sometimes in conjunction with South Korea. Some of the largest military exercises in history took place in 2017. Secondly, from the United States' installation of a missile defence system in South Korea, which is opposed by countries such as North Korea, China and Russia. Third, from the United States' inclusion of North Korea on the list of countries that sponsor and promote terrorism, after having been removed years ago as a confidence-building measure to start the six-party multilateral talks on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

South Asia

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

Summary:

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

The Indian state of Assam continued to witness violence resulting from the activity of various insurgent groups and the action of the Indian security forces, but there was a notable decrease in the levels of mortality associated with the conflict compared to previous years. During 2017 there were 26 fatalities as a result of the violence, compared to 86 reported the previous year and in clear contrast with the 305 in 2014, according to figures collected by the South Asia Terrorism Portal. However, the various sources of tension did not vanish and there were clashes between insurgent groups and security forces, many arrests of people accused of belonging to these armed groups, security force operations and practices such as attacks and extortion. Intercommunity tensions also persisted, especially among the local population and the people who arrived from Bangladesh in recent decades, as well as between different ethnic groups. Armed clashes were reported between the Indian security forces and armed groups such as the ULFA-I and the NDFB-IKS, which left several people dead at different times of the year. One of the most serious episodes of violence occurred in December, when ULFA-I members shot two men, father and son, in the district of Tinsukia, accusing them of collaborating with the Indian Armed Forces. The first was a local leader of the Hindu nationalist party BJP and his son had been a leader of the student organisation AASU. Various social protests were called after their deaths. Meanwhile, the security forces warned that there has been an increase in insurgent activity in recent years in all the states of northeastern India in the areas bordering with Myanmar,

a country in which some groups have their bases, as fighting that had previously taken place more frequently on the border with Bangladesh was now occurring there. Regarding the activity of the security forces, for the first time in 27 years, the government of the state of Assam decided to prolong application of exceptional anti-terrorist legislation called the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which until then had been in the hands of the Indian central government. Human rights organisations have denounced the many violations of the rights of the civilian population that this legislation has protected over decades of conflict.

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

Summary:

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

The situation of tension and violence persisted in the state of Manipur and there was a rise in the number of fatalities connected to the conflict in the state. **Fifty-five (55) people died as a result of the armed violence in 2017, compared to 33 in 2016**, according to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal. There were sporadic clashes between insurgent groups operating in the state and the Indian security forces throughout the year, as well as fighting between the armed groups themselves. The security forces also carried out several counter-insurgency operations during the year that led to the arrests and deaths of various insurgents. Civilians were also killed. The economic blockade started by Naga organisations in November 2016 to protest the state's decision to create new districts persisted in the early months of the year. In late March, the Naga organisations agreed to lift the blockade and negotiations with them began regarding the territorial configuration of the state, which at the end of the year had not concluded or resulted in significant progress in terms of a new territorial agreement. In July, the Supreme Court of India

ordered an investigation into allegations of extrajudicial executions carried out by the security forces in the state between 1979 and 2012, which according to human rights organisations totalled more than 1,500. Both the government and the security forces opposed this investigation, accusing the insurgent groups of being behind the murders.

There were many violations of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan throughout the year, which caused dozens of fatalities

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 tense situation between India and Pakistan continued to deteriorate seriously throughout the year, with many incidents of violence that tarnished diplomatic relations between both countries and hindered any progress in the dialogue to resolve their various conflicts. Armed clashes between both countries' security forces were repeated throughout the year on different parts of the Line of Control, the de facto border separating them, with both sides violating the 2003 ceasefire agreement. Around 100 people may have died in these incidents, according to different media reports, though much of the blame traded for the deaths could not be confirmed independently. In May, the International Court of Justice stopped the execution of a former Indian Navy officer accused of espionage and of promoting terrorist activities in Balochistan and sentenced to death in Pakistan. The Indian government denounced the killing and mutilation of two Indian soldiers by the Pakistani

security forces in early May and urged the Pakistani ambassador to demand that his government take action in light of these events. In addition, the death of the insurgent Sabzar Ahmad Bhat, the leader of the armed group Hizbul Mujahideen, whilst fighting with the Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir in late May, increased tension in the area and led to new cross-border clashes in June that

killed two civilians in the Poonch district of Pakistan and one person in Jammu and Kashmir. India blamed Pakistan for starting the violence. In September, the Indian government was accused of shooting a Pakistani girl, which sparked social protests after her death. In December, three soldiers were killed by Indian shots fired in Rakh Chikri sector in the Poonch district. These deaths came days after New Delhi accused Pakistan of being responsible for killing four Indian soldiers in the Rajauri district of Jammu and Kashmir.

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

Summary:

In 1999 the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was brought down by a military coup orchestrated by General Pervez Musharraf, that avoided conviction by exiling himself in Saudi Arabia. The new military regime initially met with the isolation of the international community. There was a thawing of relations after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, when Musharraf became the main ally of the USA in the region in the persecution of al-Qaeda. The perpetuation of Musharraf in power, the fact that he simultaneously held the positions of Head of State and Head of the Armed Forces, attacks against the judiciary, the unpopularity of the alliance with the USA in a period of anti-americanism expansion, economic and environmental crisis, or the growing strength of terrorist groups in other areas of the country (beyond tribal areas), leading to growing insecurity are some of the elements which explain the fragile political situation. In 2008, Musharraf resigned as president after legislative elections and large parts of the Parliament against him. PPP's Asif Ali Zardari was voted to replace in office. In spite of the return of democracy, and some historical milestones such as the first transfer of power from a Government (PPP) that ended its five years term to the next elected government (Nawaz's Muslim League), Pakistan continues to be an unstable country.

Alongside the different armed conflicts beleaguering Pakistan,³³ the country also underwent a serious political crisis, with some episodes of violence associated with its different sources of tension. The city of Karachi

33. See the summary on Pakistan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

continued to be severely affected by the violence and 337 homicides were reported. Regarding the Pakistani government, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was forced to resign in July after the Supreme Court disqualified him from holding public office as a result of information revealed by the Panama Papers related to several of his family's companies linked to corruption cases and ordered that an investigation be opened against him and his family. Sharif denied the accusations of corruption. His party decided to nominate his brother, Chief Minister of Punjab Shehbaz Sharif to be prime minister, and to temporarily fill the office with former Federal Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi until Sharif's election by Parliament. Some media sources reported minor clashes between supporters of Sharif and opposition leader Imran Khan in several locations. There was a new government crisis in November, which in this case affected the minister of justice, who was also forced to resign following intense protests and riots in different cities of the country in November in which at least six people died and another 200 were injured. The minister's resignation came after the government reached an agreement with the leaders of the protests, led by the religious organisation TLJR, who accused him of blasphemy for having promoted an electoral reform that modified the formulation of the belief in the Prophet Muhammad and that they also interpreted as relaxing the Ahmadi community's designation as non-Muslim. The agreement provided for the release of everyone arrested as part of the riots. Meanwhile, reports of serious human rights violations in the country persisted, including serious restrictions on freedom of expression, forced disappearances, killings of human rights advocates and serious violations of women's human rights, including an estimated 1,000 "honour" killings per year.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Thailand	
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Type:	Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition

Summary:

Since Thaksin Shinawatra's began his term in office in 2001, he had been criticised by several sectors for his authoritarian style, his campaign against drug trafficking (which claimed over 2,000 lives) and his militaristic approach to the conflict in the south. However, the socio-political crisis affecting Thailand over the last few years escalated in 2006. That year, after a case of corruption was made public, mass demonstrations took place demanding Shinawatra's resignation and in September a military junta staged a coup that forced him into exile. Although a new Constitution was voted in August 2017, the new Government was unable to bring down the political and social polarisation and there continued to be regular mass demonstrations encouraged

by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (a movement also receiving the name of "red shirts", supporting the return of former prime-minister Thaksin Shinawatra) and by the People's Alliance for Democracy -also known as the "yellow shirts". This instability gave place to many violent acts, the resignation of several governments, and the overthrowing of the Government led by Yingluck Shinawatra -Thaksin Shinawatra's sister- with a military coup in May 2014. Since then the country is governed by a military government called the National Council for Peace and Order, which has been repeatedly accused of prohibiting the action of parties, retraining fundamental rights and freedoms and wanting to institutionalize and perpetuate a constitutional and democratic exceptionality situation.

There were no social demonstrations or significant episodes of violence, but there was a series of attacks in the weeks prior to the third anniversary of the May 2014 coup, as well as much criticism of human rights violations due to the ban on the political parties' activity and the growing repression against the political and social opposition, especially against the movement called Red Shirts and against the prime minister deposed in the coup d'état, Yingluck Shinawatra. Regarding this last point, **Shinawatra, the sister of a prime minister also ousted in a coup d'état in 2006, left the country in August, a few weeks before the Supreme Court sentenced her in absentia to five years in jail on corruption charges** linked to a subsidy program in the rice sector. Coinciding with both events and anticipating possible protests, the Military Junta tightened law enforcement measures across the country. Shortly before, a prominent leader of the Red Shirts movement accused of organising armed resistance against the so-called National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) had been kidnapped in Vientiane (Laos). Around 30 people were injured in several attacks in Bangkok in the weeks running up to the third anniversary of the May 2014 coup d'état that put the current NCPO in power (in early April, at a large gathering; in mid-May, in a theatre and in late May, in a military hospital). An explosive device was also found in the underground train in the capital in late May. These incidents, which the government blamed on the same group allegedly aimed at discrediting the Military Junta, led to a significant rise in the number of arrests. Thus, at various times of the year, human rights organisations and even the United Nations Human Rights Committee criticised the continued detention of many political and social activists, the continued violation of fundamental rights, the law of crimes of lèse-majesté and the interim Constitution sponsored by the Military Junta.

Meanwhile, **both the opposition and civil society organisations criticised the fact that the ban on all political party activity remained in force and that the delays persisted in ratifying the new Constitution and in announcing the date of the elections, which are expected to restore democratic normalcy to the country.** Though there had been speculation throughout 2016 that the elections might be held in 2017, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha declared that he would announce the date in June 2018. Though information was circulated

that they could be held in December 2018, the NCPO made it clear that they would not take place until the four organic laws regulating the functioning of political parties and elections had been completed. In April the king finally approved the draft of the new Constitution, but only after several amendments had been made to strengthen royal powers. In the institutional sphere, in early January the government set out on a process of national reconciliation. The Legislative Assembly restored several institutions, such as the Electoral Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman. In November, amendments to the security law increased the local powers of the Internal Security Operations Command. Finally, in December the EU said that it decided to re-establish political contacts at all levels of the Thai government to facilitate the transition to democracy and dialogue on issues such as human rights, thus restoring political relations prior to the May 2014 coup.

2.3.4. Europe

Russia and Caucasus

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

Summary:

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

The conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh remained at high levels, with serious episodes of military confrontation, though none as bloody as during the severe crisis in April 2016, when at least 200 people died. Throughout 2017 there were ceasefire violations in the line of contact, including with heavy weapons

and anti-tank weapons. Especially serious incidents took place in February and May, killing at least 50 and wounding many others over the course of the year. In February, in the midst of the most serious clashes since April 2016, Armenian and Azerbaijani forces blamed each other for attempted incursions, leading to fighting that killed at least 15 people, and the OSCE Minsk Group, a mediating body in the peace process, warned that both sides had moved heavy military equipment to positions closer to the line of contact. Serious incidents occurred again in mid-May. The Azerbaijani Army fired a missile against Armenian military equipment on the line of contact on 15 May and Armenian forces responded with mortar fire of various calibres on 16 and 17 May. This was described in the Minsk Group statement, which also indicated that there were conflicting reports about the targets and victims. The Azerbaijani government criticised it, denouncing that it was in favour of Armenia. In the clashes, both sides used guided missiles and carried out attacks against military installations near densely populated areas.³⁴ According to the Azerbaijani government, the destroyed Armenian air defence system had been deployed to a new position in an attempt to gain control over the airspace. On the anniversary of the events of April 2016, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan expressed their willingness to wage war. The Armenian leader told the media that he would use the Iskander missile system against Azerbaijan if necessary. Azerbaijan responded to this in March by warning that its reprisals would result in large-scale casualties and levels of destruction in Armenia. Ceasefire violations continued to occur periodically in the months that followed, though they were less intense. Both sides carried out large-scale military manoeuvres during the year, including joint exercises by Armenia and Russia, and separately by Azerbaijan and Turkey, with 15,000 soldiers and more than 150 tanks, and in which Azerbaijan showed off new artillery equipment, including of Czech origin. This led the Czech authorities to announce an investigation, given the arms embargo imposed by the EU and the OSCE.³⁵ Internally in Nagorno-Karabakh, in February the region held an internationally unrecognised referendum in which constitutional changes were approved to make it a presidential republic and that will allow its current leader to continue in office temporarily and call new to elections in 2020.

Russia	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	System, Government Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups including ISIS

34. International Crisis Group, *Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds*, Europe Report, no. 244, 1 June 2017.

35. See the section on arms embargos in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

Summary:

Russia, the country with the largest surface in the world and vast natural resources –mainly gas and oil– succeeded the USSR in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet block. Since then it has gone through complex stages, including a process of economic and political reforms, privatisation and liberalisation during the first years, under Boris Yeltsin in the nineties, who strengthened the centres of corporate power; and a transition towards an authoritarian state, mainly during the stages when Vladimir Putin was the President (2000-2008 and 2012 onwards). Faced with the unconstitutionality of his third mandate, his ally Dmitry Medvedev succeeded him as President from 2008 to 2012, generating hopes for a greater democratisation, but these never became consolidated. Medvedev was appointed prime minister in 2012 after Putin became president again. From the point of view of internal affairs, since taking power, Putin strengthened the vertical political control of the institution and media and dismantled the power gained by oligarchs during Yeltsin's period, some of who support the liberal opposition. In parallel, the restrictions on human rights and freedoms have cut back the margin for political contestation. However, in 2012 there were many mobilisations against alleged irregularities in the elections and a demand for political opening. Other axes of internal tension include the Islamist violence in the northern Caucasus –stemming from the transformation and regionalisation of the violence that affected Chechnya in the nineties war– and that also resulted in terrorist attacks and violence in other parts of Russia. Likewise, alerts have been increased in relation to the participation of citizens with Russian nationality in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Russia was the scene of tension coming from various sources, including various terrorist attacks during the year and opposition demonstrations. Several attacks took place during the year, some of which were claimed by ISIS. An attack on the St Petersburg underground train on 3 April caused 15 deaths and injured more than 40, whilst a second bomb was located and deactivated at another underground station. According to the authorities, the attack was perpetrated by a man originally from Osh (Kyrgyzstan) with links to Islamist organisations. Ten others were arrested in connection with the attack. The “Battalion of Imam Shamil” group, linked to Al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility for the attack. That same month, ISIS claimed responsibility for one attack in Astrakhan in southern Russia that killed two policemen and another in the same city that wounded three national guard troops. ISIS also claimed to be behind a knife attack in a central part of the Siberian city of Surgut in August, in which seven passers-by were injured. However, the authorities ruled out that it was an act of terrorism. Also, a bomb attack on a supermarket chain in St Petersburg in late December injured 10 people. It was described as a terrorist attack by the authorities and ISIS claimed responsibility for it. Several weeks after that, the Kremlin reported that it had thwarted several attacks in the city that month, including plans to attack the Kazan Cathedral (the city's main cathedral) with information provided by the US intelligence agency. Several people were arrested that month. Russia was identified as the main country

of origin of ISIS foreign fighters during the year, with 3,417, beating out Saudi Arabia (3,244), according to a report from the intelligence and security consultancy Soufan Group.³⁶

Furthermore, political and social tensions in Russia increased one year before the presidential elections of March 2018. In March, thousands of people demonstrated (60,000 according to the radio station Echo of Moscow and 150,000 according to the Anti-Corruption Foundation) in various parts of Russia (82, according to Echo of Moscow) to protest against government corruption and answer the call of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whose Anti-Corruption Foundation revealed the corrupt practices of Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev in a documentary. More than 1,000 people were arrested, including Navalny himself. Organisations such as Amnesty International denounced the excessive use of force. They were described as the **largest anti-government protests since the demonstrations of 2011-2012, prior to the 2012 elections**. New protests in June mobilised tens of thousands of people, according to media reports, and led to the arrest of 1,000. Navalny was sentenced to one month in prison. There were protests in later months, such as October and November, with many people arrested. In December, the Central Electoral Commission announced that Navalny would not be able to run in the elections because he is facing corruption charges. The opposition leader denounced the charges as politically fabricated and **called for a boycott of the 2018 presidential election**.

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

Summary:

After the so-called first Chechen War (1994-1996), which confronted the Russian Federation with the Chechen Republic mainly with regard to the independence of Chechnya (self proclaimed in 1991 within the framework of the decomposition of the USSR) and which ended in a peace treaty that did not resolve the status of Chechnya, the conflict re-appeared in 1999, in the so-called second Chechen War, triggered off by some incursions into Dagestan by Chechen rebels and attacks in Russian cities. In a pre-election context and with an anti-terrorist discourse, the Russian army entered Chechnya again to fight against the moderate pro-independent regime which arose after the first war and which was, at the same time, devastated by internal disputes and growing criminality. In 2001 Russia considered the war as being finished, without an agreement or a definitive victory, and in 2003 favoured a state of autonomy and a Chechen pro-Russian administration.

36. Moore, James, *Russia overtakes Saudi Arabia and Tunisia as largest exporter of ISIS fighters*, Newsweek, 24 October 2017.

However the confrontations continued in following years, although in the form of low-level violence. In parallel, there was a Islamisation of the Chechen rebel ranks while the insurgency was increasingly of a regional nature, especially affecting neighbouring Dagestan. Furthermore, the civilian population faces serious human rights violations, largely committed by local security forces.

Tension in the Chechen Republic increased, with a rise in fatalities for the third consecutive year as part of the conflict between the security forces and armed jihadist actors, whilst human rights violations worsened, with the greatest increase of kidnappings since the beginning of the second Chechen War of the 1990s, according to human rights advocates. Around 60 people lost their lives due to the conflict during the year, according to Caucasian Knot, which made Chechnya the northern Caucasian republic with the highest number of fatalities, above Dagestan, which ceased to be considered an armed conflict in 2017. Around 20 people were also injured, according to the same source. The kidnapping of at least 51 people was reported by the **Russian organisation Memorial, which denounced that the situation of kidnappings, illegal arrests and unlawful detention in custody by security agents had become systemic again.** The Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention also noted that the republic was suffering from a situation of mass kidnappings.

Episodes of violence during the year included clashes in early January in the context of a special operation in the town of Tsotsi-Yurt (Kurchaloi district), which followed the December 2016 attacks on the outskirts of the capital that resulted in the arrest of at least 20 people, as well as the deaths of four alleged insurgents and two members of the security forces. Schools and establishments were closed for the operation. Mass arrests took place at around that time in other towns in that and other districts, netting around 100 detainees, according to *Novaya Gazeta*. Clashes following an attack on a Russian national guard checkpoint in the Naursky district in March killed six soldiers and six combatants and wounded several other people, prompting a new round of mass arrests. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. In July, *Novaya Gazeta* published a list of 27 men executed without trial in late January, among dozens of detainees in security operations after the violence in December 2016. In July, the Memorial organisation also published a list of 13 men missing since December 2016 after they were stopped by the authorities. The Russian High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Chechnya in September to investigate allegations of extrajudicial killings of victims' relatives. In March, information emerged about the kidnappings of homosexual men by armed non-state actors and security forces, followed by arbitrary arrests, violence, torture and other forms of mistreatment. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also raised the allegations, urged an end to the abuse and called for the investigation and prosecution of what he described as acts of persecution and violence on an unprecedented scale in the region and serious violations of Russia's

obligations under international human rights law. *Novaya Gazeta* and Human Rights Watch published information and complaints about the abuses, many of which took place in an unofficial detention centre near Argun.

South-east Europe

Turkey	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Turkish government, political and social opposition, ISIS, organization of Fetullah Gülen

Summary:

The Republic of Turkey as we know it today was founded by Mustafa Kamal "Atatürk" in 1923, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War I –and the subsequent partition of its territories (Lausanne Treaty, 1923)– and after the war of independence (1919-1923). It was founded under principles such as secularism, nationalism and statism, promoting a secular nation state with the Army playing a predominant role as the guarantor. Throughout its history, Turkey –a country that is a bridge between the West and the East, with a Muslim majority and the second largest Army in NATO– has experienced periods of instability due to several reasons and actors. On the one hand, the lack of solutions to the Kurdish issue has led to different Kurdish rebellions and the state's prosecution of pro-Kurdish sectors, especially during the war between Turkey and the PKK that started in 1984. On another hand, the country has experienced several military coups (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997). Also, the period under the rule of the Islamist AKP party (in power since 2002) and the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister from 2003 to 2014, and President since then) has been accompanied by democratization measures initially, followed by criticism over authoritarianism, fuelling higher levels of domestic social and political tension. At the same time, growing confrontation between the AKP regime –in power since 2002– and its former allied organization of the Muslim cleric Fetullah Gülen materialized in an attempted coup in July 2016 that failed and was attributed to sectors of the Armed Forces with ties to Gülen. This attempted coup led to the instatement of a state of emergency and mass purges. The human rights' situation, which was a matter of great concern in the 80s and 90s, deteriorated once again in the context of the restarting of the war with the PKK in 2015 and the measures adopted after the failed coup. Alongside this, the serious deterioration of the regional scenario with the war in Syria and Iraq also generated new conflictive fronts in Turkey: an increase in attacks attributed to ISIS on civilian targets on Turkish soil and a complex scenario of foreign relations.

The political and social tension in Turkey remained high amidst a state of emergency, massive purges and polarisation, although the intensity of the violence fell after a 2016 coup attempt (that claimed 265 lives and wounded around 2,200). In 2016 more than 100 people had also been killed in attacks claimed by ISIS. Among the events that marked the

political course in 2017, Turkey held a referendum to reform the Constitution in April, approved with 51.4% of the vote and 84% turnout, preceded by a campaign in which the authorities equated the “no” vote (led by opponents CHP and HDP) with terrorism. The opposition reported irregularities in the vote and, according to the OSCE observation mission, it took place under unequal conditions for the parties, voters did not receive impartial information and there were limits on fundamental freedoms, which had a negative effect. The “no” vote won in the three main cities of the country (Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir), which account for a quarter of the population, as well as in most of the Kurdish region, among others, although with less votes than were received by the pro-Kurdish HDP (defender of “no”) in past elections. The approved reform will transform the country into a presidential republic. Thus, the president will be the head of state and government, the position of prime minister will be eliminated, the situations in which the president may govern by decree will be expanded and the number of members of high courts appointed directly by the president will increase, in addition to other changes.

Meanwhile, political and social tensions remained high amidst the state of emergency, which stayed in force throughout the year and was renewed in January, April and October. There were massive purges against people accused of being linked to the failed coup d'état of 2016 and to the religious organisation led by Fetullah Gülen, a cleric living in exile in the United States, that the Turkish government calls FETÖ. Ankara accuses FETÖ of orchestrating the attempted coup. Around 4,4000 officials were dismissed, including hundreds of academics and staff from the Ministries of the Interior, the Economy, Foreign Affairs and Education, as well as from the police and security services. In total, 125,000 people have been dismissed or suspended from their posts since the attempted coup. There were also mass arrests of people accused of having links to the Gülen organisation. Human rights activists were also arrested during the year, like the president of Amnesty International Turkey, arrested and imprisoned in June, and 10 human rights defenders arrested in July, including the director of Amnesty International Turkey, on charges of belonging to a terrorist group. Two of these last 10 were later released in June and the remaining eight were conditionally released in October. Other well-known civilians were also arrested, like the philanthropist Osman Kavala in October. Kurdish politicians and activists were also detained, including elected officials, and several Kurdish MPs were stripped of their seats, including HDP co-leader Figen Yüsekdağ, who was convicted on charges of distributing terrorist propaganda in February. Women's human rights defenders expressed serious concern about the impact of the state of emergency on women's organisations, which affected Kurdish women's organisations or organisations

working in Kurdish areas specifically and on a larger scale, including closures and bans. In its report published in March on the human rights situation in southern Turkey, OHCHR noted that the protection and monitoring of human rights had been severely affected by the use of anti-terrorism legislation to remove elected officials of Kurdish origin, the harassment of independent journalists, the closure of independent media in the Kurdish language and the shutting down of citizen associations and massive dismissal of judges and prosecutors. Faced with all this persecution, the political opposition launched initiatives such as the “March for Justice” from Ankara to Istanbul, organised by the CHP and concluded in June, and the “Watch for Justice” protests called by the HDP in Istanbul and other parts of the country between August and November. Amidst the political and social tension, the HDP boycotted the first session of the parliamentary year in October. Turkey also experienced a drop in violence associated with ISIS, in contrast to the many attacks claimed by the armed group in 2016. According to the Turkish authorities, around 2,000 people accused of having links to ISIS were arrested during the year.

2.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

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

Summary:

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

The internal climate of repression of dissent was upheld throughout 2017, alongside denunciations of human rights abuse by state security agents. The persecution of critics and civil society organisations affected the Al Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture at the beginning of the year, a benchmark organisation that was closed after being accused of violating the NGO law. The declaration of a state of emergency following a double attack conducted by ISIS in April extended the powers of the security forces to arrest, monitor and detain. In this context, **the government of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was reportedly taking advantage of the situation of insecurity to intensify its repression of the opposition and critical media outlets.** Thus, activists and journalists were arrested and a total of 429 websites were reportedly blocked between May and September, many of them news websites, according to the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression and the Egyptian media, including al-Jazeera, the Huffington Post in Arabic and Mada Masr. Thus, Egypt ranked 161 out of 180 countries in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders. Egyptian authorities also blocked Human Rights Watch's website in September after the organisation published a report denouncing torture as a regular practice by Egyptian security forces. The document echoes the multiple complaints gathered by local NGOs, warns of arbitrary arrests and forced disappearances and documents around 20 cases of torture, including sexual violence.³⁷ Protests against measures taken by the authorities, such as Parliament's approval of the transfer of two islands to Saudi Arabia and the elimination of subsidies for fuel and electricity, also led to the arrest of protesters during the year. During the final quarter, persecution and violence against the LGBTBI group intensified, with more than 80 people arrested. Since al-Sisi took power in 2013, more than 230 people have been prosecuted for "libertinism", according to a report by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) published in November, which also documents cases of torture.

As in previous years, new sentences against leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were also issued in 2017, as well as the death sentences of around 40 people and many other sentences of life imprisonment for participating in violent events after the overthrow of Mohamed Mursi in 2013. Meanwhile, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was released after six years of detention in a military hospital, after being exonerated of charges linked to the killing of demonstrators during the revolt against his regime in early 2011. Finally, **towards the end of the year the political climate began to be marked by the presidential election of May 2018.** Supporters of al-Sisi called to postpone the elections due to the security situation, to extend the current president's

The government of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was reportedly taking advantage of the situation of insecurity in Egypt to intensify its repression of the opposition and critical media outlets

term of office for another two years and to eliminate the restrictions setting limits on presidential re-election. Former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq announced his intention to run for president in November from the UAE, but the authorities of that country arrested him and deported him to Egypt. Weeks later, Shafiq declined to run. Another potential candidate, General Ahmed Konsowa, who reportedly tried unsuccessfully to give up his military career to be eligible, was arrested and sentenced to six years in prison for expressing political opinions.

Iraq (Kurdistan)	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Self-government, Territory, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey, Iran, PKK

Summary:

Concentrated in the northern part of Iraq, the Kurds represent between 15 and 20% of the country's entire population. Since the creation of the state of Iraq and after the unfulfilled promises of an independent Kurdish state in the region, the Kurdish population has experienced a difficult fit within Iraq and suffered severe repression. In 1992, after the end of the Gulf War, the establishment of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq laid the foundations for creating the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The Kurds' experience with self-government was strengthened when Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled in 2003 and won recognition in the federal scheme embodied in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. Since then, different interpretations of the rights and responsibilities of each party have stoked tension between Erbil and Baghdad. The strain has mainly been over the status of the so-called "disputed territories" and control of energy resources. More recently, the Syrian Civil War and the development of the armed conflict in Iraq have affected the dynamics of this tension, rekindling discussion about the prospects of a possible independent Kurdish state.

Unlike in 2016, when dynamics of cooperation prevailed as part of the joint campaign against ISIS, during 2017 **the tension between Erbil and Baghdad intensified mainly due to an independence referendum promoted by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).** Under the leadership of President Massoud Barzani, the KRG announced in June that on 25 September it would hold a referendum on the independence of the region (formed by the Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk governorates) and of territories disputed with the federal government, including Kirkuk. The measure was backed in September by the regional legislature, which met for the first time in two years, though parties such as Gorran and Komal opposed the initiative. The call for the referendum was rejected by the Haidar al-Abadi government and

37. Human Rights Watch, "We Do Unreasonable Things Here": Torture and National Security in al-Sisi's Egypt, 5 September 2017.

was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and the Iraqi Parliament, which authorised the Iraqi prime minister to take all necessary steps to preserve the unity of the country. The referendum was also rejected by Turkey, which until then had been an allied country of the KRG, and by Iran, two countries with Kurdish minorities that are therefore not interested in encouraging an independent Iraqi Kurdistan. The KRG initiative also lacked support from the US and Europe, which backed the territorial unity of Iraq. Washington expressed concern that the referendum would increase tensions with Baghdad and interfere with the campaign against ISIS. The UN did not support the referendum either. Despite this adverse regional and international climate, with the exception of Israel, the referendum was held on the scheduled date, enjoyed 72% turnout and yielded 93% of the vote in favour of independence. According to some analysts, Barzani's government maintained the call despite the lack of external support for various reasons, including the need to regain legitimacy amidst criticism of its management and its continuation in office after the closure of Parliament in 2015, as well as the context of internal struggle within his party, the KDP, particularly between his son Masrour Barzani, who supports the referendum, and his nephew, Prime Minister Nechervan Barzani, who prefers to maintain good relations with Baghdad and Ankara. Both men are candidates to succeed Massoud Barzani.³⁸

The referendum provoked harsh responses and threats from the Iraqi government, Ankara and Tehran and motivated some retaliatory measures, such as the closure of Iraqi Kurdistan's airspace for international flights and the land border with Iran, as well as military manoeuvres by Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish troops in the border areas. **The most significant action was the federal government's decision to regain control of Kirkuk and other disputed areas in October.** Kirkuk had been under Kurdish rule since 2014, when the advance of ISIS led to the collapse of Iraqi forces in the area. The advance of the Iraqi troops and the Shia militias (PMU) that participated in the offensive was facilitated by an agreement between the Abadi government and the Kurdish party PUK, a rival of the KDP, in which Iran may also have played an important role. After the withdrawal of the peshmergas from Kirkuk, the forces sent by Baghdad penetrated the city without encountering resistance and regained control of other locations such as Bashiqa, Khanaqin and Sinjar in the following days, also without confrontation. In this context, the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 1 November in Iraqi Kurdistan were postponed and Barzani announced his resignation as president. In the following weeks, Baghdad insisted that it would not hold negotiations with Erbil until the KRG nullified the results of the referendum. The central government then intensified pressure on oil exports and the share of the federal budget that corresponds to Iraqi Kurdistan. The

KRG, meanwhile, announced wage cuts at the end of the year that led to protests in Sulaymaniyah and the killing of three people by the security forces. Alongside these dynamics of tension, just like in 2016, there were intra-Kurd tensions between the KDP and the PKK in Sinjar in 2017, causing eight fatalities in March. Turkey's attacks on PKK positions northwest of Sinjar also killed 14 members of the group and five KRG peshmergas, in what Ankara acknowledged as a mistake. Finally, the historical leader of the PUK and former president of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, died in 2017.

Israel – Syria, Lebanon	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	System, Resources, Territory International
Main parties:	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah (party and militia)

Summary:

The backdrop to this situation of tension is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its consequences in the region. On the one hand, the presence of thousands of Palestinian refugees who settled in Lebanon from 1948, together with the leadership of the PLO in 1979, led Israel to carry out constant attacks in southern Lebanon until it occupied the country in 1982. The founding of Hezbollah, the armed Shiite group, in the early 1980s in Lebanon, with an agenda consisting of challenging Israel and achieving the liberation of Palestine, led to a series of clashes that culminated in a major Israeli offensive in July 2006. Meanwhile, the 1967 war led to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, which together with Syria's support of Hezbollah explains the tension between Israel and Syria. Since 2011, the outbreak of the armed conflict in Syria has had a direct impact on the dynamics of this tension and on the positions adopted by the actors involved in this conflict.

The international tension between Israel, Syria and Lebanon evolved similarly to the previous year. During 2017, the climate continued to be marked by belligerent rhetoric between the parties. Through several of its leaders, including its top leader, Hassan Nasrallah, **the Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah threatened to attack the Israeli nuclear reactor in Dimona, warned that there would be no "red lines" in an upcoming confrontation with Israel** and stressed that the hostilities would take place in the occupied Palestinian territories. Lebanese President Michel Aoun said that potential Israeli actions would receive a response from Lebanon and defended Hezbollah's possession of arsenals as complementary to those of the Lebanese Armed Forces for confronting Israel, a position not shared by all members of the Lebanese government.³⁹ Aoun reportedly rejected calls by the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to adopt a firmer attitude towards Hezbollah's activities in the south of the country, arguing that he could not

38. International Crisis Group, *Oil and Borders: How to Fix Iraq's Kurdish Crisis*, Middle East Briefing no.55, 17 October 2017.

39. See the summary on Lebanon in this chapter.

demand that the Shia group lay down its weapons in a context of security threats. Meanwhile, several members of the Israeli government and Israeli senior military officers warned at different times of the year that in a future conflict with Hezbollah, Lebanese institutions and various types of infrastructure like airports and power plants would be considered legitimate targets. Both sides accused each other of violating the provisions relating to Resolution 1701, which was approved after the last war between Israel and Hezbollah, although UNIFIL said that the situation in the area under its supervision remained tense, but stable. Israel repeatedly denounced the presence of Hezbollah weapons and infrastructure in the area under UNIFIL's control, though the mission could not verify them independently. As in previous years, UNIFIL documented recurrent violations of Lebanese airspace by Israel, frequently daily and mainly with manned aircraft. According to data from UNIFIL, these transgressions increased in number and duration. Thus, for example, 758 airspace violations were reported between 1 July and 31 October, 80% more than in the same period during the previous year. In this period, Israel carried out manoeuvres simulating a possible armed conflict with Hezbollah. The demarcation of the maritime border between Israel and Lebanon was another source of tension between the parties.

Lebanon	
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Hezbollah (party and militia), political and social opposition, armed groups ISIS and Jabhat Fatah 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 internal situation continued to be determined by the consequences of the armed conflict in Syria, by episodes of violence in the heart of the Palestinian community in Lebanon and by internal tensions resulting from the country's complex political scenario. As in previous years, **the impact of the war in Syria was**

especially evident in the border areas and particularly around Aarsal. Lebanese security forces participated in actions against armed groups operating in this area (ISIS, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Saraya Ahl-Sham and others) whilst Hezbollah was also involved in armed actions against these groups on either side of the border in alliance with the forces of the regime of Bashar Assad. Meanwhile, another group of Lebanese continued fighting in the ranks of armed organisations opposed to the Syrian government. The death toll of the acts of violence during 2017 is difficult to establish given the imprecise information regarding some incidents, which may have caused “dozens” of victims, but in general terms it was higher than in 2016. In August alone, clashes between Hezbollah and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham on the outskirts of Aarsal may have killed 28 and 150 militants, respectively. In this context, several ceasefire agreements were reported, which led to massive population movements. Thus, for example, a pact between Hezbollah and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham in July led to an exchange of prisoners and the march of a group of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham fighters and their families to the Syrian governorate of Idlib, involving between 7,000 and 9,000 people in total. A similar deal in August with a faction of around 300 Saraya Ahl al-Sham fighters also led to the withdrawal of militants and their families into Syria, whilst another agreement reached with ISIS may have been hampered by bombings by the US-led coalition in Syria. In this context, the UN and human rights groups denounced non-consensual repatriations of the refugee population.

The impact of the Syrian conflict was also evident in the situation of the refugee population. The operations of Lebanese security forces in refugee camps led to the arrest of more than 350 people during the year, four of whom died in custody. In June, during a tracking operation, five suicide bombers injured seven Lebanese soldiers and killed one girl in two camps in the Aarsal area. At the same time, **the economic vulnerability of the one million refugees of Syrian origin increased, with 58% living in conditions of extreme poverty (5% more than the previous year)** and 74% living below the poverty line, in addition to the fact that half of the children of primary school age were not enrolled in school. According to surveys, anti-refugee sentiment in the country also increased (in 2014, 40% said there was no tension between the two communities, compared to 2% in 2017), with protests about competition over work with the Syrian population. In this regard, the Lebanese president said that the Syrian refugee population posed an “existential challenge” to the country and called on the international community to create the conditions for their return to stable low-tension areas in Syria. Meanwhile, the situation in most Palestinian refugee camps remained relatively stable, with the exception of Ain el-Hilweh, where violence escalated. This camp was the scene of clashes between jihadist groups and Palestinian security forces throughout the year that claimed at least 20 lives, wounded dozens and forcibly displaced more than 400 families.

Finally, in terms of domestic policy, after several delays the Lebanese Parliament agreed on a new electoral law that should allow legislative elections to be held in May 2018. Initially scheduled for June 2017, they will be the first in a decade. Throughout the year, differences within the government regarding the role of Hezbollah continued to be evident. Thus, President Michel Aoun defended the Shia party and militia's possession of arsenals on several occasions, as complementary to those of the Lebanese Armed Forces and necessary in a potential confrontation with Israel.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Prime Minister Saad Hariri continued to view this possession of weapons as illegitimate. **Hariri was involved in a confusing incident in November, after surprisingly tendering his resignation from Saudi Arabia on the grounds that Hezbollah and Iran had too much influence in Lebanon** and that he had received death threats. Hezbollah and President Aoun accused Riyadh of arresting Hariri, who after mediation from France finally returned to Lebanon and retracted his resignation.

The impact of the Syrian war in Lebanon was especially evident in the border areas and particularly around Aarsal

intensified compared to the previous year and caused a dozen deaths in 2017. The most serious incident occurred in May, when **protests against the judicial conviction of a prominent Shia cleric, Ayatollah Isa Qassim, led to clashes with security forces that killed five people and more than 280 detainees in the northwestern village of Diraz.** Other acts of violence included a bombing in Diraz that killed a policeman in June and an attack against a police bus in Manama that killed another policeman in October. Two other explosions in the capital, in February and October, wounded five police officers, respectively. During February there were four other incidents in Manama that caused no casualties and for which nobody claimed responsibility. As in previous years, protests on 14 February (marking a new anniversary of the 2011 uprising in the country) led to clashes with police. Moreover, in January, three Shia were executed for the murder of three policemen in 2014 in the first death sentences carried out in 20 years. The executions were condemned by Shia opposition activists and Iran, which the Bahraini authorities continued to accuse of attempting to destabilise and promote violence in the country. During the year, arrests of alleged members of terrorist cells and new sentences were reported against opposition political leaders and human rights activists for incitement to hatred and disseminating false news, among other crimes. At the same time, the opposition party al-Wefaq's appeal of the ruling in 2016 to dissolve the organisation based on accusations of terrorism was denied and the government began a process to disband another dissident organisation, Waad, on similar grounds. The authorities also approved a constitutional amendment to allow civilians to be tried in military courts. After the diplomatic crisis between Qatar and several countries in the region, led by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain criminalised expressions of sympathy towards Qatar.

In this context, **Amnesty International published a report on the situation in Bahrain denouncing the use of repressive tactics, including arbitrary arrest, torture and sexual violence,** and warning of a systematic campaign to dismantle the political opposition and eliminate freedom of expression.⁴¹ According to the report, actions by Bahraini authorities to quell the protests killed at least six people, including a child, between June 2016 and June 2017. Amnesty International documented arrests, torture, threats and travel bans affecting 169 dissidents and their families during this period and denounced the lack of an international reaction. The United States, which made the sale of airplanes to Bahrain depend on its human rights progress in 2016, changed the policy with Donald Trump's ascension to the presidency and eliminated the conditions for the transaction in 2017.

The Gulf

Bahrain	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Type:	Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition
Summary: The popular uprisings that spread across countries in the Maghreb and Middle East in 2011 also had an impact on Bahrain. Ruled since the 18th century by the al-Khalifa and part of the British protectorate territories from 1861 to 1971, the country formally became a constitutional monarchy in 2002. The family in power is of Sunni faith, unlike most of the country's population, which is of Shiite faith and which denounces systematic policies of discrimination. Internal tensions, which had increased in recent years, turned into open protest from February 2011. Demands for political and social reforms were met by the government with economic incentives and offers of political dialogue, but also with the repression and persecution of government opponents. The threat to the stability of the region led to the intervention of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which sent troops to the country. The situation in Bahrain has fuelled the confrontation between Iran and the Gulf countries (especially Saudi Arabia) and is of special concern to the USA, whose Fifth Fleet is stationed in the archipelago.	

The situation in Bahrain continued to be characterised by demonstrations against the regime, the persecution of opponents and various acts of violence that

40. See the summary on Israel-Syria, Lebanon in this chapter.

41. Amnesty International, 'No one can protect you': Bahrain's year of crushing dissent, 7 September 2017.

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 fuelled 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.

Tension intensified in Iran at the end of the year following a series of protests in different cities that led to clashes with security forces and many arrests during the largest internal upheaval in the country since 2009. According to media reports, **from 28 December to the first week of January 2018, a total of 21 people had died in the incidents (mostly demonstrators, but also security agents) and over 1,000 people had been arrested.** At first the protests complained about economic issues, such as prices hikes, unemployment levels and corruption, but they quickly took on a more political tone. The protests questioned Iranian foreign policy and particularly the country's costly participation in regional conflicts such as in Syria and Iraq, demanding that it leave these theatres to concentrate on domestic affairs. The protests also criticised President Hassan Rouhani and supreme leader Ali Khamenei. In an unprecedented event, some during the demonstrations called for the resignation and even the death of Khamenei and some messages were also heard in support of the ancient monarchy of the Shah. The nature of the demonstrations and their rapid expansion to different parts of the country (Mashhad, Kermanshah, Isfahan, Rasht, Qom, Sari, Hamedan, Qazvin, Tehran, Arak, Zanjan and others) fuelled various interpretations and questions about their origin and development. The demonstrations began in the country's second-largest city, Mashhad, the stronghold of Ebrahim Raisi, an ultraconservative cleric who was defeated by Rouhani in the presidential election in May (Rouhani won 57% of the vote against Raisi's 38.5%). Thus, some Iranian reformists thought

Iran experienced the worst protests since 2009, which led to clashes with security forces and the deaths of around 20 people

that the movement had been promoted by opponents of Rouhani. Meanwhile, other observers said that if the movement had been sponsored by any particular group, it quickly evolved in its own way. Others said that unlike the protests of 2009, which were led by the country's middle class and elites, the recent demonstrations were dominated by the Iranian working class and took place in a context in which the Rouhani government faced problems in promoting economic improvements despite the lifting of sanctions after the deal over the nuclear programme.⁴² Meanwhile, other analysts focused on internal rivalries between the different Iranian factions, which may be intensifying as Khamenei gets older and the race for his succession becomes a more relevant issue.

Faced with the wave of protests, Rouhani acknowledged that people had the right to criticise, but warned that the authorities would not tolerate the use of violence or the destruction of property. Conservative groups admitted that there were grounds for economic and political grievances, but accused foreign powers of exploiting the situation and inciting violence, especially after the US president expressed support for the demonstrations.

Iran was also attacked by ISIS for the first time, in June 2017. Five assailants carried out two simultaneous

attacks against the parliament and the mausoleum of the former supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, killing 17 civilians in the Iranian capital. Tehran blamed the United States, Saudi Arabia, ISIS and Iranian Kurdish groups as possible perpetrators, but ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. Days later, the Iranian authorities announced the death of the leader of the attack and launched a missile from the western city of Kermanshah against alleged ISIS positions in Deir al-Zour, Syria.

Iran – USA, Israel ⁴³	
Intensity:	2
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

42. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in this chapter.

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

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.

After two years of easing international tensions around the Iranian nuclear programme, there was a turn in the opposite direction in 2017 resulting from **mutual accusations, incidents and the new US government's announcement that it may review the agreement reached in July 2015** (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Throughout the year, the reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) certified that Iran was complying with the commitments it made in the pact. Yet some activities, mainly linked to Iran's ballistic missile programme, prompted complaints from other countries, with divergent views on these devices' ability to transport nuclear weapons. Tehran ensured that its actions did not contravene the provisions of the nuclear programme agreement and defended them as part of the development of its conventional defensive capabilities. France, Germany, the United Kingdom and especially the US and Israel, which accused Iran of cooperating with North Korea in this area, warned of some Iranian ballistic tests, such as the one that took place in Khorramshar in January, with missiles fired from medium range, and the launch of a space vehicle in July on the grounds that they could violate provisions of the agreement (relating to the capacity and potential of travel of the devices). Meanwhile, other countries like Russia said that Resolution 2231, which ratified the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme in 2015, does not include a ban on the development of the Iranian space or ballistic programme. In this context, the US approved new sanctions against people and entities linked to the Iranian ballistic tests, which Tehran denounced as a violation of the 2015 nuclear agreement. In turn, Iran approved sanctions against US companies that it accused of violating human rights and cooperating with Israel. Other Iranian activities were also reported during the year, such as Major General Qassem Soleimani's trips to Iraq and Syria despite the ban in Resolution 2231 and, in particular, the possible transfer of ballistic missiles from Tehran to the Houthis, an armed Yemeni group that would have used these weapons in their fighting with Saudi Arabia. In December, in its report on implementation of the nuclear agreement, the UN reported that it was investigating this latest complaint and the remains of missiles recovered after attacks on

Saudi soil, in Yanbu and Riyadh that occurred in July and November, respectively.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Iran refused to give military assistance to the Houthis.

Meanwhile, several incidents took place during 2017, including warning shots fired by US ships at Iranian ships in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz; military simulations and exercises in the Persian Gulf in which Iran may have tested new cruise missiles; accusations that US vessels had entered Iranian territorial waters; Iran's accusations that the Saudi Coast Guard had killed an Iranian fisherman; the arrest of three Revolutionary Guard troops, allegedly in Saudi waters, and mutual threats following the US decision to declare the Iranian Revolutionary Guard a terrorist threat. This international tension was also influenced by the new US administration's position regarding the nuclear agreement and its more hostile stance towards Iran. Donald Trump, who had discredited the pact on many occasions during the election campaign and after his inauguration in January, decided not to validate it in October and raised the possibility of imposing new sanctions. According to the UN Secretary-General, these actions created "considerable uncertainty" regarding the future of the agreement. **Washington was in favour of making changes to the agreement, but other international actors involved in the negotiations, like the EU, ruled out renegotiating all or parts of it.** Some in the US, including 90 scientists and experts on atomic issues, stressed the importance of the nuclear pact and asked the US Congress to preserve it. During the year, the new US government also explicitly expressed its support for regime change in Iran. In June, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson accused Iran of seeking hegemony in the Middle East and assured the US Congress that it was supporting elements within Iran that could lead a transition. Trump also supported the protests against the Iranian authorities at the end of the year.⁴⁵

Saudi Arabia	
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Type:	Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, political and social opposition, armed groups, including AQAP and branches of ISIS (Hijaz Province, Najd Province)

Summary:

Governed since the 18th century by the al-Saud family and established as a state in 1932, Saudi Arabia is characterised by its religious conservatism and wealth, based on its oil reserves, and its regional power. Internally, the Sunni monarchy holds the political power and is in charge of government institutions, leaving little room for dissidence. Political parties are not allowed, freedom of expression is curtailed and many basic rights are

44. UNSC, *Fourth report of the Secretary General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)*, 8 December 2017.

45. See the summary on Iran in this chapter.

restricted. The Shiite minority, concentrated in the eastern part of the country, has denounced its marginalisation and exclusion from the state's structures. The authorities have been accused of implementing repressive measures on the pretext of ensuring security in the country and in the context of anti-terrorism campaigns, the targets of which include militants of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). As part of the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, protests calling for reform and democracy received a repressive response from the government, especially in the Shia-majority areas of the country, and the authorities have denounced attempts at destabilisation from abroad, pointing to Iran. The country is the scene of sporadic armed actions by AQAP, and most recently by cells presumably linked to ISIS.

As in the previous year, tension in Saudi Arabia was determined by internal dynamics and by the consequences of its foreign policy, characterised by its growing involvement in regional affairs and a power struggle with Iran. **Several acts of violence in the country in 2017 led to the deaths of at least 17 people, a toll similar to that of 2016**, mainly linked to the activity of armed groups and the authorities' response in the Shia-majority part of the country. The bloodiest episode took place in the town of Al-Awamiyah in the Qatif region (Eastern Province) in August, when clashes between security forces and suspected Shia fighters led to the deaths of nine civilians. In this same town in May, armed men attacked a military patrol during a raid, killing a soldier and wounding two policemen. Other incidents involved members of ISIS: two assailants detonated their explosive charge in Jeddah after being surrounded by police in January and two other suspected members of the group were killed by security forces during raids in Riyadh in October. Also in October, a man who murdered two guards outside the royal palace was killed by police. Saudi authorities announced arrests of people

Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries including Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt cut trade and diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing it of aligning with Iran

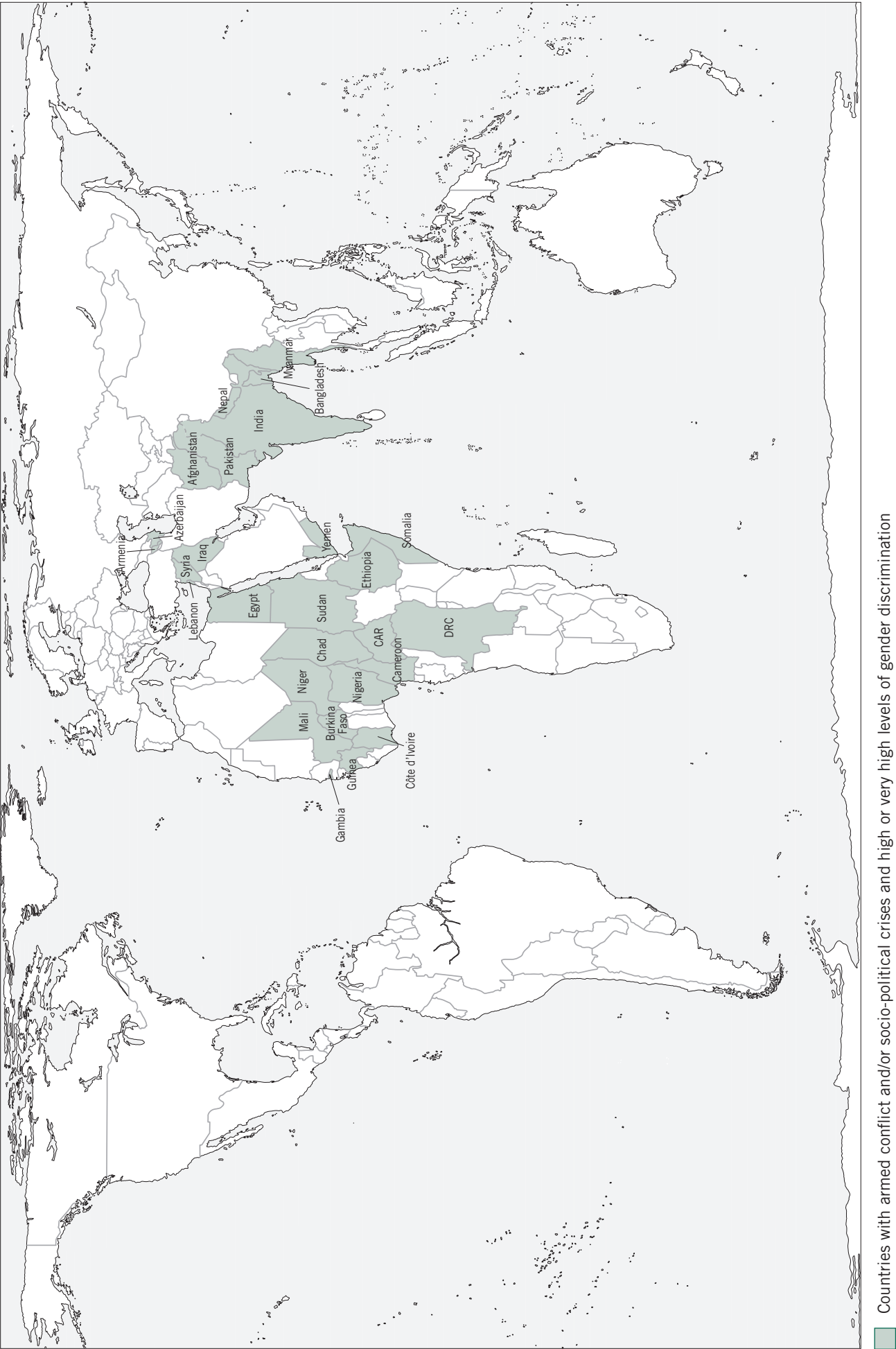
accused of belonging to ISIS cells or of supporting the organisation throughout the year. In the last quarter, arrests of clerics, intellectuals, political figures and businessmen intensified, including around 30 high-ranking officials.

Saudi Arabia was also involved in escalating tension with various regional actors. In the middle of the year and at the behest of Riyadh, **Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries including Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt cut trade and diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing it of aligning with Iran**, of promoting terrorist activities by supporting various groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and of trying to destabilise the region. Riyadh promoted the imposition of 13 conditions on Qatar to reverse these moves and overcome the blockade, which was still in force at the end of the year. Qatar received support from Turkey and Iran and accused Riyadh of aggression. Saudi Arabia also remained directly involved in the armed conflict in Yemen.⁴⁶ The Houthis fired missiles at Yanbu in July and Riyadh in November, which were intercepted by Saudi forces. Riyadh accused Iran of providing these missiles to the Houthis and said that firing them was an act of direct military aggression. It also accused the Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah of training the Yemeni armed group to use these weapons. One of the missile firings coincided with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri's decision to announce his resignation from Riyadh, citing death threats and Hezbollah and Iran's excessive influence on Lebanese affairs.⁴⁷ Hezbollah and the president of Lebanon accused Saudi Arabia of abducting Hariri, who after mediation by France returned to his country and withdrew his resignation.

46. See the summary on Yemen in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

47. See the summary on Lebanon in this chapter.

Mapa 3.1. Gender, peace and security



3. Gender, peace and security

- 75% of the armed conflicts for which gender equality data is available took place in contexts with serious and very serious gender inequalities.
- Of the 17 armed conflicts in which sexual violence was documented in 2016 according to the report of the UN Secretary General, ten of them registered their maximum levels of intensity during 2017 –Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (al-Houthists).
- The United Nations noted that sexual violence in Myanmar against the Rohingya population had been commanded, orchestrated and perpetrated by the Armed Forces and had involved other actors, such as border police and militias from the Rakhine population and other ethnic groups.
- The Secretary General's report on women, peace and security found that during 2016 there was a decline in the participation of women in peace processes and the participation of civil society as a whole. In addition, the number of peace agreements that included gender issues was also reduced.
- Civil society organisations announced a petition to the International Criminal Court for this court to bring charges against ISIS for the persecution and murder of the LGBTI population.

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 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 Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)² is a measure of discrimination against women in social institutions, which reflects discriminatory laws, regulations and practices in 160 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.

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. OECD, *Social Institutions & Gender Index. 2014 Synthesis Report*. OECD, 2014.

Table 3.1. Countries which have armed conflict and crisis and high or very high levels of gender discrimination³

	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination
Armed Conflicts	Afghanistan Cameroon ⁵ Ethiopia India (2) ⁴ Iraq Myanmar Pakistan (2) CAR	Chad ⁶ Egypt Mali Niger ⁷ Nigeria ⁸ DRC (3) Syria Somalia Sudan (2) Yemen (2)
Socio-political crises	Armenia ⁹ Azerbaijan Burkina Faso Cameroon Côte d'Ivoire Ethiopia (3) Guinea India (4) ¹⁰ Iraq Lebanon (2) ¹¹ Nepal Pakistan (2)	Bangladesh Chad Egypt Gambia Niger Nigeria (2) DRC (4) ¹² Syria Somalia Sudan (2) Yemen

According to the SIGI, levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 38 countries, mainly concentrated in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The analysis obtained by cross-referencing the data of this indicator with that of the countries that are affected by armed conflict situations reveals that **21 of the 33 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2017 occurred in countries where serious gender inequalities existed, with high or very high levels of discrimination, and that five armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data in this regard –Algeria, Libya, Israel–Palestine, Russia, South Sudan.** Thus, 75% of the armed conflicts for which gender equality data is available took place in contexts with serious or very serious gender inequalities. Likewise, in six other countries where there was one

21 of the 33 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2017 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities

or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with intermediate levels (Burundi, Philippines) and in others with low levels (Ukraine, Colombia, Thailand and Turkey). As regards socio-political crisis, at least 32 of the 88 active cases of socio-political crisis during 2017 took place in countries where there are serious gender inequalities (high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 45% of the cases of socio-political crisis for which data were available. 16 crises occurred in countries for which data are not available (Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Mexico, Japan, DPR Korea, Republic of Korea, Cyprus, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Palestine).

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 socio-political crises

As in previous years, during 2017 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts.¹³ 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.

The debate on sexual violence was held on the Security Council in April, during which the UN Secretary General presented

- Table prepared based on the levels of gender discrimination of the SIGI (OECD) indicated in the last available report (2014) and on the classifications of armed conflict and crisis of the Pau School of Culture (see chapter 1, Armed conflicts and chapter 2, Socio-political crises). The SIGI establishes five levels of classification according to the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low, very low.
- The number of armed conflicts or crises in that country appear between brackets.
- Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are involved in a single armed conflict, called Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram). See the summary in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan are involved in a single international crisis, that of the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. Please see the summary in Chapter 2 (Socio-political Crises).
- One of the crises in which India is involved is related to the crisis with Pakistan.
- One of the crises in Lebanon relates to the crises with Israel and Syria.
- In the case of DRC, one of the crises is the international crisis called Central Africa (LRA), which involves both the Congolese Armed Forces and the self-defence militias of the DRC. See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).
- The UN considers sexual violence related to conflicts to be "incidents or patterns of sexual violence [...], that is, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancies, forced sterilisation or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, boys or girls. These incidents or patterns of behaviour occur in situations of conflict or post-conflict or in other situations of concern (for example, during a political confrontation). In addition, they have a direct or indirect relationship with the conflict or political confrontation, that is, a temporal, geographical or causal relationship. Apart from the international nature of the alleged crimes, which depending on the circumstances constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide or other gross violations of human rights, the relationship with the conflict may be evidenced by taking into account the profile and motivations of the perpetrator, the profile of the victim, the climate of impunity or the breakdown of law and order by which the State in question may be affected, the cross-border dimensions or the fact that they violate the provisions of a ceasefire agreement". UN Action Against Sexual Violence In Conflict, *Analytical and conceptual framework of sexual violence in conflicts*, November 2012.

Box 3.1. Armed actors and sexual violence in conflicts¹⁴

The report of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflicts published in April 2017 included a list of armed actors who are suspected of having committed systematic acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence or being responsible for them in situations of armed conflict, which are subject to examination by the Security Council.¹⁵

Côte d'Ivoire	Non-state agents: Patriotic Alliance of the Wé ethnic group, the Front for the Liberation of the Great West, the Liberation Movement of the West of Côte d'Ivoire and the Patriotic Union of Resistance of the Great West
Iraq	ISIS
Mali	MNLA, Ansar Dine, MUYAO, AQMI, Self-Defence Groups of the Tuareg Imgad and their Allies
CAR	LRA; former Séléka coalition; anti-balaka forces, including associated elements of the armed forces of the CAR; Revolution and Justice; Democratic Front of the Central African People
DRC	Armed groups: APCLS; ADF-NALU; Forces for the Defence of the Congo; FDLR; Patriotic Resistance Forces of Ituri/"Coronel" Adirodhu Mbadhu/"Coronel" Kakado; LRA; Mai-Mai Cheka/Defence of Nduma for the Congo; Mai-Mai Kifua; Mai-Mai Simba/Manu; Mai-Mai Simba Mangaribi; Mai-Mai Simba/Lumumba; Nyatura; Raia Mutomboki (all factions) Armed Forces of the DRC; National Police of the DRC
Syria	ISIS; Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (formerly Al-Nusra Front); Army of Islam, Ahrar Al-Sham; pro-government forces that include the militias of the National Defence Forces; Syrian Armed Forces and Syrian Intelligence Services
Somalia	Al-Shabaab; Somali National Army; National Police of Somalia and its allied militias; Puntland military forces
Sudan	Movement for Justice and Equality; Sudanese Armed Forces; Rapid Support Forces
South Sudan	LRA; Movement for Justice and Equality; Army/Movement for the Liberation of the People of the Sudan in the Opposition; Sudan People's Liberation Army; National Police of South Sudan
Other cases	Boko Haram

his annual follow-up report on conflict-related sexual violence for the period from January to December 2016, which identifies armed actors responsible for having committed systematic acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also documents patterns and trends in the use of sexual violence in the context of the conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur (Sudan), Syria, Yemen; the post-conflict cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal and Sri Lanka, in addition to the situation in Burundi and Nigeria. The report also includes different response initiatives carried out by governments or from other bodies, such as the United Nations or civil society.

Of the 17 armed conflicts¹⁶ in which sexual violence was recorded in 2016 according to the report of the UN Secretary General, ten of them registered their maximum levels of intensity during 2017 –Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (al-Houthists)– with more than one thousand fatalities in total, which has had a severe impact on people and territories, including sexual violence related to armed conflict. In addition, in ten of them there was also an escalation of violence during 2017 with respect

to the previous year –Libia, Mali (north), CAR, DRC (east), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (al-Houthists).

Among the armed conflicts of 2017, it should be noted that armed actors **from South Sudan** continued to perpetrate sexual violence on a massive scale, directed against people from ethnic groups considered rivals. This was indicated in a 2017 report prepared by Amnesty International and 10 human rights defenders from South Sudan.¹⁷ According to the report, survivors of sexual violence pointed to a situation of widespread sexual violence by armed actors, including during military attacks on localities, searches in residential areas, checkpoints and after kidnappings and detentions. The report complains that the majority of sexual violence was perpetrated along with other forms of violence, including murders, looting and destruction of houses. Likewise, most documented cases involved individual and collective violations against women and girls. In addition, the practices of sexual violence were part of a strategy of terror and humiliation against the victims as well as their ethnic or political groups, according to the testimonies of the victims. The report also notes the impunity that accompanies this violence, as well as the lack of reparation measures.

14. UN Security Council, *Sexual violence related to conflicts. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2017/249, 15 April 2017.

15. This table uses the denomination of the armed actors as it appears in the report of the Secretary General which does not necessarily coincide with that used in chapters 1 and 2 of this yearbook.

16. In some countries included in the report of the UN Secretary General there was more than one armed conflict according to the definition of the School for a Culture of Peace (ECP). The complete list of armed conflicts is as follows: Libya, Mali (north), Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) –includes Nigeria–, CAR, DRC (east), DRC (east-ADF), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria, Yemen (al-Houthists) and Yemen (AQAP).

17. Amnesty International, *"Do not remain silent": Survivors of Sexual violence in South Sudan call for justice and reparations*, AI, 2017.

The West Africa Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN) of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) warned of sexual and gender-based violence by armed actors in northern and central **Mali**.¹⁸ Its national early warning system recorded 70 cases of rape in 2017, without counting other forms of sexual harassment. WANEP noted that sexual violence in Mali was under-reported. According to WANEP, the solution to violent extremism should not be limited to military action. The network advocated the active participation of local communities, including through building trust between the population and security forces. WANEP also urged ECOWAS, the AU and other international actors to carry out preventive diplomacy work with a view to the elections in 2018, and called for greater attention to gender violence in the centre and north of the country.

One of the armed conflicts in which sexual violence had the greatest impact during the year 2017 was that of **Myanmar**, in which numerous international and local human rights organisations denounced the sexual violence perpetrated by the Myanmar security forces against the civilian Rohingya population, especially women and girls. Within the framework of the military operation that was carried out since August and which lasted for the remaining months, many women were victims of this sexual violence, in the middle of a very serious crisis of forced displacement as a result of which about 700,000 Rohingya had to leave their homes. The human rights organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report¹⁹ in which it documents the gang rape of Rohingya women and girls by the Armed Forces in the framework of an ethnic cleansing campaign against this population. HRW interviewed more than 50 refugee women in Bangladesh who had fled the violence, including about 30 survivors of sexual violence who denounced rapes committed by Burmese soldiers during attacks on populations. In addition, they warned that Rakhine civilians also sexually harassed Rohingya women. HRW notes that practically all documented sexual assaults are gang rapes and that hundreds of women could have been victims. This organisation had already documented acts of sexual violence during previous military operations in the Rakhine state, although these accusations had been rejected by the Burmese authorities, who never investigated what happened or persecuted the culprits. On the other hand, the UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, travelled to Bangladesh to visit the camps that receive the Rohingya refugee population from Myanmar and reported that there had been multiple sexual assaults including rapes,

In South Sudan, survivors of sexual violence pointed to a situation of widespread sexual violence by armed actors, including during military attacks on localities, searches in residential areas, checkpoints and after kidnappings and detentions.

gang rapes, forced nudity, humiliation and sexual slavery by members of the Myanmar Armed Forces against the Rohingya civilian population. The UN representative said that sexual violence had been commanded, orchestrated and perpetrated by the Armed Forces and had involved other actors, such as border police and militias from the Rakhine population and other ethnic groups.

In relation to the armed conflict in **Ukraine**, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented sexual violence related to the conflict between March 2014 and the end of January 2017. In a new report, presented in February 2017, OHCHR presented a sample of 31 cases of sexual violence to exemplify and denounce the patterns and trends of this type of human rights violation.²⁰ OHCHR notes that sexual violence is under-reported and that it has not been able to verify all allegations, especially in the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, due to factors such as access barriers. Among the trends, OHCHR notes that there is no evidence to suggest that sexual violence has been used for strategic or tactical purposes by government forces or rebel actors. However, in the same report OHCHR describes that in **the majority of documented cases, which occurred in contexts of deprivation of liberty, sexual violence was used as a method of torture and ill-treatment to punish, humiliate or extract confessions**. In some cases, also for the victims to abandon their properties or carry out certain actions. **Sexual violence affected men and women**, according to the report, and included practices such as beatings and electrocutions in genital areas, rape, threats of rape and forced nudity. In addition, threats were made to carry out detentions, kidnappings, rapes, damages or killings of relatives, especially of children. In addition to situations of deprivation of freedom –the main risk situation–, cases of sexual violence were also documented, mainly against women, at checkpoints on the contact line. OHCHR noted that the presence of the Ukrainian armed forces and armed groups in populated areas increased the risk of sexual violence against the civilian population. In addition, **the report identifies a general situation of impunity for human rights violations, including sexual violence**.

A United Nations study revealed the **impact of sexual violence on Syrian refugee men and boys**, noting that sexual violence and torture are far more widespread than previously estimated, and that much of the sexual violence took place as a form of torture in detention centres or prisons, although it

18. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, *West Africa Early Warning Outlook for 2018. Potential Flashpoints & Simmering Conflicts*. WANEP, February 2018

19. Human Rights Watch, *"All of My Body Was Pain" Sexual Violence against Rohingya Women and Girls in Burma*, Human Rights Watch, 2017.

20. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine, 14 March 2014 to 31 January 2017*, 16 February 2017.

was perpetrated by all parties to the conflict.²¹ This sexual violence affected men and children of all ages. Sexual violence against the LGBTBI population was led by armed actors in Syria and also opportunistically by other actors in the asylum countries, given their situation of double vulnerability due to their refugee status and the discrimination suffered as a result of their sexual orientation and/or identity. Children suffer sexual violence in their countries of asylum, both from the local population and from other men or children in their own community. There are also multiple cases of sexual exploitation of refugee men and children in the employment context in the host countries. The study includes the multiple psychological, health, social, economic, family and community impacts that this violence has on men and boys, including strong psychological traumas and important physical ailments, as well as stigma, which affects not only individuals, but also the whole family. The report points out that community stigma is one of the most serious impacts and that it often forces victims to break their ties with the closest environment and to move to cities where it is easier to remain anonymous.

In **Libya** throughout 2017, complaints continued about the arbitrary arrests of women, in some cases due to their family affiliations, to be used in the exchange of prisoners or as a form of punishment for alleged “moral crimes”, such as having sex outside of marriage. During these periods of deprivation of liberty, many women – Libyan, but also foreigners– suffer torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as the UN has repeatedly noted in its reports on the situation in the North African country. It should be noted that both the UN and various NGOs warned of the serious situation of vulnerability of the migrant and refugee population in Libya –especially women and children– who were suffering from various forms of sexual violence, including gang rape and forced prostitution, as well as being exploited by different actors, including Libyan officers, armed organisations and human traffickers. In this regard, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) warned in 2017 of the establishment of slave markets in Libya.

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 December, a ruling was handed down of enormous relevance to the fight against impunity for **sexual violence in the context of armed conflict in the DRC**, when 11 militiamen were sentenced to life imprisonment for the rape of 40 girls, including a baby, aged between eight months and 12 years between the 2013 and 2016. The leader of the Djeshi ya Yesu militia, who was also imprisoned, was the parliamentarian Frederic Batumike. The ruling established that these were crimes against humanity. In addition, the victims received financial compensation, also including the families of victims who were murdered. The special representatives of the UN Secretary General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, celebrated the ruling, highlighting the role played by civil society in ensuring that the trial was held and the fact that the team of experts for the rule of law and sexual violence of the United Nations was deployed to support both the Congolese authorities and the military justice system to allow this case to be a priority.

In DRC, 11 members of the Djeshi ya Yesu militia were sentenced to life imprisonment for sexual violence against 40 girls, in a process backed by civil society and the United Nations

In relation to the armed conflict in **Ukraine and the sexual violence related to the conflict**, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted a climate of impunity and inaction on the part of the Government and armed groups regarding the response to this type of under-reported violence. According to a report published by OHCHR in February, national legislation and legal practice in Ukraine against sexual violence is limited and not fully in line with international standards and practices.²² The report notes that cases of sexual violence are frequently recorded

under the classification of other crimes, including bodily injury. In this regard, OHCHR also points out legislative gaps and lack of knowledge by police and justice personnel (police, lawyers, prosecutors, judges) to document, investigate and consider such situations as sexual violence related to conflict.

In **Kosovo, progress was made in the area of reparations for victims of sexual violence related to conflict, although serious obstacles and limitations also persisted**. The beginning of the period of access to economic reparations for male and female victims of sexual violence was scheduled for January 2018, following the creation in 2017 of the Verification Commission and the allocation of a budget. These are the first reparation measures since the end of the armed conflict and are the result of the activist efforts of local women’s organisations, which resulted in amendments in 2014 to the law on the rights of combatants and other civilian victims of

21. Sarah Chynoweth, *We Keep it in our Heart. Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in the Syria Crisis*, UNHCR, 2018.

22. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine* 14 March 2014 to 31 January 2017, 16 February 2017.

war.²³ Organisations like Amnesty International (AI) celebrated in 2017 the upcoming commencement of the reparations. At the same time, AI warned of the significant limitations and challenges pending in transitional justice in relation to sexual violence in the Kosovo conflict and urged the EU and the Government of Kosovo, among others, to take specific measures in this regard. Among the limitations of the legislation, AI noted that **the law regulated access to reparations for victims of sexual violence committed up to June 1999, which excluded victims of sexual violence perpetrated in the immediate post-conflict phase, most of them women from ethnic minorities** in Kosovo (Serbs, Roma) and some Kosovo Albanian women at the hands of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). AI also underlined, among other limitations, the lack of provisions for free or affordable access to health care –considered instead for other civilian victims of war–, psychological and psychosocial assistance, as well as economic empowerment and access to employment. The report also addresses the failures of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to address the legacy of sexual violence related to the war, a warning on the climate of impunity and the evident lack of political will to prosecute sexual violence, and urges the adoption of comprehensive and transformative reparation measures. **AI also stressed that the legacy of impunity was never addressed in the negotiating process facilitated by the EU aimed at normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo.**

Amnesty International noted that the legacy of impunity in the face of sexual violence has never been addressed in the negotiating process led by the EU aimed at normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo

On the other hand, in relation to sexual violence perpetrated by military and civilian personnel deployed on United Nations missions, the report of the UN Secretary General “Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” –presented in February 2017, and which analyses what took place in 2016– detected an increase in complaints for a further year running.²⁴ **Thus, in 2016, 145 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported (65 cases allegedly perpetrated by civilian personnel and 80 by uniformed personnel), compared to 99 cases in 2015 and 80 in 2014.** The complaints affected 311 victims, of whom 309 were women. In addition, 103 of the 145 allegations referred to peacekeeping missions and special political missions, while 42 others referred to different entities. The report linked the increase to support measures for submitting complaints. In addition, the document includes another 20 complaints of abuses committed by other international forces, other than

the United Nations, but operating under a mandate from the Security Council. In turn, during 2017 the unit of conduct and discipline of the United Nations peacekeeping department recorded 62 reports of sexual exploitation and abuse on peacekeeping missions. It should be noted, according to this unit’s registry, that in 2017 the United Nations sent 242 communications to member states, requiring actions in relation to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, but received only 153 responses, with information on the actions taken or the administrative or disciplinary procedures initiated (compared to 189 communications and 174 responses in 2016; or 107 communications and 115 responses in 2015).

On the other hand, the UN Secretary General presented the four pillars of the new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse: the rights and dignity of the victims; the fight against impunity; cooperation with civil society, external experts and other organisations; and the reorientation of communication, to promote awareness. The new strategy is a response to the approaches of the multidisciplinary group, established in January under the coordination of Jane Holl Lute, which carried out consultations with the Member States, UN agencies and external organisations. As part of the new strategy, **a new position was established in 2017, that of the United Nations defender for the rights of victims of sexual abuse.** The Secretary-General appointed Jane Connors from Australia in August, with a long history in the defence of human rights and humanitarian assistance in the fields of academia, civil society and the United Nations. From the new position, the defender will support the strategy of assistance to victims in coordination with the United Nations system. Also, within the framework of the new strategy, the Secretary General urged the member states participating in peace missions to sign a voluntary pact that establishes commitments in the fight against abuse, to promote the implementation of measures and to strengthen coordination. In September, 72 States had signed the pact and another 18 had expressed their intention to sign it.

3.2.3. Other gender-based violence in socio-political crises or armed conflict

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and crises had other serious gender impacts. El Salvador continued to be affected by high rates of femicide. In 2017 there were 468 femicides, according to figures

23. With the amendment, Law 03/L-054 was renamed the Law on the Status and Rights of Martyrs, Invalids, Members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Victims of Sexual Violence of War, Civilian Victims and their Families.

24. General Assembly of the United Nations, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse: a new approach. Report of the Secretary-General*, A/71/818 General Assembly, 28 February 2017.

from the Legal Medicine Institute of the country,²⁵ which represents an increase with respect to the previous year. 15.5% were girls and women under 19 years of age. 45% were under 29 years old, according to the same source. **In 2016, El Salvador was already the country with the highest rate of femicide in Latin America**, according to the Observatory on Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a rate of 11.2 femicides per 100,000 women (371 deaths in 2016), followed by Honduras, with a rate that year of 10.2 femicides (and an absolute figure of 466 murders). Likewise, **Salvadoran women continued to be affected by the absolute prohibition of abortion and legal persecution against women and medical personnel**. Feminist and human rights organisations in El Salvador denounced the serious violation of sexual and reproductive rights and urged the Legislative Assembly to reform Article 133 of the Criminal Code to decriminalise abortion for health reasons.²⁶ According to figures from The Feminist Collective, more than 150 women have been prosecuted, including more than 35 with prison sentences of more than 30 years with accusations of aggravated homicide. In addition, local organisations denounced the serious situation faced by women, adolescents and girls with pregnancies resulting from rapes or abuses and who are forced to continue them (3,947 complaints of sexual crimes in 2016, according to figures from the National Police, of which 47% were rapes of children under 15 years of age, and 26% of adolescents between 15 and 18 years).²⁷ At the end of the year, the Legislative Assembly was awaiting two reform proposals, one focused on decriminalising four cases (presented in 2016) and the other with two cases. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who visited El Salvador at the end of the year (the first visit to the country by a high commissioner for human rights) warned that the absolute prohibition of abortion was penalising women for spontaneous abortions and other obstetric emergencies. In addition, he pointed out that prison sentences were carried out only against women from poor backgrounds. On the other hand, the Asociación Comunicando y Capacitando a Mujeres Trans en El Salvador (COMCAVIS TRANS) reported 28 serious attacks in 2017, mostly murders, against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex population.²⁸ The situation of gender violence occurred in a general context of human rights violations, as Amnesty International noted in its annual

El Salvador recorded an increase in femicides, as well as serious violations of women's sexual and reproductive rights and high rates of sexual and gender-based violence

report, including extrajudicial executions, as well as extraordinary security measures in the fight against organised crime that violated international standards, including detention and solitary confinement in inhumane conditions and suspension of family visits.

In Chechnya, practices of kidnapping homosexual men carried out by armed non-state actors and security forces were reported, followed by arbitrary arrests, violence, torture and other ill-treatment. The first information was published by Novaya Gazaeta in early April. In turn, the Russian LGBT Network carried out a fact-finding mission and evacuated several victims from the region. The organisations OurRight International, Human Rights Watch, ILGA-Europe and the Russian LGBT Network issued an urgent appeal to the Secretary General of the UN in April to intervene as a matter of urgency in the situation of violence detected against one hundred gay and bisexual men and those perceived as such. The allegations included the death of at least three men, illegal detention in prison and a pattern of abuse against detainees.²⁹ The NGOs reported that it was a serious escalation of violence against Chechen homosexual men, preceded by years of threats and beatings. The Russian LGBT Network filed complaints with the Russian authorities. For their part, the Chechen authorities issued homophobic statements and denied the existence of homosexuality in Chechnya. The UN high commissioner for human rights urged the end of abuses and the investigation and prosecution of what he described as acts of persecution and violence on a scale unprecedented in the region and of serious violations of Russia's obligations under the International Law of human rights.

In **Libya**, women who live in the east of the country were affected by attempts to restrict their freedom of movement by the armed actors that control the area. In February, after claiming reasons of security, military authorities in the eastern area of Libya forbade women under 60 from travelling alone, demanding the presence of a man who would act as a "guardian" of their movements. One of the local military leaders in the area argued that Libyan women travelling abroad on behalf of civil society groups were being used by foreign intelligence services. The controversial measure was widely condemned and shortly after was temporarily suspended by the eastern authorities of the country. However, throughout the year women activists denounced interrogations and harassment while travelling without having a man officiate as a "guardian."

25. Observatory of Gender Violence against Women, Organizaci3n de Mujeres Salvadoreñas por la Paz.

26. Citizen Group for the Decriminalisation of Therapeutic, Ethical and Eugenic Abortion; Feminist Collective for Local Development; Centre for Reproductive Rights; Centre for Justice and International Law, *Sexual and Reproductive Rights Situation in El Salvador*, 28 November 2017.

27. Ibid

28. Amnesty International, *Report 2017/2018. The human rights situation in the world*, Amnesty International, 2018.

29. OutRight Action International, Human Rights Watch, ILGA-Europe, The Russian LGBT Network, *Letter to the Secretary-General on Re: The Arbitrary Detention, Torture and Murder of Gay Men in Chechnya*, 14 April 2017, <https://www.outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/UNSGChechnyaLetter.pdf>

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 women, peace and security

The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was marked by two monographic debates on the Security Council. The first one, in April, dealt with sexual violence and armed conflicts. The Secretary General presented his annual report on this matter.³⁰ Civil society once again highlighted the importance of understanding sexual violence in armed conflicts within a broader framework of gender violence perpetrated by both military and civilian actors in a context of profound international inequalities between men and women, aggravated by the arms race and militarism.

In October, the open debate of the UN Security Council on women, peace and security was held, with the participation of member states, the United Nations, as well as representatives of civil society. The Secretary General presented his annual report evaluating the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, composed of eight Security Council resolutions on this matter –1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015)–. The report again noted the enormous deficiencies in the implementation of the agenda, which is far from achieving the commitments made over the past 17 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000. The UN Secretary General assessed the initiatives and progress in the following areas: a) participation and leadership of women in peace and security initiatives; b) protection of the human rights of women and girls during and after conflicts; c) planning with a gender perspective and accountability; d) the strengthening of the gender architecture and technical knowledge; and e) the financing of the agenda on women and peace and security. In addition, the Secretary General stressed that since he entered the position he had promoted that one of the central pillars of conflict prevention, an issue that was a special focus of attention during 2017, should be gender equality through effective actions in the areas mentioned above. **However, in the specific assessment of the progress, the report itself notes the fragility of the progress and even certain setbacks.**

Thus, in the area of participation, for example, it was found that **during 2016 there was a setback in the**

participation of women in peace processes since the report states that “of the nine processes that were followed up, there were women in senior positions in 11 delegations, compared to eight processes and 12 delegations in 2015 and nine processes and 17 delegations in 2014.” And with regard to the demands for specialised advice on gender equality in peace negotiations, these were reduced and only took place in four of the seven (57%) mediation processes led or co-led by the UN, which represents a reduction with respect to previous years in which demands were registered in 89% of the processes in 2015, 67% in 2014 and 88% in 2013. There was also a setback with regard to the participation of civil society as a whole, because although in 2014 and 2015 consultations were held in 100% of the processes involving the United Nations, in 2016 consultations in 86% of the

processes were carried out. In addition, the number of peace agreements that included gender issues was also reduced, moving from 70% in 2015 to 50% in 2016. Thus, **after several years of positive trends, there have been setbacks that highlight the lack of sustainability of the progress achieved.** In fact, the United Nations Global Survey assessing the 15 years’ implementation of the agenda already pointed out that the field of participation and leadership of women was one of the areas in which the greatest challenges continued.

With respect to the protection of women’s rights, the report echoed the 19 contexts of concern and the 46 actors in conflict over which credible allegations of their responsibility for acts of sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts hang. In addition, 145 new allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by United Nations personnel were recorded, most of which were directed against peacekeeping operations personnel. The report also notes concern regarding the increasing participation of women in organisations accused of terrorism, noting that women could constitute between 20 and 30% of foreign fighters from these groups. In addition, in the case of groups such as Boko Haram, almost one in five suicide bombers is a minor and three quarters of these are girls. Another of the main challenges pending continues to be the financing of the agenda which, according to the Secretary General in the report, is insufficient and far from optimal figures. The United Nations recommends that 15% of the funds earmarked for peacebuilding be specifically dedicated to actions to promote gender equality. Only 12 National Action Plans have a specific budget.

Regarding the holding of the global debate of the UNSC, it is worth highlighting the advocacy actions carried out by women’s organisations to achieve greater commitment on the part of the member states with the active participation of civil society and the protection

30. See section 3.2.1. of this chapter.

of female human rights defenders, as well as a greater involvement of the women, peace and security agenda in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. They also stressed the importance of redoubling efforts to promote disarmament. And **calls were made to ensure that anti-terrorist policies, including in the financial sphere, do not impede or restrict the work of women's organisations. There were complaints from civil society that the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda continues to be fragmented.** In the context of concern among civil society organisations regarding the 2017 cuts in gender roles in UN peacekeeping missions (including in terms of the number of gender positions and the degree of experience required for the position), women's organisations called on States not to allow a reduction of gender provisions in the mandates or budgets of the women, peace and security agenda. In this regard, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, in October, warned of the reduction of gender positions in peace missions in CAR, Haiti and Liberia, the vacancy in Mali and the absence of gender experts on the teams responsible for the strategic assessment of the missions in Cyprus and South Sudan.³¹ The interventions by the States focused in particular on two areas: the participation of

women in prevention, mediation, and the building and maintenance of peace; and protection against sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflicts.

Another area of implementation of the agenda on women, peace and security of particular relevance was the preparation of National Action Plans (NAP), since they are the main tool available to States to apply said agenda at the national and local level. By the end of 2017, 73 countries had their own National Action Plan (NAP). During 2017 ten States approved a NAP –Jordanania, Angola, Guatemala, El Salvador, Cameroon, Solomon Islands, Palestine, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Brazil–, one of the years in which the greatest progress has been made in this regard, only surpassed by 2010, when, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, 11 new NAPs were approved. Other countries, such as Spain, reviewed their action plan and approved a new plan to update the one in force up to that time. It should be noted that several of the countries that approved a plan for the first time in 2017 were affected by armed conflict (Cameroon, Palestine) or by significant levels of violence (Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador).³²

Box 3.2. The II National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security in Spain

At the end of July the Spanish Government approved the 2017–2023 II National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. The first NAP had been approved in 2007 and since then its content had not been revised, despite the persistent deficiencies revealed by the civil society organisations that have monitored its implementation throughout its decade of effectiveness. The II Plan of Action was approved in an international context very different to that of the first plan. In 2017 more than 70 countries had their own NAP, unlike in 2007, when only seven countries had one approved. The II NAP, therefore, had to respond to new challenges in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and, at the same time, incorporate the accumulated lessons learned over 17 years of this agenda and more than a decade of existence of the NAP as the main tool to convey the action of the States in this regard. In addition, the approval of the II NAP took place after the high-level review of the implementation of the agenda carried out by the United Nations in 2015, in which Spain played a leading role in the promotion of resolution 2242. On the other hand, it is worth noting that there are several countries that already have second and even third generation NAPs and that, in the European case, there is also a regional plan that should guide not only the action of the organisation, but also that of the Member States. Thus, it is in this context that the approval of the new NAP takes place, which establishes four main goals:

- 1) Include the gender perspective in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and the consolidation of peace
- 2) Ensure that the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts becomes a reality
- 3) Guarantee the protection and respect of the human rights of women and girls in situations of conflict and post-conflict
- 4) Effectively introduce the gender perspective into the definition of specific reparation and recovery measures for victims of conflicts

One of the historical demands of civil society involved in the agenda on women, peace and security was to ensure the meaningful participation of social organisations. Although in the process of designing the second NAP civil society had greater participation than in the first, it was limited to a consultation process with little impact on

31. Louise Allen, *Gender Continues to be Overlooked by UN Peacekeeping*, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, 23 October 2017.

32. Geneva Declaration Secretariat. *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

the final drafting of the NAP. Others referred to endowing the eventually approved plan with sufficient economic and institutional mechanisms and resources to ensure its effective (and not merely rhetorical) application and supervision. However, these claims have only been answered partially in the new NAP.³³ The Spanish II NAP does not have its own budget dedicated specifically to its implementation, which greatly limits it and reinforces the merely declaratory nature of the document, to the detriment of its operability. On the other hand, despite the fact that the NAP has a temporary framework, it lacks a specific timetable that allows a better definition of the implementation process. In addition, the language of rights in the NAP has been weakened, as has its link to other key legal and policy tools in the women's rights agenda, such as CEDAW or the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition, the plan does not have impact and process indicators, but rather mainly descriptive indicators. Regarding its political content, the plan does not clearly promote support for women's organisations, nor does it use feminist terminology, nor does it question the patriarchal structures that sustain the serious gender impacts of armed conflicts. Furthermore, it does not question, as the United Nations Global Study on Resolution 1325 did, international policies of a militaristic nature that hinder international peace and security. In this regard, it should be noted that nor does the NAP promote policy coherence to ensure that Spanish foreign policy does not contribute to the generation or aggravation of armed conflicts in areas such as the arms trade.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the joint visit to **DRC** and **Nigeria** carried out by the United Nations and the African Union, with a high-level delegation composed of the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, Amina Mohammed; the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten; and the Special Envoy of the AU for women, peace and security, Bineta Diop. The visit, particularly focusing on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, was the first with these characteristics, and the delegates met with the main local authorities, as well as women victims and civil society organisations. The Deputy Secretary-General of the UN highlighted that, after the hearing, the acting president of Nigeria established a judicial commission to investigate human rights violations perpetrated by the Nigerian security forces.

A joint high-level delegation of the United Nations and the AU carried out a visit to Nigeria and the DRC specifically focusing on the women, peace and security agenda

Celebrating this initiative, Mohammed stressed the importance of sexual and gender-based violence being addressed by this commission and offered the support of the United Nations to do so. However, thousands of women continue to be victims of forced displacement and of violence and sexual exploitation as a result of the armed conflict with Boko Haram. With regard to the DRC, the Deputy Secretary also highlighted the fragile living conditions of thousands of displaced women as a result of the violence, and the insufficient humanitarian assistance due to the lack of available resources. However, she also highlighted the appointment of a Personal Representative of the President for sexual violence and the recruitment of minors, as well as other

efforts to address sexual violence in various reports of the UN Secretary General.

With respect to the **implementation of resolution 1325 by other organisations**, in December 2017 the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) approved the "Third Report on the EU Indicators for the Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security."³⁴ This report collects data provided by the EU Member States on the implementation of EU commitments to the women, peace and security agenda during the period January 2013 to December 2015, based on the EU indicators approved in 2010 and updated in 2016. Although one of the priority areas of this new report was to be the participation of women in peace processes –according to the previous report (period 2010–2012)–,

the new document admits that the collection of data carried out does not allow a substantive evaluation of the degree of EU support for the participation of women in peace processes. The report shows the lack of systematisation of information by the EU and its member states on EU indicators and sub-indicators relating to women and peace processes (indicators 11 to 14, sub-indicators 11.1, 12.1, 13.1. and 14.1.), as well as the mostly anecdotal and non-systematic focus on monitoring these indicators. On the other hand, the report also identifies as a challenge the stagnation in terms of the proportion of women Delegation heads (22.8% in 2013, 22.1% in 2014 and 19.5% in 2015). The report highlights the window of opportunity

33. Document of the group of civil society organisations involved in the review of the National Action Plan Women, Peace and Security: *Las organizaciones de la sociedad civil reclamamos una apuesta real del gobierno español para el cumplimiento efectivo de la Agenda Mujer, Paz y Seguridad* (Civil society organisations demand a real commitment from the Spanish government for the effective fulfilment of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda).

34. Council of the European Union, *Third Report on the EU Indicators for the Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security*, 22 November 2017.

that has opened for the period 2017–2019, given the high number of Delegation heads that will end their term in those years. The proportion of women among the senior staff of the European External Action Service was even more limited (13.8% in 2013, 10% in 2014, and 13.6% in 2015). On the other hand, in relation to gender roles in civil missions of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU, in the first quarter of 2017 44% of those missions had a full-time gender adviser, 33% had a double-duty gender consultant, and 22% had gender focal point(s). With regard to military missions, 50% had a full-time or double-duty gender adviser and 50% had gender focal point(s). Likewise, the report indicates the room for manoeuvre that exists for the greater inclusion of the gender perspective within the mandates and in the planning and accountability documents. Among the future lines, the report indicates that the review of the EU's Comprehensive Approach and the presentation of results to the PSC will be concluded, although without a specific timetable.

3.3.2. The gender dimension in peace negotiations

Several peace processes were relevant from a gender point of view during the year 2017. Women's organisations demanded greater participation in different negotiations around the world as well as the inclusion of gender agendas. However, in most of the negotiating processes, significant changes were not implemented to include the participation of women in a significant way.³⁵

Colombia

With regard to Colombia, it is worth noting that peace negotiations between the Government and the ELN guerrillas began officially during the year. Both delegations included women and the process was supported by women's organisations, which spoke publicly on the matter, with a communiqué issued by the National Summit of Women and Peace, a platform that emerged during the negotiation process with the FARC to promote the active participation of women in the peace negotiations and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the agreements. However, gender issues did not occupy an important place in the agenda of the negotiations throughout the year.

On the other hand, and with respect to the implementation of the peace agreement signed with

the FARC in 2016, it is worth noting that **the Special Instance began its work to guarantee a gender focus in the implementation of said agreement and to collaborate with the Commission for Monitoring, Promoting and Verifying the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIVI, Spanish acronym) to strengthen this approach.** However, difficulties and delays in the application of the approach were identified. In addition, it is worth mentioning the warnings issued by the Ombudsman's Office regarding the increased risk of sexual violence against women and girls as a result of the expansion of illegal armed groups such as the Colombian Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces, the EPL and the ELN, as well as the dissenting actors of the FARC.

Cyprus

In relation to the peace process in **Cyprus**, the UN Secretary-General noted in his September report on the good offices mission in the country that the recommendations of the gender committee were not always included at the negotiating table and that the influence of the Committee was limited.³⁶ New research evidence in 2017 also showed the barriers to women's participation in the process. In addition, research by the Berghof Foundation (Germany) and the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (Cyprus) showed that the negotiating delegations did not incorporate the gender perspective.³⁷ According to their report, the gender committee occupied a marginal position in the dynamics of the process.

Myanmar

With regard to the inclusion of the gender perspective in the peace process and the significant participation of women, it is worth noting that different organisations and platforms made demands in this regard throughout the year. The peace process continued to exclude the effective participation of women and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the agreements reached and the discussions that took place were very limited. According to the figures offered by the Government, during the second session of the Panglong 21 conference, of the 910 people who attended, only 154 were women, representing 17%, far from the 30% previously committed. In August, a forum on women, peace and security was held in Yangon, attended by 180 delegates to discuss the role of women in peace processes. The Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), a platform that brings

In Colombia, the Special Instance group began to work to guarantee a gender focus in the implementation of the peace agreement and to collaborate with the CSIVI to strengthen this approach

35. For more exhaustive information on the inclusion of the gender perspective in the currently active peace processes, please consult the yearbook of the Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2017. Report on trends and developments*, Icaria, 2018.

36. UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on his good offices mission in Cyprus*, S/2017/814, 28 September 2017.

37. Anna Koukkides-Procopiou, *Gender and Inclusive Security: A new approach to the Cyprus Problem within the framework on Security Dialogue, Security Dialogue Project*, Background Paper, 2017. Edited by Ahmet Sözen and Jared L. Ordway. Berlin: Berghof Foundation and SeeD.

together different women's organisations to promote their inclusion in peace negotiations, pointed out that of the 37 points agreed at the conference, only three directly referred to issues related to women's rights and four referred to them indirectly.

Libya

In Libya, some initiatives were launched in 2017 in an attempt to facilitate the implementation of the Skhirat political agreement, signed in 2015, in which Libyan women had a very limited presence. Between April and May the House of Representatives and the High Council of State –institutions that are involved in a struggle for power and legitimacy in the context of the Libyan conflict– appointed their respective delegations to discuss possible changes to the Skhirat agreement. The group of the House of Representatives was composed of 24 people, of which three were women; while the committee appointed by the State Council consisted of 13 people, with only one woman. These delegations only maintained informal contacts in the following months. It was not until September, after the assumption of a new UN special envoy for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, that the diplomatic efforts were reactivated, within the framework of a new plan to unblock the political process in the North African country. Both the delegation of the House of Representatives and the State Council then appointed a group of people –including a woman in each case– to form a joint committee to discuss the restructuring of the executive authority of Libya.

It should be noted that during 2017 the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Community Development launched a study on the leadership of Libyan women that highlighted their limited presence in decision-making forums. Throughout the year, a meeting was also held to identify lessons learned on the participation of Libyan women in the political dialogue process and a conference –held in Tunisia– on the Libyan women's peace agenda, in which more than sixty women participated. In this last meeting it was decided to launch a campaign of peaceful coexistence at national and local level. Seven women from the different regions of Libya assumed the task of becoming "focal points" for this outreach campaign, which would have the support of the UN mission in Libya, UNSMIL. The mission provided technical assistance to facilitate the inclusion of women's perspectives in the political agreement. UNSMIL, which has taken on the task of promoting and supporting the participation of Libyan women in the political process and promoting a minimum representation of 30%, in line with the implementation of resolutions 1325 and 2122 of the UN Security Council (approved in 2013 with the intention of strengthening the role of women in all stages of conflict prevention and resolution), also

carried out training activities for women who are part of the House of Representatives. It should be noted that the UN mission had a more explicit gender mandate after the approval in September 2017 of resolution 2376 of the UN Security Council. The text requests UNSMIL to take the gender perspective into account throughout its mandate and in its work to assist the Libyan authorities in order to ensure the effective participation of women in the transition to democracy, the reconciliation efforts, in the security sector and in national institutions, in line with resolution 1325. Likewise, a call is made to take measures to prevent and respond to sexual violence, avoiding impunity for this phenomenon.

Mali

Regarding the peace process in Mali, it should be noted that at general level, Malian women continued to be marginalised from most of the spaces related to the implementation and supervision of the 2015 peace agreement. Between 27 March and 2 April 2017, the Conference of National Understanding took place, in which more than a thousand representatives of political parties, armed groups and civil society organisations participated, among others. Women represented 32% in this instance, however, on the subsequent commission responsible for drafting the Charter for Peace, Unity and National Reconciliation –which included the main recommendations of the conference– there were only six women among its 53 members (11%). Some analyses highlighted that Malian women were under-represented –on average, their presence hovered around 3%– in the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the 2015 peace agreement, including the Agreement Supervision Committee, the DDR Commission, the National Council for the Reform of the Security Sector and the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. This is despite the fact that in recent years, groups of Malian women have mobilised to demand a greater presence, initiatives of the UN's mission in the country (MINUSMA) and of UN Women in order to encourage their participation and also despite the country having a National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 that specifically includes the goal of encouraging the participation of women in the implementation of the peace agreement. In this context, and in a positive trend, it should be noted that towards the end of the year the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Government of Sweden promoted the first meeting of the Malian Women's Network for Resolution 1325, in collaboration with the National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and Fight Against the Proliferation of Light Weapons (CONASCIPAL). At the meeting, held in November, women representatives from 36 localities from ten regions of the country participated, discussing how women impact and are impacted by the conflict and to discuss their role in the peace process.

Syria

Regarding the peace negotiations on Syria promoted by the United Nations, during the course of 2017 the Syrian Women's Advisory Board (SWAB) remained active, involving Syrian women of different leanings. The SWAB held meetings with the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, who invited two women –a SWAB representative and another delegate from the Civil Society Support Room, a platform in which Syrian civil society actors participate– to the opening session of the February 2017 negotiations (with the first of the five rounds during the year held in the framework of this process). De Mistura then reminded the delegations of the Syrian regime and the opposition of the importance of the presence of women and civil society in the intra-Syrian talks. In parallel, women who are part of the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) of the opposition's High Negotiations Committee (HNC) –created in 2016 to give a stronger presence to the involvement of women in the delegation of the Syrian opposition in the negotiations sponsored by the UN– publicly demanded a role in the talks. One of their main demands during 2017 was a greater involvement of the UN and the International Syria Support Group in monitoring a ceasefire in Syria.

Within the framework of this process, another initiative that had an outstanding presence of women was the Families for Freedom movement, which denounces arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances in Syria. Women from this group were the main leaders of the demonstrations in Geneva to remind the negotiating delegations of the relevance of this issue and demand the publication of lists of people who have been arbitrarily detained in the context of the conflict. Women from this platform also met with De Mistura and reiterated the need to determine the whereabouts and fate of their missing relatives.

Yemen

In the case of Yemen, during 2017 the blockade was maintained in the negotiations between the disputing parties, but Yemeni women persisted in their demands in order to have a greater presence in the peace initiatives. Yemeni women have been insisting on this demand since the escalation of violence in the country in March 2015, but despite this they have been mostly marginalised from the formal forums of negotiation activated since then. In this context, initiatives by women such as Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security remained active. In its meetings this platform identified priorities to address the Yemeni conflict, which include the immediate adoption of a ceasefire, the urgent access of humanitarian aid that must be distributed in an equitable manner among the Yemeni population –80% of which needed assistance–, the

prioritisation of the search for political solutions beyond armed routes to tackle the crisis and the resumption of peace negotiations. With regard to this last point, it was suggested that the talks should be broad, inclusive and take into account the results of the National Dialogue Conference –which ended in early 2014, but whose recommendations were not implemented–, especially as regards the representation of women in all areas of public life. It should be noted that the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security, which has had the support of UN Women in its genesis and development, is made up of women of diverse political leanings and social groups, both from rural and urban environments, who have united their voices to call for an end to the armed conflict and promote a vision of a country based on non-violence and the improvement of the living conditions of the entire population of the country, the poorest country in the Arab world. According to reports, during 2017 this platform held at least two meetings with the UN special envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, to analyse the conflict, the main challenges posed by the crisis and the prospects for peace.

3.3.3. Civil society initiatives

Three organisations announced a petition to the International Criminal Court for this court to bring charges against ISIS for the persecution and murder of the LGBTBI population. The Madre organisation, the Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq and the City University of New York School of Law presented evidence to the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC of serious violations of the human rights of the LGBTBI population perpetrated by ISIS, including public executions, beheadings and rapes, among others, perpetrated by 60 people in Mosul and its surroundings for 14 months. According to the complainant organisations, this was the first time that such exhaustive and consistent documentation of this type of crime had been produced, and therefore an important precedent could have been set. The petition contends that the international community should prosecute the ISIS members responsible for this violence of persecution on the grounds of gender and crimes that include discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Neither Syria nor Iraq are states that are parties to the ICC, which makes it difficult for the prosecutor to take this request into consideration, but there is a possibility that the ISIS members from countries that are parties to the ICC will be prosecuted.

Women from the **Sahel** G5 countries (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso) participated in dialogue sessions between January and February 2017, promoted by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in collaboration with UN Women to address challenges of cross-border security and links to violent extremism. Among the results, sub-indicators were developed to reinforce prevention, which will be integrated into

the WANEP early warning system. Among the courses of action, the participants identified opportunities to reduce threats based on their ability to detect people from outside the local communities and connect to the focal points of the early warning systems. Participants also called for the strengthening of the leadership of women and their platforms at the local level and for collaboration with civil society actors to promote inclusive approaches to the prevention of violent extremism.

In turn, given the increase in **Nigeria** in the number of women perpetrators of suicide attacks, WANEP identified in 2017 opportunities to address the situation and issued recommendations in this regard.³⁸ Thus, it advised raising the population's awareness through the existing radio culture in the country, in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to being used by Boko Haram; as well as contributing to a greater awareness among families about the risks of religious extremism through traditional communication systems ("Sankira", "Masu-shela"). WANEP also recommended the deployment of adequate security operatives trained in the detonation of explosives, including women, for spontaneous searches in north-eastern areas; as well as efforts of governments at the federal and state level in the education and empowerment of girls; and joint work of federal and state governments with civil society organisations and women's organisations in the north-west of the country, including training in early warning mechanisms. According to the balance of the WANEP early warning system, between January and mid-August 2017, 99 women and girls participated in suicide attacks, mainly in the state of Borno. The attacks were carried out at checkpoints, educational institutions, displaced persons camps, markets, mosques, parking and residential areas, among others. In 2014, the first case of a Boko Haram suicide attack perpetrated by a woman was documented, a figure that increased in subsequent years (4 in total in 2014, 56 in 2015, 30 in 2016).³⁹

The **South Sudan** coalition of women's organisations known as Women's Monthly Forum on the Peace Process (WMF) presented recommendations in 2017 to strengthen women's participation and the gender perspective in the peace process, as a result of a WMF investigation into the peace agreement achieved in 2015.⁴⁰ WMF carried out report presentations and consultations during the year with various stakeholders, including political leaders, women's and civil society organisations, youth groups, traditional authorities and religious leaders, among others. The recommendations include the integration of the gender perspective in the process, including the demand for the inclusion of women in the peace process in various roles and functions, as well as the monitoring of the process

by women's organisations. According to the WMF, the agreement calls for the creation of various institutions –economic, judicial, government– to address the needs of South Sudanese women, and requires eight major institutions to appoint women (the Hybrid Court of South Sudan, the National Commission for the Review of the Constitution, the Joint Commission for Oversight and Evaluation of the African Union, the Authority for Compensation and Reparations, the Mechanism for Monitoring and Ceasefire and Transitional Security Agreements, the Strategic Defence and Security Review, the Transitional Government of National Unity and the Authority for Financial and Economic Management). The WMF stressed that the agreement indicated gender equality and women's rights among the goals of the transitional government and the Constitution. Nonetheless, the WMF highlighted the challenges pending in the implementation and proposed to the women the option of action beyond the parameters of the agreement. According to 2017 WMF figures, in South Sudan only 18 women are participating in the national dialogue, out of a total of 110 people, and all the positions of co-presidents, secretaries and deputies were held by men. However, according to the report of the UN Secretary-General in June, of 31 May, President Kiir appointed three women to the governing body of the National Dialogue Steering Committee, composed of nine members.

With regard to **Yemen**, more than 40 civil society organisations, including several women's organisations –including the Southern Women Coalition (Najm), the Association of Abductee's Mothers, The Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights, the Yemen Organisation for Women Policies, the Arab Association to Support Women and Juveniles– appealed to the president of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN high commissioner for human rights to promote the establishment of an independent international commission to investigate the multiple violations and abuses committed in the context of the conflict facing the country. In the letter, the organisations denounce the severe impact of violence in Yemen in recent years and claim that gender violence has increased by 70%. NGOs warn that 2.6 million women and girls face the risk of violence and indicate that throughout 2016, 10,000 cases of violence, including rape, against women and girls were reported. In this context, the entities considered it essential to create an independent investigation commission of all the abuses committed in Yemen since 2011 –the year of the beginning of the revolt that ended the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh–, to work in coordination with Yemeni civil society and that it has an adequate number of women among its ranks. The commission, they claimed, should be sensitive to gender issues, ensure women's accessibility and work in coordination with feminist organisations and entities led by women.

38. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, *News Situation Tracking – Nigeria. Female Suicide Bombings*, August 2017.

39. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, *West Africa Early Warning Outlook for 2018. Potential Flashpoints & Simmering Conflicts*. WANEP, February 2018.

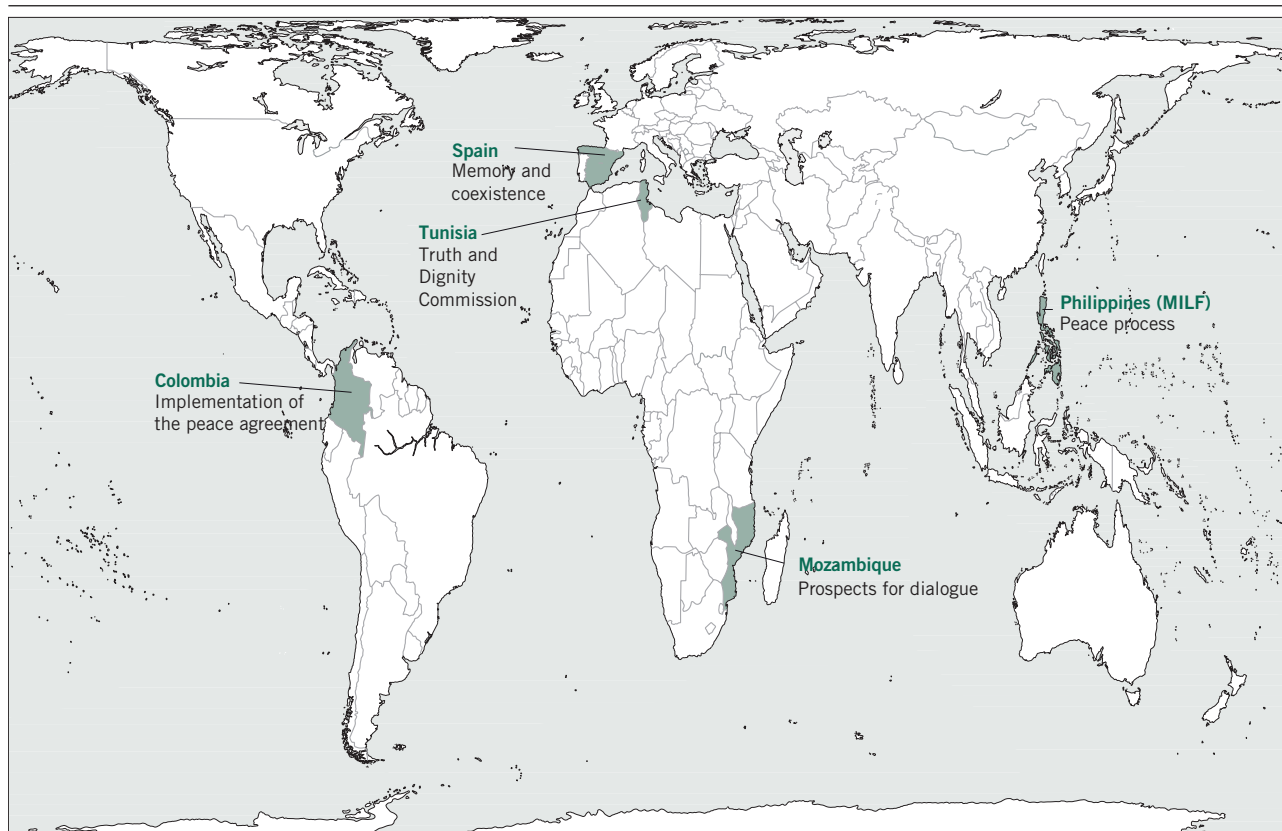
40. Women's Monthly Forum on the Peace Process, *South Sudan: Gender Analysis of the Peace Agreement*, January 2016.

4. Opportunities for peace in 2018

After analysing the year 2017 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 2018. 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 2018 include the process to implement the peace agreement between the government and the FARC in Colombia, the possible approval of the Bangsamoro Basic Law to complete the peace process between the government and the MILF in the Philippines, the possibilities of an agreement to provide a political solution to the tense situation in Mozambique, the dissolution of ETA and progress on issues of memory and coexistence in the Basque Country and perspectives on the work of the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia, which could become a benchmark mechanism for transitional justice.

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 2018



4.1. Implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC: an opportunity for peace in Colombia

The signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC marked the beginning of a process to build a sustainable and lasting peace in Colombia. One of the most exhaustive and innovative when it was signed, the agreement is an asset of enormous importance, since it laid solid foundations for transforming the root causes that gave rise to the armed conflict and for addressing immediate security problems and violence in Colombian society. Though it was rejected by broad swathes of society, the agreement also generated great expectations in much of civil society, which had demanded an end to the conflict for decades. Evaluating the termination of an armed conflict is always a complex process that requires analyses addressing multiple factors. In Colombia, we see an end to the violence associated with the direct confrontation between the government and the FARC. Thus, CERAC documents near-total compliance with the ceasefire agreement that was extended until the armed group completely demobilised and disarmed.¹ Although some violent incidents were reported and several people linked to the FARC were murdered, the drop in violence was drastic and most analysts agreed that the armed conflict was over.²

In addition to the end of armed clashes between the warring parties, the central process deals with implementation of the peace agreement, which began after the definitive signing of the agreement in November 2016, led by the Commission for Monitoring, Furthering and Verifying Implementation of the Final Agreement, a body created by the peace agreement itself, which in turn is a novel mechanism for institutionalising the implementation process. Evaluating this implementation is essential to guarantee compliance with the agreements reached between the parties and to determine the main difficulties and challenges that require better support from different stakeholders involved in peacebuilding, including the international community. Several organisations and institutions have conducted assessments of this implementation in Colombia in recent months. These assessments confirm that the agreement still offers a unique opportunity for peace in Colombia, though they acknowledge several obstacles and challenges.

It is significant that the peace agreement recognised the need for these evaluation mechanisms and therefore appointed the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies as the institution in

charge of independently monitoring its implementation. In its first report on the status of the implementation of the agreement, the Kroc Institute indicated significant progress, noting that implementation of 45% of the provisions agreed in the Havana negotiations had begun and of these 17% had been completed, 6% were at an intermediate stage and 22% were at a minimal stage of implementation.³ Implementation of 55% of the provisions had not yet begun. With regard to the gender approach, 41% of its provisions had been implemented, 6% had been completed, 5% were at an intermediate stage and 22% were at a minimal stage, whilst implementation of 59% of the provisions had not yet begun.

Notably, according to other studies carried out by this research centre, Colombia's agreement is being implemented more quickly in comparative terms than has generally been the case with other peace agreements, especially with regard to measures that should be implemented in the short term. Moreover, full implementation of peace agreements generally takes seven or eight years. The report highlights that important progress has been made in the definitive ceasefire, the quartering of troops, the laying down of weapons and guarantees for the political participation of the opposition, aspects without which it would be difficult to move forward in other areas. However, other assessments of the implementation focus on the great fragility of the process, noting that implementation of the peace agreement has hardly been perceived by the local population in the areas most affected by the armed conflict and highlighting the violence that has proliferated since the FARC ended their armed activity, even if not directly related to the conflict.⁴ These assessments stress the lack of resources dedicated to implementation, as well as the modification of some agreements when they were transformed into legislation, which puts their implementation at risk, especially with regard to the fight against impunity and guarantees of non-repetition.

The progress made in implementing the agreement, together with the many pending obstacles and challenges, shows the crossroads where the country stands. Proper support for and promotion of implementation by all responsible stakeholders is therefore key, since the best guarantee for the sustainability of the peace process is to fully implement everything agreed by the two parties that fought each other for decades.

1. CERAC, *Un conflicto largo, de terminación negociada. Monitor del Cese el Fuego Bilateral y de Hostilidades – Reporte Final*. Monitoring period: from 29 August 2016 to 27 June 2017, 30 June 2017.

2. See the summary on Colombia in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

3. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, *Informe sobre el estado efectivo de implementación del acuerdo de paz en Colombia*, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, November 2017.

4. Mundubat and PBI, *En los territorios la paz no se siente, la esperanza se mantiene*, Report of the International Verification Mission on the Implementation of the Peace Agreement with a gender-sensitive approach, Mundubat and PBI, December 2017.

4.2. Adoption of Bangsamoro Basic Law, a step towards completion of the peace process between Government of the Philippines and MILF

Twenty years after peace talks started between the Government and the MILF in 1997, during the year two factors converged allowing for some hope with regards to the future of the peace process. Firstly, progress made in discussing and processing the Bangsamoro Basic Law – similar to a status of autonomy for the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region foreseen in the 2014 peace agreement between Manila and the MILF– as well as the firm support shown to this agreement by President Duterte on several occasions. Secondly, the serious confrontations that occurred in the city of Marawi (south Lanao province, Mindanao) from May to October between the Armed Forces and what is known as the Maute Group and several armed groups that have sworn allegiance to ISIS, which killed 1,100 people and forcefully displaced more than 600,000 people, led the MILF, the Government, many analysts and several governments to reiterate the importance of the peace process between Manila and the MILF to prevent the expansion of ISIS in the region and the radicalisation of large sectors of the population in Mindanao.⁵

With regards to the first point, in 2017 important progress was achieved in processing the Bangsamoro Basic Law in parliament. Following several months of inactivity, in February Duterte re-launched the mandate of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission –to prepare a draft law– and extended its membership from 15 to 21 members to broaden inclusiveness and representativeness of the agreement. It is important to mention that from the ten people appointed by the Government (the MILF holds the presidency of the body and appoints 11 people), three members were included from a majority faction of the MNLF led by Yusoph Jikiri and Muslimin Sema. This is an important factor, since it shows an explicit support from a part of the MNLF to the peace agreement reached between the MILF and the Government in 2014. On the contrary, the MNLF faction led by its founder, Nur Misuari, opposes the agreement because it considers that it goes against some of the fundamental aspects of the peace agreement signed by the MNLF with the Government in 1996 –such as replacing the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, of which Misuari was the governor, with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region– for which reason he agreed with Duterte to negotiate bilaterally to fully implement the 1996 peace agreement. After completing the draft law in mid-June and send it to the Presidential Office for revision, towards the middle of August Duterte submitted the law to Congress for approval.

In the second half of the year, Duterte himself publicly reclaimed the need to revert the historical injustice caused to the Moro people and repeatedly expressed his

commitment to this law, calling on Congress to adopt the law urgently and suggesting holding a special joint session of both chambers in parliament to discuss the draft law prepared by the BTC and reviewed by the Government, as well as other alternative drafts presented by other congressmen. Furthermore, during the year the peace process received many supports. Especially worthy is the Bangsamoro Assembly held in Sultan Kudarat in November, the goal of which was to support the peace process, which was attended by hundreds of thousands of people (one million according to the MILF), as well as by Rodrigo Duterte, the main leaders of the MILF and MNLF, plus 80 diplomats, congressmen and representatives of the ARMM, and from other institutions.

Besides the progress achieved in processing the Bangsamoro Basic Law in parliament and the support expressed by Duterte, the aspect putting greater pressure on successfully completing the peace process was the siege on the city of Marawi and the growing awareness that ISIS was expanding not only its logistical capacity and armed activity in the region, but also its influence on significant sectors of population. Both Duterte and the leader of the MILF, Murad Ebrahim, warned that a failure to adopt the

The siege on the city of Marawi and the growing consolidation of ISIS in Mindanao may facilitate the adoption of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the implementation of the 2014 peace agreement

Bangsamoro Basic Law and of the peace process would cause not only important defections within the ranks of the MILF and a strengthening of other armed groups loyal to ISIS in the region, but also would seriously increase unrest among a significant part of civil society in Mindanao. In light of these circumstances, the Government, a majority of the international community and several analysts believe that the best option to de-escalate the conflict and achieve stability in Mindanao would be to adopt the Bangsamoro Basic Law and create the new autonomic framework –the Bangsamoro Autonomous

Region, to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao– where the MILF (or a political force that emerged from it) may have a leading weight in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority. In this regard, some analysts consider that, after the Mamasapano massacre in early 2015 that led to the sudden halt in the peace process between the MILF and the Government led by former President Benigno Aquino, for Manila and several governments, the MILF has emerged as a legitimate interlocutor and the only actor in Mindanao that is able to contain and counter the political aspirations of organizations such as the Maute Group, Abu Sayyaf or the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. Some of the factors that explain the growing political legitimacy of the MILF are the fact that, since 2015 there have been no armed incidents, there is a good collaboration between the parties in the different mechanisms to monitor the ceasefire agreement, the MILF is cooperating with the Government

5. See “Consolidation of ISIS in southern Philippines and Southeast Asia” in chapter 5 (Risk scenarios for 2018).

with regards to prosecuting organized crime structures, or the help provided by the MILF to the Government during the Marawi confrontation, ensuring a humanitarian corridor that allowed evacuating tens of thousands of people from the city. As an expression of the support showed by the international community to the peace process, it is worth recalling the statements made by several Governments and the meeting in October of a diplomatic delegation of ambassadors from eight countries of the EU and representatives of the EU and the ASEAN Regional Forum with the MILF, the ARMM, the International Monitoring Team and several NGOs.

Nevertheless, there are also large sectors of population that do not share the tactical alliance of the MILF and the Armed Forces during the siege on the city of Marawi, who consider that the MILF went too far in its collaboration with the Government, or that feel that this collaboration and the good political understanding between both parties in recent times has not led to substantial progress in the peace process or to an improvement in the overall wellbeing of the population.⁶ According to these voices, the constant delays and difficulties encountered in processing the Bangsamoro Basic Law –which should have been adopted in 2015– or the broken promises by the Government with regards to the peace agreements signed in past decades in Mindanao –for instance, the 1996 agreement between Manila and the MNLF, or the failed attempt at signing what is known as the Memorandum of Understanding between Manila and the MILF in 2008– have weakened the State's credibility to find a solution to the conflict, have minimized the so-called “peace dividends”, and have eroded the ability of the MILF to convince a majority of the Moro people of the virtues of an agreement with the State.⁷ In this regard, although it seems unlikely that the MILF may abandon the path to the peace process and resume high-intensity violence, it also seems clear that the entrenchment in implementing the 2014 agreement hugely weakens both its influence on society and its ability to contain and counter the message arriving from organizations that oppose negotiations with the State (such as the case of the BIFF) or those who plainly accept ISIS' thesis.⁸

On the other hand, some analysts have expressed their scepticism on the future of the Bangsamoro Basic Law since they consider that, despite the apparent efforts made by Duterte, he lacks the necessary support in both chambers for this law to be adopted. In fact, towards the middle of the year there was not a single MP that wanted

to take the lead in defending the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law prepared by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission that had been validated by the Government, and this hinders this law from being processed in Parliament. In fact, as already happened under Benigno Aquino's Administration, during the process of parliamentary debate of the law, several alternative drafts emerged –such as the one in 2017 drafted by the former president of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo– which was quite far from the one prepared by the BTC and was deemed unacceptable by the MILF. In this regard, the Bangsamoro Coordination Forum declared it would not accept any law that did not reflect the main aspects of the 2014 peace agreement. Finally, some analysts consider that the Bangsamoro Basic Law cannot be adopted because it currently contains some provisions that are incompatible with the Constitution –at a time there were discussions on the possibility to reform the 1987 Magna Carta to accommodate a possible peace agreement with the MILF, but such a possibility seems discarded in the current situation⁹ or also because the solution to the conflict is not among the Government's priorities, and certainly not among the priorities of the parliamentary majority. With regards to this last point, Duterte declared on several occasions that his fundamental priority was to transform the Philippines into a federal state and on some occasions has suggested that the political solution to the conflict in Mindanao must fall within this new form of territorial organisation. The MILF, in turn, has shown its support to this reform, but has warned that it will not accept that the adoption of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the creation of a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region are tied to a process of federalising the State, which would entail reforming the Constitution and would hugely delay the implementation of the 2014 peace agreement.

In conclusion, there is uncertainty and scepticism regarding the possibilities that the peace process with the MILF will actually be successful, but at the same time, the siege on the city of Marawi and the growing perception that ISIS may consolidate its presence in the region might become key factors that help unblock the reticence of the Government and both chambers of Congress on the suitability of resolving the conflict in Mindanao, which historically has been frozen, by establishing a unique and specific autonomic regime for the regions in Mindanao, which are mostly populated by Moro population and that could substantially improve the competences and financing of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

6. Alindogan, Jamela, “Philippine-Moro Islamic peace talk delays ‘creating discontent’”, *Al Jazeera*, 23 October 2017.

7. Jones, Sydney, *Has Marawi killed the Philippines peace process?*, Lowy Institute, 29 August 2017.

8. Loesch, Juliette, “The GPH-MILF Peace Process in the Philippines to Prevent and Transform Violent Extremism in Mindanao”, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Volume 12, No. 2, 2017.

9. Lau Seng Yap, “Will the Bangsamoro Peace Process Succeed?”, *The Diplomat*, 7 December 2017.

10. Mordeno, Marcos, “Will Federalism hold the Bangsamoro hostage?”, *Mindanews*, 7 March 2017.

4.3. Mozambique: a second chance for peace

The 1992 peace agreement ushered in a period of political stability and economic development, though with high levels of inequality in the country. However, the progress made has partially been wrecked by growing accusations of fraud and irregularities in the successive elections, some corroborated by international observers, as well as corruption and the 2013 debt scandals, growing authoritarianism, repression of the opposition and accusations that the state, media and economy are being appropriated by the party in power, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). In 2013, the opposition party and former insurgency, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), made its continued participation in politics contingent on a series of reforms, threatening to remove its signature from the 1992 peace agreement if they were not enacted. After three years of negotiations, several positive steps were taken last year so the parties might reach an agreement that lays the foundations for a political solution to the demands made by RENAMO in 2013, possibly providing a new opportunity to review failures in the country's governance.

Several developments strengthened trust between the parties in 2017. First, in late 2016, President Felipe Nyusi and RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama held telephone conversations that contributed to rapprochement, leading RENAMO to declare a unilateral truce until the beginning of 2017 so that the Mozambican population could welcome the New Year in a peaceful atmosphere. Dhlakama extended this truce during the year, enabling progress to be made in the peace negotiations. Second, in July the government withdrew troops from eight positions near RENAMO's stronghold in the Gorongosa Mountains, as demanded by RENAMO in June in order to continue the negotiations, which helped to create a climate of greater trust between both parties. Third, direct meetings were held between the parties during the year. In August 2017, Filipe Nyusi and Afonso Dhlakama held their first direct meeting since 2015. The meeting took place in RENAMO's historical stronghold in the mountainous Gorongosa district and helped to build trust between both sides. After the meeting, RENAMO noted that the decentralisation plan had to be submitted to Parliament in December, before the 2018 local elections were held. Fourth, FRELIMO and RENAMO discussed the issues that are part of the core of the problem, such as the demand to increase the decentralisation of power in the country, concerning the procedure for appointing provincial governors and other issues. In early 2018, the president announced that he would implement the constitutional amendments that would allow the political parties that win the provincial parliamentary elections to select the regional governor prior to subsequent approval by the country's president. Nyusi and Dhlakama also met in Namadjiwa to discuss the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of RENAMO members and their incorporation into the state security forces.

Mozambican civil society's support and pressure for dialogue has been a positive factor in the peace negotiations. Civil society activists in Mozambique, and especially leaders of the different religions of the country, with the support of the Community of Sant'Egidio, have built bridges of dialogue between the parties and have provided ideas to promote the peace negotiations. In July 2016, at the peak of tension and sporadic outbreaks of violence between both sides, the Youth Parliament (YP) organised the Thinking Mozambique conference, which produced the proposal to hold a meeting to reflect on peace, reconciliation and development. The Youth Parliament is a civil society initiative and the conference, attended by hundreds of civil society activists and Mozambican politicians, had an important impact.¹¹ The proposal was taken up in December 2016 by the Monitoring Panel of the Political Dialogue (PMDP), composed of activists from Mozambican non-governmental organisations, which convened a national peace conference in the country and demanded an immediate end to military hostilities. The PMDP proposed holding the National Conference on Peace, Reconciliation and Development in Maputo and repeated the need to permanently extend the dialogue to other political stakeholders and especially to civil society.¹² The document presented by the PMDP proposed mobilising the international organisations of which Mozambique is a member in order to create an atmosphere of trust between the government and RENAMO and guarantee the conditions for a ceasefire. The PMDP's proposal arose from a referendum conducted throughout the country. It also called for an audit of the debts incurred as a result of the last phase of the conflict and for publication of the results of the current international audit of the 2013 debt scandal.

Another issue that has helped to give a boost to the peace process was the international support it has received. Since the beginning of the crisis, Dhlakama had raised the need for international mediation as a precondition for dialogue and called to include the country's Catholic Church. The government had rejected the request at first, but President Nyusi accepted following the meeting held between both negotiating teams in May 2016, making mediators of the Catholic Church and the Community of Sant'Egidio, the EU and South African President Jacob Zuma. The EU appointed Mario Raffaelli and Father Angelo Romano of the Community of Santi'Egidio as its representatives. Raffaelli was also appointed coordinator of the international mediation team.

Despite the important headway made in the peace process, which could end with the signing of a global agreement in 2018, the country also faces enormous challenges that could overshadow these achievements. One of the main issues that could hinder implementation of a peace agreement is the role that the most recalcitrant sectors of FRELIMO may play in approving the constitutional amendments. It

11. Jornal de Noticias, *PJ promove palestra para 'Pensar Moçambique'*, 4 July 2016.

12. LUSA, *Mozambican civil society proposes national peace conference*, Club of Mozambique, 14 December 2016.

remains to be seen if these sectors will support Nyusi's decentralisation plan, since it means that RENAMO might end up with more provincial governors and district administrators, implying a direct loss of power for FRELIMO.

Another challenge facing the country is poor governance and corruption. The country is still awaiting answers regarding the scandal that broke out in 2013 and continues to undermine the government's credibility. In 2013, a group of international actors provided loans worth 2 billion dollars to Mozambican companies that granted dubious sovereign guarantees. That sum is equivalent to about one third of the national budget and violated the debt-related commitments made to the IMF that same year. The loans were arranged by Credit Suisse of Switzerland and VTB Capital of Russia. These huge loans eventually caused sovereign debt to grow to unsustainable levels. In March 2016, the government had to restructure the debt to fulfil its obligations. This led Standard & Poor's to downgrade Mozambique's credit rating, unleashing a series of events that led to the disclosure of information on more than one billion dollars in previously undeclared loans. It soon became clear that the loan acquisition process lacked parliamentary approval, had contravened the Constitution and violated budget laws.¹³ In April 2016, the IMF suspended its programme along with

Mozambique faces a key moment in the peace process that may help to promote democracy and good governance in the country, fostering greater control over and redistribution of its resources

other key donors. This further limited the government's room for manoeuvre, battered investor confidence and triggered an economic crisis still affecting the country today. The IMF forced the government to conduct an independent audit that made the main conclusions public in June 2017, but it also revealed that there is a great deal of information about which there is no kind of control or knowledge, according to the auditing body itself. In April 2017, the FRELIMO-controlled Parliament retroactively approved the hidden debt, which several analysts saw as a preventive way of clearing the government of possible criminal consequences. The government itself is reluctant to carry out the investigation due to the personal involvement of President Nyusi, who was Minister of Defence when they were granted.

Despite these challenges and difficulties, the country, which has become one of the so-called "African lions" due to its economic growth, is facing a key moment in the peace process that may help to promote democracy and good governance in the country, fostering greater control over and redistribution of its resources. On the other hand, a non-inclusive peace process that does not help to improve governance could end up becoming an agreement between the elites of both parties, potentially making it a source of future instability.

13. Patel, Alisha, *Mozambique's debt scandal: Impunity is the catch of the day*, African Arguments, 19 July 2017.

4.4. New steps towards peace in the Basque Country: towards the end of ETA, memory, victims and coexistence

Nearly seven years after the armed group ETA announced that it was ending its armed activity for good and one year after declaring that it is an “unarmed organisation”, there is an opportunity to make progress towards ETA’s dissolution, demobilisation or disappearance in the Basque Country in 2018, as well as in other areas, including coexistence and memory. At the same time, the process in the Basque Country has been established as an innovative and socially enhancing model in a context without formal negotiations. The signs pointing to potential new headway in 2018 include the very important previous steps that make the process irreversible; preparatory work aimed at achieving the dissolution of ETA in 2018 and the weight of social expectations and demands in this regard; the measures taken by the French government on prison policy; current and planned progress in the field of memory and coexistence and more. However, there are also risk factors that could slow down the process or perpetuate divisions, including deadlock in prison policy, long-term challenges of coexistence and others. Despite the obstacles, conditions are in place for moving ahead thanks to the political and social push of political and social actors committed to peace in the Basque Country.

First of all, this is an irreversible process. The disarmament of ETA in April 2017, confirmed by the International Verification Commission and actively involving civil society groups through the Artesanos de la Paz (Artisans of Peace) mechanism, marked a new historical step in the process after the announcement of a permanent, general and verifiable ceasefire in January 2011 and the final cessation of armed activity in October 2011. Despite the subsequent deadlock¹⁴ and social frustration linked to the lack of clearer and more diligent progress towards the disarmament and dissolution of ETA, the process moved ahead slowly and was re-launched in 2016, aimed at laying down weapons. It did so in a format without negotiations between the Spanish government and the armed group, but rather with local and international facilitation (Social Forum for the Promotion of Peace, International Contact Group, International Verification Commission) for one of the parties, ETA, in addition to sub-state dialogue among many political and social actors. Continuous pressure on ETA from Spanish and French security forces in recent years (including the arrest of the group’s leaders in France in September 2015) operationally weakened the organisation, which was immersed in change towards unarmed options.

Thus, as a further step in the irreversible process, 2018 could be the year that ETA dissolves. This has been stated in public by facilitating stakeholders like the Permanent

Social Forum, which in early 2018 foresaw ETA’s demobilisation for the first half of the year and further progress in the reintegration of prisoners and fugitives¹⁵ ETA is apparently undergoing the final stage of an internal process of discussion and voting on its final end, which will probably come in 2018.¹⁶ The foreseen scenario would involve dissolving the organisation (regardless of the term used by each stakeholder or group of the population, be it dissolution, demobilisation, end or others) and ruling out its transformation into another organisation or party.¹⁷ Political and social actors assert that it is essential for the end of ETA to be made completely clear. The possible dissolution of ETA would in itself be a historic step towards normalisation and coexistence in the Basque Country.

The dissolution of ETA could facilitate progress on other pending issues, such as the situation of its prisoners. Whilst most political parties in the Basque Country have supported sending the prisoners closer to the Basque Country, the central government’s position has been to refuse any such moves as long as ETA exists and the ruling Popular Party has a wide variety of views on future steps to take on prison policy once ETA has dissolved. In any case, the fact that most of the ETA prisoners accepted the legal framework in 2017 revealed that a new scenario is emerging regarding a possible solution for them. At that time, 73.4% of the inmates of the EPPK collective of prisoners approved the new position to individually submit to the current penal legal framework to apply for penal benefits and the progression of degrees. However, the EPPK drew a red line at repentance and denunciation.¹⁸

The Fourth Social Forum focused on prisoners and fugitives and offered conclusions and proposals for their reintegration, providing fresh impetus and opportunities for making progress on the issue in 2017. The Social Forum’s recommendations for reintegrating prisoners includes removing parts of prison policy that contravene fundamental human rights, ending penal exceptionality prior to the development of transitional justice and transferring powers over prisons to the autonomous communities of the Basque Country and Navarre, as well as an early and individualised reintegration plan for the inmates. Furthermore, the calm reaction of victim associations like Covite and the Association of Victims of Terrorism (AVT) to the French government’s announcement that it would send ETA prisoners to prisons near the Basque Country in 2018 following case-by-case study and the application of French law could indicate future social normalisation in the Basque Country regarding potential (though still uncertain

14. Ríos, Paul. “Basque Country. Experiences of the Social Forum to invigorate peace”, in Conciliation Resources, *Legitimacy and peace processes: from coercion to consent*, Accord, no. 25, 2014.

15. EFE, “El Foro Social cree que antes de seis meses se producirá “la desmovilización de ETA”, *DEIA*, 4 January 2018.

16. GARA, “El debate y la votación para cerrar ‘el ciclo y la función de ETA’, en su recta final”, *GARA*, 22 February 2018.

17. El País, “ETA plantea su disolución en verano al haber acabado su ‘ciclo y función’”, *El País*, 22 February 2018.

18. Guenaga, Aitor. “Los presos de ETA aceptan mayoritariamente la legalidad penitenciaria”, *El Diario*, 30 June 2017. https://www.eldiario.es/norte/euskadi/presos_de_ETA-debate-politica_penitenciaria-legalidad-EPPK_0_660034932.html.

and remote) scenarios of prisoners being sent closer to the Basque Country, depending on changes to Spanish penal law.

There are also opportunities for progress on one of the crucial lines of the process, the issue of victims, memory and coexistence. One such sign of hope was the agreement reached in 2017 between all the political parties of the Basque Parliament, except the Popular Party, to create the Report on Memory and Coexistence under the Human Rights Commission for the purpose of seeking broad consensus on memory, coexistence, victims, the delegitimisation of terrorism and violence, prison policy, peace and human rights. Its constitution is a step forward after the deadlock over the Report on Peace and Coexistence in the previous term, in which the Popular Party and Union, Progress and Democracy refused to participate, and which was subsequently abandoned by the Socialist Party of the Basque Country. In 2017, the Report made headway in the deadlock over working with victims, the appearance of victims of violence and the contributions of the political parties, and progress towards the first formal agreements is expected in 2018. The Social Forum also plans to hold a monographic edition on reparations, coexistence and memory in 2018, with victims participating. There were also initiatives about memory and reconciliation at various levels, including the local level, as well as local coexistence

forums in some places, the activities and legacy of civil society organisations and movements for peace and the existing institutional architecture, including the Institute for Remembrance, Coexistence and Human Rights. In early 2018, the Permanent Social Forum also reported the EPPK's willingness to recognise the damage caused and to hold meetings with victims of ETA violence as part of the work promoted by the Social Forum for an inclusive road map that might lead to coexistence, reconciliation and no prisoners in a few years. However, the issue of memory and the victims continued to be subject to different approaches and political and social confrontation, demonstrating the steep challenges.

In short, various factors are coming together to gain ground on key issues in the peace process in the Basque Country. At the same time, as indicated above, persistent political divisions and the differences in approach among social stakeholders are risk factors that could slow down progress in some of the most politically and socially sensitive areas. Other potential obstacles include the impact that the 2019 elections may have on political polarisation in the pre-electoral stage and the degree of political tension throughout Spain. However, the irreversibility of the process and the opportunity available allow us to glimpse new developments in the Basque Country in the future.

4.5. The Truth and Dignity Commission of Tunisia: a benchmark mechanism for transitional justice?

Tunisia has been a benchmark country since late 2010. It was where the revolts began that rapidly spread throughout North Africa and the Middle East and put several authoritarian governments in the region in check. Tunisia has since become the most successful case, for unlike other countries in the area, it managed to avoid spiralling into chaos and violence after the overthrow of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's regime and set a transition process in motion. This process has had its problems, but thanks to the initiative of civil society, Tunisia has managed to contain its internal differences at critical moments within the framework of a political dialogue, leading to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. In this context, Tunisia has also been working on an interesting initiative that could eventually become a benchmark for transitional justice: the Truth and Dignity Commission. Better known by its acronym in French, the IVD is an ambitious enterprise that aims to deal with the abuses of the past and foster reconciliation within Tunisian society. Its work has given voices to the victims and helped to build an alternative narrative of the country's recent history. However, it also faces many challenges that could compromise its legacy and the achievement of its objectives.

The creation of the IVD was approved by the first democratic government of Tunisia in late 2013 as part of the transitional justice law. It was created to seek the truth about the abuses committed between July 1955, shortly before the country's independence from France, and December 2013, including the governments of Ben Ali (1987-2011) and his predecessor, Habib Bourghiba (1957-1987). According to the IVD's mission statement, it aims to dismantle the authoritarian system and facilitate the transition to the rule of law by disclosing past violations, establishing the state's responsibility for these abuses, ensuring accountability for those responsible and restoring the victims' rights and dignity. This process should help to preserve memory and foster national reconciliation.¹⁹ By the end of 2017, the IVD had received more than 62,000 claims and had opened inquiries into over 49,000 cases. The many claims submitted have been seen as a sign of interest in the initiative and of the need for large parts of the population to address past abuse.

During the first stage of its work, the IVD listened behind closed doors to thousands of victims in all regions of the country and 60 investigators drew a map identifying 32 human rights violations, including cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, enforced disappearance and the use of the death penalty without guarantees of a fair trial, as well as

violations of the freedom of expression and of the press, infringements on the freedom of worship, the methodical marginalisation of certain regions of the country, electoral fraud and corruption. According to data published by the IVD, most victims of the abuses are affiliated with Islamist groups, followed by trade unionists, leftist activists and human rights activists. Given that the testimonies of women only accounted for a very small percentage at first, several women's organisations received support from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) to launch the Transitional Justice is Also for Women campaign and encouraged many women to submit their claims to the IVD. Women's testimonies leapt from 5% to 20% in mid-2016. The public hearings of the IVD began in November 2016 (around 10 had been held by the end of 2017) and shed light on torture, sexual aggression, intimidation and many other kinds of abuse suffered for decades. No perpetrators participated in these hearings, as they were only for victims, unlike other truth commissions, such as the one in South Africa. Moreover, the victims were chosen because they represent the different types of abuse committed in the period addressed by the IVD.²⁰

Several analysts have hailed the IVD as a unique experience in the region and as an unprecedented initiative worldwide due to the scope of its mandate.²¹ Its conceptualisation of transitional justice has therefore been highlighted, as it not only addresses political and civil rights, but also tackles economic, social and corruption-related issues. It also considers collective rights, for example by allowing entire regions to file claims as "victims" of exclusion during the Ben Ali regime.²² However, this ambitious approach has also sown doubt from the start about the IVD's ability to perform its work, which has also been shaped by changes and political tension in the country. The 2014 elections led to the rise to power of a coalition headed by Nidaa Tounis, a party largely composed of parts of the old regime that begrudgingly acquiesces to the work of the IVD. Even President Beji Caid Essebsi, who held ministerial positions during the government of Ben Ali, has publicly declared that he is in favour of leaving the past behind and has refused to testify at public hearings.²³ Nidaa Tounis has led criticism of the IVD, which it accuses of politicisation, of being a tool of the opposition and of taking a vengeful approach. Some legal experts agree that the IVD's appointments conform more to political than to technical criteria. The IVD has also been rattled by controversy and division, with many issues focusing on its president, Sihem Ben Sedrine, a journalist and human rights activist who was in prison during the Ben Ali regime and who has even received death threats.

19. Instance Vérité et Dignité, www.ivd.tn.

20. González, Ricard, "Túnez busca la verdad y la dignidad que le arrebató la dictadura", *El País*, 26 December 2017.

21. International Crisis Group, *Tunisia: Transitional Justice and the Fight Against Corruption*, Middle East and North Africa Report no.168, 3 May 2016.

22. Almajdoub, Sumaya, "Transitional Justice in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities", *Maydan*, 29 May 2017.

These developments have had an impact on the work of the IVD. The commission needs to cooperate with other institutions and one of the problems it has faced has been the lack of collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior, for example, which has refused to hand over its secret files. The Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defence and the Military Justice authorities did not cooperate with the IVD's investigations, according to Amnesty International. In this context, some observers and victims have expressed their fear and frustration at the possibility that many cases of abuse will go unpunished. The IVD has mediated between victims and perpetrators in some cases, but the files on the most serious violations are expected to be referred to special courts. However, this requires an agreement between the IVD and the Ministry of Justice that has yet to be reached. In its annual report, HRW revealed that none of these courts had yet been created by the end of 2017. According to the Tunisian transitional justice law, the courts should have been established under the civil judicial system. HRW also stated that nobody had been sentenced for serious cases of torture and death in custody in the seven years since Ben Ali was overthrown. It is also unclear if the process initiated by the IVD will end with binding verdicts, since the transitional justice law passed in 2013 refers to various crimes that do not appear in the Tunisian penal code, potentially leading to problematic situations for judges.

The transitional justice process also suffered a blow in September 2017 after Parliament passed the

The IVD has given voices to the victims and helped to build an alternative narrative of the recent history in Tunisia, but it also faces many challenges that could compromise its legacy

controversial administrative reconciliation law (proposed by the president in 2015), which in practice grants immunity to former officials implicated in corruption cases who claim that they did not personally gain from the misuse of public funds, though no mechanisms have been established for the beneficiaries of the law to present evidence regarding their past behaviour. In practice, this law, which faced opposition from Tunisian civil society groups and criticism from international human rights and anti-corruption organisations, curtails the mandate of the IVD, whose remit included the investigation of financial crimes and systematic corruption during the Ben Ali regime. Furthermore, the general political atmosphere was clouded throughout 2017 by allegations indicating an authoritarian drift of the government and the return of abuse by the security forces, as well as by growing discomfort among parts of the population due to their persisting marginalisation, economic problems and disillusionment with the political class.²⁴

Given this complex and unstable background, the IVD faces the challenge of overcoming the obstacles and fulfilling its mission. The commission is expected to present its final report and recommendations in 2018 or 2019. It remains to be seen if the experience can succeed in redefining Tunisia's relationship with its past and altering the structures that allowed so much abuse in recent decades, as well as whether it can serve as a model for the Arab world.

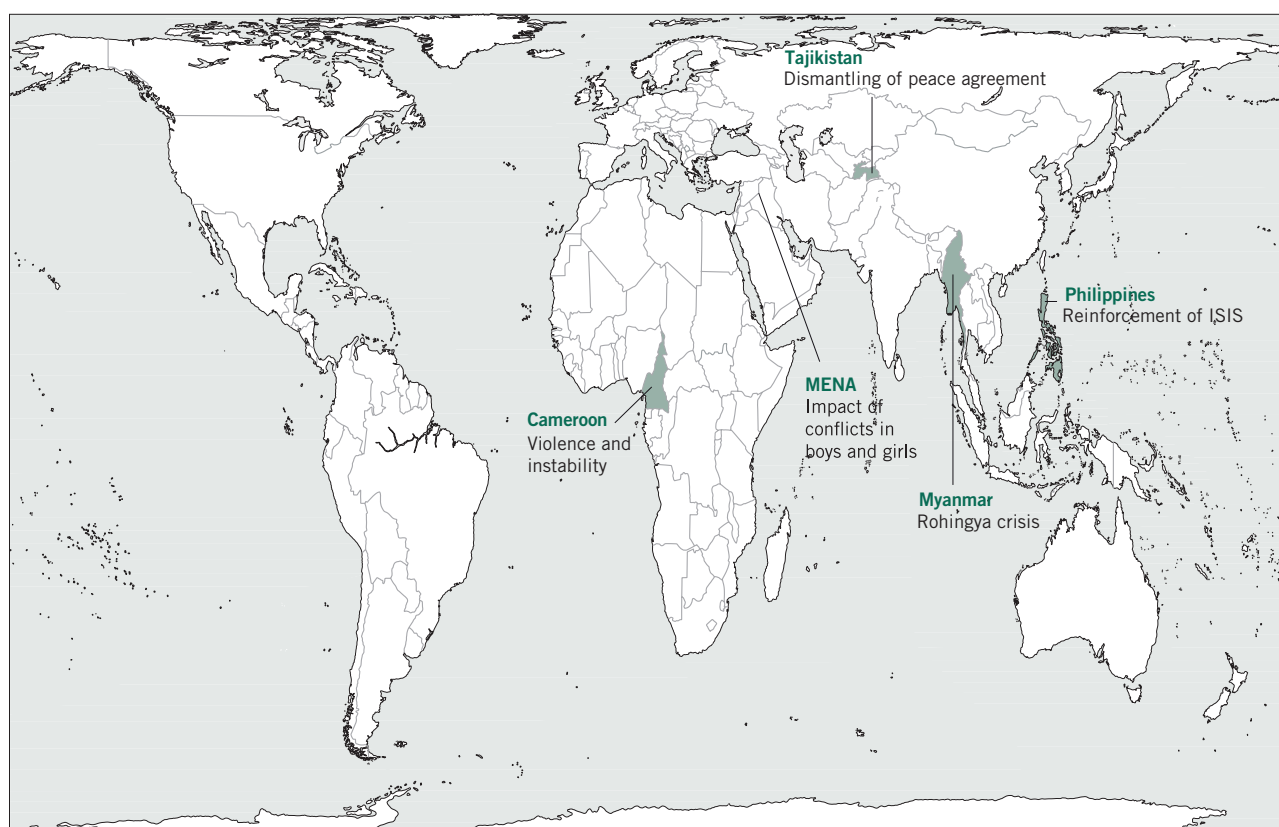
23. Abé, Nicola, "The search for justice in Tunisia: 'We Know Everything, But We Have No Proof'", *Spiegel Online*, 11 December 2017.

24. See the summary on Tunisia in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

5. Risk scenarios for 2018

Drawing on the analysis of the contexts of armed conflict and socio-political crisis in 2017, in this chapter the School for a Culture of Peace identifies five scenarios that, due to their conditions and dynamics, may worsen and become a focus of greater instability and violence during 2018. The risk scenarios for 2018 refer to escalating violence and rising instability in Cameroon, the establishment the armed group ISIS in the southern the Philippines and in Southeast Asia, the repercussions of the Rohingya crisis for the democratic transition and peace process in Myanmar, the shrinking of the opposition space and the dismantling of the post-peace agreement framework in Tajikistan and the impact of high levels of violence on children connected to the serious armed conflicts raging in North Africa and the Middle East.

Map 5.1. Risk scenarios for 2018



5.1. Escalation of violence and instability in Cameroon

Cameroon, known as “Africa in miniature”, as it is home to over 230 different linguistic groups, had not attracted the attention of the international community to date despite the poor governance linked to the excessive centralisation of the political system and high levels of corruption plaguing the country, led by the everlasting Paul Biya since 1982. However, the country is facing escalating instability connected to various internal and regional issues that could push it to the brink of civil war in 2018, in a crucial year for the country.

First, Cameroon is suffering from the consequences of its location between two of the worst armed conflicts in the continent in recent years: those raging in its neighbours Nigeria and the Central African Republic (CAR). The conflict in Nigeria initially affected the northern part of the country, but since 2014 it has gradually been expanding to the entire subregion of Lake Chad, including Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The most affected region in Cameroon is the Far North region, where an estimated 2,000 people (around 1,800 civilians and 175 soldiers) have died as a result of Boko Haram (BH) attacks. The armed group has abducted about 1,000 people and has burned and looted dozens of settlements. The Far North Region is home to 96,000 Nigerian people who have fled the conflict, which in turn has also led to the displacement of 241,000 Cameroonians due to the armed group's actions as of January 2018. Although the group has been weakened by coordinated regional military actions, 27 soldiers and gendarmes and 210 civilians lost their lives in 2017, and these figures could rise depending on the government's involvement in the region.¹ As of January 2018, 249,000 Central Africans had fled the escalation of recent clashes between former Séléka militias and anti-Balaka militias in CAR and sought refuge in the Cameroonian regions of Adamawa, East and North, according to UNHCR, aggravating the humanitarian situation there. Armed groups from CAR have also carried out sporadic attacks and kidnappings in Cameroonian border towns, leading to a Cameroonian military response and the temporary closing of the common border.²

Meanwhile, the crisis in the western Anglophone regions (Northwest and Southwest) is worsening. It began with a sectoral protest in 2016, though it has roots that go back to the colonial period and the creation of the Cameroonian state and to the feelings shared by the Anglophone minority of the former southern part of British Cameroon (20% of the population of the country) that they are politically and economically marginalised by the state institutions, which are controlled by the French-speaking majority. The violent crackdown on the massive demonstrations of 22 September and 1 October 2017 triggered the rise of insurgent movements. From October 2016 until the end of 2017, around 90 civilians, dozens of soldiers and

police officers and an undetermined number of insurgents were killed, more than 1,000 people were arrested, over 30,000 sought refuge in Nigeria and tens of thousands were internally displaced as a result of the violence. The escalating tension in the Anglophone regions has also led to an increase in BH's activities due to the tepid reaction of the security forces, according to ACLED, as the Cameroonian government is more concerned with dealing with insurgent organisations in the Anglophone regions than BH attacks against civilians in northern Cameroon. As such, BH is taking advantage of the situation.

Given this convulsive scenario, the country is racked by growing food insecurity made worse by the influx of displaced populations fleeing different sources of internal and regional instability. According to a WFP report issued in December 2017, 16% of the country's population (3.9 million people) faces moderate to severe food insecurity.

All this is related to the country's structural governance problems, combined with the serious economic situation stemming from the rise in prices and the fall in the country's growth as a result of the crisis. To make matters worse, the country must hold four elections in 2018: municipal, senatorial, parliamentary and presidential. Hardly anything new is predicted about their results, however, for since independence in 1960 the country has been controlled by the ruling party, the Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC), which was called the Union Nationale Camérounaise until 1985. The RDPC has systematically won every election, some of them boycotted by the political opposition, which accuses the party of controlling all mechanisms of power in the country. The presidential term limit was removed by Parliament in 2008, helping Biya to remain in power, a decision that prompted an escalation in protests and repression by the security forces at the time. Elections in the country have been systematically dogged by fraud and irregularities denounced by the opposition and detected by international observers. Thus, the four elections in fall 2018 that will culminate with the presidential election in October will be a new litmus test of governability in the country before the possible beginning of a transition planned by Paul Biya, who at 85 years old is the longest-ruling leader in Africa. Though he is expected to run again and to win by a large majority, several analysts say that his departure could increase instability due to internal struggles within the RDPC to succeed him. They also point to an electoral boycott by the independence movements in the western regions that could spread to other areas of the country. In conclusion, the confluence of the different fault lines and local, national and regional conflicts could drag the country backwards and set off a spiral of violence and instability with unpredictable consequences.

1. Watch List 2018, EU Watch List 10 / From Early Warning to Early Action, International Crisis Group, 31 January 2018.
2. Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Seals Border as Fresh Violence Escalates in CAR”, VOA, 28 September 2017.

5.2. Consolidation of ISIS in southern Philippines and Southeast Asia

Despite progress in the peace process between the Government and the MILF, and the good functioning of the ceasefire supervision mechanisms –there have been no significant violent episodes since 2015– there was an unprecedented rise in armed activity in 2017 in Mindanao by organizations that have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS). It is worth mentioning the confrontation in the city of Marawi (south Lanao province) from May to October, between the Armed Forces and the group called Maute and other armed groups close to ISIS, which killed more than 1,100 people, forcefully displaced more than 600,000 and destroyed a significant part of Marawi, a city of around 200,000 inhabitants. According to some media, the siege on the city of Marawi was the largest battle fought by ISIS outside Syria and Iraq, and was mentioned by communication media from around the world, raising strong concerns among a large sector of the international community over the possibility that Southeast Asia as a whole, and Mindanao particularly, may become an important activity front for ISIS and some related or close organizations. In previous years, information had circulated on a greater articulation of jihadist groups in Mindanao and on the intentions of ISIS to gain stable presence in the region. In 2016, ISIS had officially recognized the allegiance and obedience made public by several groups in the Philippines; it had announced its intention to create a province (wilayat) of the Caliphate in the region; it had designated a leader of the organization in the area; it had claimed responsibility for a large-scale attack –18 soldiers killed and more than 50 injured in the Basilan region– and stated it had 10 battalions of fighters in five different locations around the country. Nevertheless, the events in Marawi, together with the increased activity by organizations such as Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), especially in Maguindanao and North Cotabato regions; Abu Sayyaf – especially in the Sulu archipelago – or Ansar al-Khalifah – especially in Sarangani province – indicate a qualitative leap forward in ISIS' warfare capacity in Southeast Asia, giving place to serious concerns with regards to the impact this may have on the peace process between the Government and the MILF, and also over the possibility that some extremist and jihadist ideologies may spread among certain sectors of population.

During the year, the Government announced it calculated there were some 50 ISIS cells in Mindanao, but some analysts have suggested the situation may worsen in the future for several reasons. Firstly, because of military defeats inflicted on ISIS in Syria and Iraq and secondly, because of the possibility that fighters originally from Southeast Asia may return to their countries of origin.³ It is estimated that hundreds of people (up to 1,200) from Southeast Asia travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside ISIS and that around 100 of them have perished in these two countries. In fact, a faction within ISIS called Katibah Nusantara, was entirely made up of members from the region. Also, the fact that travelling to Syria and Iraq is

becoming more complicated –and may not make that much sense– turns Mindanao into a more strategic and attractive place from the perspective of jihadism. According to some analysts, from those fighting in Marawi, dozens came from several countries in the region with a Muslim majority, such as Indonesia and Malaysia.⁴

Some analysts have warned about the possibility that the ideology of jihadist organizations may expand to certain sectors of the population due to the economic and political situation in Mindanao. At an economic level, although Mindanao is a prosperous area, fertile and with many resources, the southern provinces with a Muslim majority, largely coinciding with those making up the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, are among the most impoverished in the country. Politically speaking, broad sectors of society have become growingly sceptical about the State's will and ability to resolve the conflict in Mindanao. In fact, a historical overview of the attempts at solving the conflict through negotiations shows many non-compliances by the State. The 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Government and the MNLF was never implemented by dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Later on, with the repercussion of democracy in the mid 80's, the Government of Corazón Aquino resumed dialogue with the MNLF, which ended up signing a peace agreement with the Government of Fidel Ramos in 1996. However, the MNLF argues that this agreement was never implemented fully, and since then it has tried to negotiate bilaterally with the Government. In fact, the founder of MNLF, Nur Misuari –also Governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao– has led important armed rebellions twice –in 2001 and 2013– among other reasons due to the non-compliances by the State. Besides failing to implement the 1996 peace agreement, several voices have denounced that behind the generalized perception that the ARMM has never worked and will never work to solve the so-called “Moro problem”, there is the little commitment of the State with the ARMM.

As for the peace process with the MILF, after 17 years of negotiations a peace agreement was reached in 2014, the cornerstone of which was the creation of a new entity called Bangsamoro (or the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region) that would replace the ARMM. Nevertheless, both the creation of this new entity and the legislative operationalisation and concretion of the peace agreement depend on the approval of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. This law should have been adopted the year after the signing of the peace agreement, but after several delays in the parliamentary process, its approval was rejected in early 2015 after some MILF members were involved in a massacre in Maguindanao province, where 44 members of the Philippine Special Forces were killed. The work of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission resumed in 2017 to approve this law, but analysts have warned of the little support in both the parliamentary chambers and have anticipated the possibility that the political priority of president Rodrigo

3. Westerman, Ashley, *How Big A Threat Is Extremism In Southeast Asia?*, NPR, 11 June 2017.

4. Sanderson, Thomas, “Black Flags over Mindanao: ISIS in the Philippines”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2017.

Duterte to transform the Philippines into a federal state may water down the contents of the Bangsamoro Basic Law or further delay its approval. In any case, the main problem confronting the MILF today is that the credibility of its proposal (forming a new autonomic framework through dialogue) largely rests on the political will of their interlocutor. Until now, the systematic delays and breaches by the State with regards to the peace agreements signed with the two main Moro organizations (MNLF and MILF) seem to have jeopardized the efforts made by the MILF to peacefully contain and channel the grievances and demands of a large sector of the Moro people.

Despite an eventual defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the lack of commitment from the State towards finding a stable solution to the conflict in Mindanao and the growing organization and consolidation of ISIS in the region allows to predict that violence in Mindanao may become chronic or even grow, it is also true that there are some factors that could undermine or hamper the consolidation of ISIS in the region and in Southeast Asia in general. Firstly, the five months of bloody combats in Marawi have significantly eroded ISIS' capacity in Mindanao and that of some armed groups supporting it or allegedly fighting in its name. Hence, since the military offensive ended in Marawi at the end of October, around one thousand combatants had died, including Isnilon Hapilon –supposedly the leader of ISIS in the region– Omar and Abdullah Maute –leaders and founders of the group– as well as several of their other brothers and Mahmud Ahmad, a Malaysian citizen who, according to the Philippine intelligence, had played an important role in the relations between ISIS and several groups operating in Mindanao. Also, the death of Mohammad Jafaar Maquid, alias Tokboy – the leader and founder of Ansar al-Khalifah– in early 2017 in Sarangani province could mean, according to the Government, the dismantlement of the group and the weakening of ISIS in Southeast Asia due to the close ties he had with ISIS fighters in Syria. Secondly, the events in Marawi –and the strengthening of ISIS in the region these indicate– have generated concern among the international community, which has doubled its cooperation with the Government of

the Philippines not only in terms of supporting the peace process with MILF, but also in the counter-insurgent struggle. Countries such as Australia or the USA –the only countries with a Visiting Force status– played an important role in the Marawi fighting.⁵ Australia deployed some 80 military after the fighting ended, while the USA –with whom Duterte's administration had a very volatile relationship– provided significant arms, drones and planes, as well as military assistance with around 100 to 200 soldiers posted in the Philippines. Also, the fighting lead to an increased cooperation in terms of intelligence and counter-terrorism from countries in the region like Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei or Thailand.⁶ With the increased activity of Abu Sayyaf in the region, already in 2016 the Government of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia had signed an agreement to intensify vigilance and control in the Sulu Sea. Thirdly, it is worth mentioning the strong commitment shown until now by the MNLF and the MILF in fighting against ISIS and the expansion of radicalism. In fact, the MILF actively participated in consolidating a humanitarian corridor in Marawi, while the founder of the MNLF, Nur Misuari, offered to deploy hundreds of combatants.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the confrontation in Marawi, the increase in armed activity by organizations that have sworn allegiance to ISIS and the growing attention that ISIS is placing on Mindanao and Southeast Asia have led to an important reaction from the Philippine Government, the MILF and the MNLF, some countries in the region, the USA and other prominent actors in the global fight against terrorism. Nevertheless, the increased activity of armed groups such as Abu Sayyaf or the BIFF after the Maute Group was defeated in Marawi, or the fact that after the official end of the fighting, there might be an increase in the recruitment of organizations considered to be jihadist, led to consider a presence of ISIS in the region in the mid-term, providing new opportunities for both local armed groups and sectors of population that are sceptical about the possibilities that the current peace process with the MILF might accommodate the main demands of the Moro people and lead to improved wellbeing.

Fighting in the city of Marawi, the increase in armed activity by organizations that have sworn allegiance to ISIS and the growing attention that ISIS is placing on Mindanao and Southeast Asia have led to an important reaction from several Governments

5. ABS-CBN News, *US played key role in helping AFP retake Marawi, envoy*, AFP, 26 October 2017.

6. The Sunday Morning Herald, *Philippines' Battle for Marawi shows how South-East Asia can unite to fight terrorism*, 6 February 2018.

5.3. The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar puts the democratic transition and peace process at risk

The serious humanitarian and human rights crisis that desolated Myanmar in 2017 threatens to jeopardise the fragile progress made in democratisation and peacebuilding in the country in recent years. In August, Myanmar's security forces launched a large-scale military operation in response to several attacks carried out by the Rohingya armed group ARSA in Rakhine State.⁷ Almost 700,000 Rohingya were forcibly displaced, taking refuge mainly in Bangladesh, and thousands died as a result of the violence. Many cases of sexual violence committed by military personnel against civilians were also documented, as other serious human rights violations like arson and looting. Several human rights organisations and the United Nations warned that the actions of the Burmese security forces could be considered crimes of genocide. Although the violence had subsided by the end of 2017, the serious crisis has revealed the great fragility of the progress of the political transition initiated in the country in recent years under the leadership of State Counsellor and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Burmese security forces' disproportionate response to ARSA's attacks has highlighted the central role that the powerful military intends to continue playing in Myanmar. After decades of iron-fisted military dictatorship, the transition process had resulted in a delicate balance between political and military forces that the crisis in Rakhine has tipped, demonstrating the civilian authorities' inability to control and exercise authority over the military. The civilian authorities did not heed the many calls from the international community and human rights organisations to put an end to the unprecedented military operation that was responsible for atrocious human rights violations and for provoking the mass exodus of the Rohingya population. In fact, Aung San Suu Kyi did not travel to the area affected by the armed conflict until November and the government repeatedly denied accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Although the most intense violence has subsided, as indicated above, a process of militarisation of the Rakhine State has begun, with a wide deployment of security forces occupying large civilian areas. Along with the destruction of entire settlements that were devastated and burned down, this deployment foreseeably jeopardises the return to the state of the hundreds of thousands of people displaced

by the violence. As such, the humanitarian displacement crisis, which is currently international in character, given that Bangladesh is the country where the vast majority of the Rohingya population has taken refuge, threatens to continue into the future, with the consequent impact on the living conditions of hundreds of thousands of people. Therefore, the militarisation of Rakhine State not only threatens the fragility of the country's civilian political structures, built in recent transition years, but will also in all likelihood lead to deadlock in the humanitarian crisis. New military activity by the Rohingya insurgency cannot be ruled out either, and the armed group ARSA, which has been inactive in recent months, could again carry out attacks against the security forces or against the Rakhine population. International jihadists could also try to interfere in this conflict after remaining outside its dynamics thus far. Armed groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda have already made calls to support the Rohingya cause.

Furthermore, the crisis in Rakhine State may also have a very negative impact on the peace process that is being conducted with a large number of armed opposition groups and that has materialised in a nationwide ceasefire agreement and in the 21st-Century Panglong Peace Conference.⁸ There are still enormous obstacles to achieving substantive progress during this Conference, mainly due to the exclusion of armed groups that have not signed ceasefire agreements. However, the human rights crisis unleashed by the military operation in Rakhine State clearly poses a new challenge to finally reaching ceasefire agreements with all the insurgent groups and making headway in addressing the grievances of the different ethnic minorities of the country. Moreover, the security situation in Rakhine has made it impossible to hold consultation and national dialogue processes associated with the peace process and new sessions of the 21st-Century Panglong Peace Conference were postponed for this and other reasons.

All these factors threaten Myanmar's immediate future and underscore both the civilian authorities and the international community's inability to stop the massacre of the Rohingya population. In the immediate future, accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing will have to be faced and international bodies must sponsor an independent enquiry into what happened to ensure accountability before international justice.

7. See the summary on Myanmar in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

8. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, "An inclusive peace process in Myanmar", *Alert 2017! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona, Icaria, 2017.

5.4. The dismantling of the post-peace agreement framework in Tajikistan and the shrinking of the opposition space

Though it has hardly received any international media coverage, Tajikistan is facing a serious internal crisis: the dismantling of the political framework resulting from the 1997 peace agreement, which ended the bloody civil war in the country (1992-1997) that killed around 50,000 people and caused about 1.2 million internally displaced persons and refugees. Several factors are coming together to put the country at risk: the escalation of policies that have banned the religious political opposition since 2015; human rights violations committed against the political opposition, relatives of opponents and other parts of the population, including human rights advocates and the serious shrinking of the space for criticism and democratic contestation. Moreover, Tajikistan's regional geostrategic context as an area of Russian influence and of increasing military interest for China, as well as its role in the international fight against jihadism, also place a low priority on bilateral and multilateral dialogue about risks to the post-agreement framework and to human rights in the country.

The risk factors are diverse. First, the dismantling of the post-agreement political framework is already a reality that could get worse. The peace agreement that ended the Tajik civil war between the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) coalition and the forces of the newly independent government of Tajikistan (the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord of 1997 and its associated protocols) included political stipulations that lifted the ban on the UTO's political parties and movements and endorsed its operations under the Constitution and the legislation of the country. Eighteen years later, in August 2015, the government ordered the dissolution of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), one of the UTO's parties, on the grounds that it lacked territorial representation. The decision came shortly after elections that shut the IRP out of Parliament and that the OSCE considered as falling short of democratic standards, held in a restricted political space and without guarantees of electoral competitiveness. In September 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that the IRP was a terrorist organisation and more than 30 of its leaders were arrested. This occurred amidst persecution against other opposition groups, such as the G24, and pressure against Islam in the public space. The dismantling of the post-agreement system went a step further in 2016 with the approval of constitutional amendments, ratified in a referendum, that prohibit the existence of religious-based parties. The IRP was the only legal Islamist party in the former Soviet Central Asian countries. In 2017, the number

of IRP members in prison rose to over 100, according to figures from the IRP leader in exile, Muhiddin Kabiri.

There is a risk that this pattern of dismantling the framework of guarantees of political participation for the opposition may worsen in 2018 and in the years to come, alongside a growing accumulation of political power by the presidency. Thus, in 2015, Parliament granted Tajik President Emomali Rahmon the title of "Leader of the Nation", lifelong immunity and executive powers when he retires, including veto power over state decisions and others. The 2016 amendments also opened the door to removing presidential term limits for Rahmon, based on his status as "Leader of the Nation", among other changes. These changes will allow the Tajik president to run again in the 2020 elections, which could take place amidst the dismantling of the political opposition. The reforms also lowered the minimum age threshold from 35 to 30 years, thus facilitating the possible candidacy of his son, Rustam Emomali, in case his father chooses to step down. Thus, the "draconian restrictions on opposition voices" denounced in 2017 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression⁹ could be expanded further towards the monopoly of political power.

Moreover, the general human rights situation in the country is seriously deteriorating. For example, the authorities have increased repression against family members of IRP members in prison or in exile, including by filing charges of attempts to overthrow the constitutional order, which human rights organisations consider fabricated. Relatives of exiled political activists were arrested, interrogated and in some cases beaten, according to politicians in exile.¹⁰ In addition, people involved in cases related to national security, the fight against terrorism and politically sensitive cases were increasingly subject to harassment, intimidation and undue pressure, according to Amnesty International. For instance, Buzurgmekhr Yorov, a human rights advocate and defence attorney in the court case against the IRP who was sentenced to 28 years in prison, suffered beatings and threats in prison, according to Amnesty International in 2017. Also connected to the human rights crisis, the trend of pressure against Islamic practices in public space has continued and could worsen in the short and medium term. This policy has specific gender implications, such as the obligation for thousands of women to remove their hijab in public places in 2017.¹¹ In recent years, pressure has intensified on places of worship, imams and students of religious schools who

The trend of shrinking political space in Tajikistan has resulted in the dismantling of the framework of political coexistence established by the 1997 peace accords, a situation that could worsen in the years to come

9. Commission on Human Rights, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression on his mission to Tajikistan*, A/HRC/35/22/Add.2, 9 June 2017.

10. Amnesty International, *The State of the World's Human Rights*, 2017/18, AI, 2018.

11. Ibid.

are foreign or considered extreme. Analysts pointed to the risks that religious actors who are being excluded and persecuted by the regime could radicalise and adopt violent strategies.¹²

Meanwhile, the human rights agenda in bilateral and multilateral relations has been relegated even further in a regional and international context that prioritises the fight against religious extremism through security channels and alarms about the risks posed by the return to the entire region of Central Asian and Russian combatants who have fought for the armed group ISIS. In that vein, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned in 2017 that ISIS plans to destabilise the former Soviet Central Asian republics and the southern regions of Russia. In 2017, some analysts cited Russia as the main country of origin of ISIS foreign fighters, accounting for around 3,500¹³ of them (4,000, according to the Russian president). Breaking the world down by regions, the Soufan Center placed the former Soviet republics as the region of origin of the largest number of ISIS combatants (8,717 fighters), followed by the Middle East (7,054) and, further afield, Western Europe (5,778) and the Maghreb (5,356).¹⁴ As such, one of the

fundamental lines of Tajikistan's foreign policy continues to be its relations with Russia, which continues to consider the former Soviet Central Asian republics as its area of influence, a relationship that relegates issues related to guarantees of political participation for the opposition and the human rights agenda. According to analysts, China's growing interest in Tajikistan, with an increase in military and security cooperation, is related to its perception of the risks posed by the radicalisation of the banned opposition and the conflict in neighbouring Afghanistan, which shares a border with Tajikistan.¹⁵

Given the deteriorating situation in Tajikistan, marked by the dismantling of the system of political coexistence established by the peace agreements and a policy of persecuting extremism that could have counterproductive effects, and barring factors that could indicate any improvement in the short term, it is imperative to step up international efforts to put the focus on the human rights agenda, including civil and political freedoms, on bilateral and multilateral relations with the Tajik regime, and on increasing support for local civil society, including human rights advocates.

12. Goble, Paul, "Tajikistan, Most Muslim Country in Central Asia, Struggles to Rein in Islam", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 15, no. 18., 2018

13. Barret, Richard. *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*, Soufan Center, October 2017.

14. Ibid.

15. Partov, Umed, "Beijing Encroaching on Moscow's Military Dominance in Tajikistan", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 13, no. 185., 2016.

5.5. The impact of conflicts and violence on children in the MENA region

The intensification in the levels of violence and the deterioration in living conditions resulting from the serious armed conflicts affecting various countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are having a growing impact on a highly vulnerable group: boys and girls in the region. In recent years, a worrying series of events and trends have been observed in terms of deadliness, child recruitment, arrests, forced displacement, sexual violence, child labour, the lack of access to education and other areas that threaten to leave deep marks on a whole generation, concerning both the direct and long-term consequences of these dynamics and the fact that thousands of children in the region have been born and raised in the midst of hostilities, so war is virtually the only environment they know.

Minors have been increasingly exposed to death and injury in armed conflicts characterised by the indiscriminate and/or deliberate use of violence in densely populated areas where many rules of international humanitarian law are violated, including the necessary distinction between civilians and combatants. Countries like Libya, Yemen, Iraq and Syria illustrate this trend. In Syria, UNICEF data indicate that 2017 was the deadliest year of the war for children, with a 50% increase in the number of deaths compared to 2016 (910 deaths verified in 2017), although the final figure could be much higher considering that the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) estimates that 2,300 children were killed in the same period. In Yemen, at the end of 2017, UNICEF estimated that a total of 5,000 children had been killed or injured since the intensification of violence in the country in March 2015. In addition to the physical and psychological consequences of exposure to brutal levels of violence, children also suffer from the loss of family and friends. In Iraq, for example, it was estimated that 90% of Mosul's children were traumatised by the loss of someone close.

By the end of 2017, one in five children in the region was in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, 90% of whom lived in countries affected by conflict. In some cases the delivery of humanitarian aid was hampered by some warring parties, like Bashar Assad's regime and its policy of besieging opposition-controlled areas (such as Aleppo and East Ghouta) and Saudi Arabia's blockade of Yemen in their conflict. Both UNICEF and OCHA drew attention to the problems of malnutrition in these countries (1.8 million children in Yemen, of whom 400,000 were suffering from severe malnutrition, as well as 20,000 with acute severe malnutrition in Syria) and HRW warned that the use of hunger as a strategy of war, without considering its impact on children, was one of the most worrying trends in the conflicts in the region.

Children from the Middle East and North Africa were also directly affected by the destruction of civil infrastructure during these conflicts, especially hospitals and schools. In Yemen, the severe deterioration of health facilities has not only made it harder to treat people wounded by the conflict, but also to control the spread of disease. Thus, according to data from UNICEF, children under 5 years of age accounted for one quarter of the one million people with cholera and other serious cases of diarrhoea in Yemen, a situation aggravated by the destruction of healthcare infrastructure and the lack of access to drinking water. Meanwhile, millions of children have suffered from problems in the education system. In Syria, for example, OCHA estimated that 40% of school infrastructure had been damaged by the armed conflict and that around 180,000 teachers were no longer working. Syrian minors who have left the country with their families in recent years are also not guaranteed to be in school. For example, over 280,000 Syrian refugee children in Lebanon were estimated to be outside the school system in late 2017.

The MENA region shows worrying trends in terms of deadliness, child recruitment, forced displacement, sexual violence, child labour and the lack of access to education that threaten to leave a mark on an entire generation

Another worrying phenomenon has to do with the recruitment of minors by armed actors. Data from the UN indicate that minors are assuming increasingly active roles (handling weapons, receiving training, performing tasks at checkpoints) and that the number of children actively recruited for combat activities in the region has risen significantly in recent years. According to figures verified by the UN, over 2,100 children had been recruited in Yemen from March 2015 to late 2016, mainly by Houthi forces. In Syria, many armed actors have recruited children and adolescents into their ranks, some of whom have been recruited in refugee camps in neighbouring countries (and sometimes with offers of financial compensation for their families). In Syria, Libya and Iraq, the armed group ISIS deployed a deliberate strategy to recruit children to fight on the front line, carry out suicide operations and other acts of extreme violence or serve as human shields. An ISIS unit composed of children was even created (Fetiyen al Jinneh). One of the challenges in the wake of the retreat of ISIS in 2017,¹⁶ is the fate of the child soldiers captured by the armed group. In Iraq, after ISIS was expelled from Mosul, these minors faced threats of revenge and some remained hiding in aid camps or private homes in the north of the country. HRW has warned that the Iraqi judicial system treats these children as adults and not as victims. Recent reports by the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflicts also drew attention to the arrest and detention of hundreds of children in countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen for their participation in armed groups.

Globally, the Middle East is the main issuing and receiving

16. See the summaries on Iraq and Syria in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts).

region of refugees and internally displaced populations. The abandonment of their home, city and in some cases country has affected millions of children in the region, who have trouble meeting their most basic needs. In situations of extreme insecurity, many children are forced into child labour. Thus, Syrian refugee children as young as six years old have been found working long days in factories in Turkey. The same happens in Lebanon, especially since restrictions on work permits for adults make many minors the main providers for their families. For girls, one of the most alarming phenomena is the increase in forced marriages and at an early age. Estimates vary, but some indicate that marriages of girls and adolescents have quadrupled among the Syrian refugee population, with many cases in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt. In other countries of the region, such as Libya, the forced displacement of the population has led to other alarming situations, such as the establishment of slave markets and abuses against refugee and migrant populations, including sexual assaults, which

have also affected children. Sexual violence has been used by armed actors in several conflicts in the region, including the emblematic case of ISIS and its abuse of the Yazidi population. Thousands of Yazidi women and girls captured in mid-2014 were abused and turned into sex slaves in Iraq and Syria.

The wide range of forms of violence to which minors have been exposed in various countries of the MENA region, and which in many cases continues to affect them, is therefore one of the main challenges for the future of the area. Unfortunately, the spiral of conflicts, many armed actors' constant disregard for the rules of humanitarian law, the deadlock in the negotiations to seek solutions to the crisis and the lack of action by the international community are normalising levels of violence in the MENA region that do not allow us to predict a short-term change that could safeguard the future of millions of children in the region.

Glossary

ABM: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis	CPJP: Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix (Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace)
ADF: Allied Democratic Forces	CPN-UML: Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)
ADF-NALU: Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda	DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
ADSC: All Darfur Stakeholders Conference	DHD: Dima Halim Daogah
AFISMA: African-led International Support Mission to Mali	DHD (J): Dima Halim Daogah, Black Widow faction
AKP: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)	DHD (Nunisa): Dima Halim Daogah (Nunisa faction)
AKR: New Kosovo Alliance	DKBA: Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
ALBA: Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America)	DMLEK: Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean Kunama
ALP: Arakan Liberation Party	DPA: Darfur Peace Agreement
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia	ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States
APCLS: Alliance de Patriots pour un Congo Libre et Souverain	ECOMIB: ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau
APHC: All Parties Hurriyat Conference	ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
APLM: Afar Peoples Liberation Movement	EDA: Eritrean Democratic Alliance
APRD: Armée Populaire pour la Réstauration de la République et de la Démocratie (Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy)	EEBC: Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission
AQAP: Al-Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula	EFDM: Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement
AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	EIC: Eritrean Islamic Congress
ARMM: Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	EIPJD: Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development
ARS: Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia	ELF: Eritrean Liberation Front
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations	ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a	ENSF: Eritrean National Salvation Front
ATLF: All Terai Liberation Front	EPC: Eritrean People's Congress
ATMM: Akhil Tarai Mukti Morcha	EPDF: Eritrean People's Democratic Front
ATTF: All Tripura Tiger Force	EPP: Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo (Paraguayan Popular Army)
AU: African Union	EPPF: Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front
BDP: Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)	EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
BH: Boko Haram	EPR: Ejército Popular Revolucionario (Revolutionary People's Army)
BIFF: Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	ERPI: Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente (Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army)
BIFM: Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement	ETIM: East Turkestan Islamic Movement
BINUCA: United Nations Integrated Office in the Central African Republic	ETLO: East Turkestan Liberation Organization
BLA: Baloch Liberation Army	EU: European Union
BLF: Baloch Liberation Front	EUAVSEC SOUTH SUDAN: EU Aviation Security Mission in South Sudan
BLT: Baloch Liberation Tigers	EUBAM: EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
BNUB: Bureau des Nations Unies au Burundi (United Nations Office in Burundi)	EUBAM LIBYA: EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya
BRA: Balochistan Republican Army	EUBAM Rafah: European Union Border Assistance Mission in Rafah
CAP: Consolidated Appeal Process	EUCAP NESTOR: EU Mission on Regional Maritime Capacity-Building in the Horn of Africa
CARICOM: Caribbean Community	EUCAP SAHEL NIGER: EU CSDP Mission in Niger
CEMAC: Monetary and Economic Community of Central Africa	EU NAVFOR SOMALIA: European Union Naval Force in Somalia – Operation Atalanta
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency	EUFOR ALTHEA: European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
CHD: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue	EUJUST LEX: EU Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq
CNDD-FDD: Congrès National pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy)	EULEX KOSOVO: EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
CNDP: Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (National Congress for People's Defence)	EUMM: EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia
CNF: Chin National Front	EUPOL AFGHANISTAN: EU Police Mission in Afghanistan
CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement	EUPOL COPPS: EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories
CPI-M: Communist Party of India-Maoist	

EUPOL RD CONGO: EU Police Mission in DRC
EUSEC RD CONGO: EU Security Sector Reform Mission in DRC
EUTM Mali: EU Training Mission in Mali
EUTM SOMALIA: EU Somalia Training Mission
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
FAR-LP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Liberación del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces – People’s Freedom)
FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FDLR: Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
FDPC: Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain (Central African People’s Democratic Front)
FEWS NET: USAID Net of Famine Early Warning System
FFR: Front des Forces de Redressement (Front of Forces for Recovery)
FIS: Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front)
FJL: Freedom and Justice Party
FLEC-FAC: Frente de Liberação do Enclave de Cabinda (Cabinda Enclave’s Liberation Front)
FNL: Forces Nationales de Libération (National Liberation Forces)
FOMUC: Force Multinationale en Centrafrique (CEMAC Multinational Forces in Central African Republic)
FPI: Front Populaire Ivoirien (Ivorian Popular Front)
FPR: Front Populaire pour le Redressement (Popular Front for Recovery)
FPRC: Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic)
FRF: Forces Republicaines et Federalistes (Republican and Federalist Forces)
FRODEBU: Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (Burundi Democratic Front)
FRUD: Front pour la Restauration de l’Unité et la Démocratie (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy)
FSA: Free Syrian Army
FUC: Front Uni pour le Changement Démocratique (United Front for Democratic Change)
FUDD: Frente Unido para la Democracia y Contra la Dictadura (United Front for Democracy and Against Dictatorship)
FURCA: Force de l’Union en République Centrafricaine (Union Force in the Central African Republic)
GAM: Gerakin Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
GEI: Gender Equity Index
GIA: Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group)
GIE: Gender Inequality Index
GSPC: Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat)
HAK: Armenian National Congress
HDZ: Croatian Democratic Union
HDZ 1990: Croatian Democratic Union - 1990
HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HPG: Humanitarian Policy Group
HRC: Human Rights Council
HRW: Human Rights Watch
HUM: Harkat-ul-Mujahideen

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
IBC: Iraq Body Count
ICC: International Criminal Court
ICG: International Crisis Group
ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
ICR/LRA: Regional Cooperation Initiative against the LRA
ICTR: International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia
ICU: Islamic Courts Union
IDMC: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP: Internally Displaced Person
IFLO: Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia
IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IHL: International Humanitarian Law
IISS: International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMN: Islamic Movement in Nigeria
IMU: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INLA: Irish National Liberation Army
IOM: International Organization for Migrations
IPOB: Indigenous People of Biafra
IRA: Irish Republican Army
ISAF: International Security Assistance Force
ISF: International Stabilisation Force
ISIS: Islamic State
JEM: Justice and Equality Movement
JKLF: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JTMM: Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (People’s Terai Liberation Front)
KANU: Kenya African National Union
KCK: Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Communities Union)
KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party
KFOR: NATO Mission in Kosovo
KIA: Kachin Independence Army
KIO: Kachin Independence Organization
KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army
KLNLF: Karbi Longri National Liberation Front
KNA: Kuki Liberation Army
KNF: Kuki National Front
KNPP: Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU: Kayin National Union
KNU/KNLA: Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army
KPF: Karen Peace Force
KPLT: Karbi People’s Liberation Tiger
KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government
KYKL: Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (Organization to Save the Revolutionary Movement in Manipur)
LeT: Lashkar-e-Toiba
LJM: Liberation and Justice Movement
LRA: Lord’s Resistance Army
LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M23: March 23 Movement
MAP-OAS: OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia
MASSOB: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MB: Muslim Brotherhood
MDC: Movement for Democratic Change
MEND: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

MFDC: Mouvement de las Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance)

MIB OAS: Good Offices Mission in Ecuador and Colombia

MICOPAX: Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en République Centrafricaine (CEEAC Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic)

MILF: Moro Islamic Liberation Front

MINURCA: United Nations Mission in Central African Republic

MINURCAT: United Nations Mission in Central African Republic and Chad

MINURSO: United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

MINUSTAH: United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti.

MISCA: African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic

MISMA: International Mission of Support in Mali

MIT: Turkish National Intelligence Organisation

MJLC: Mouvement des Jeunes Libérateurs Centrafricains (Central African Young Liberators Movement)

MLC: Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (Movement for the Liberation of Congo / DRC)

MMT: Madhesi Mukti Tigers

MNLA: Mouvement National pour la Libération de L'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)

MNLF: Moro National Liberation Front

MONUC: United Nations Mission in DRC

MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC

MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People

MOVEDEF: Movimiento por Amnistía y Derechos Fundamentales (Amnesty and Fundamental Rights Movement)

MPRF: Madhesi People's Rights Forum

MQM: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement)

MRC: Mombasa Republican Council

MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctor's Without Borders)

MUJAO: Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa

MVK: Madhesi Virus Killers

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NC: Nepali Congress Party

NCP: National Congress Party

NDF: National Democratic Front

NDFB: National Democratic Front of Bodoland

NDPVF: Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force

NDV: Niger Delta Vigilante

NGO: Non Governmental Organization

NLD: National League for Democracy

NLFT: National Liberation Front of Tripura

NMSP: New Mon State Party

NNC: Naga National Council

NNSC: Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission

NPA: New People's Army

NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isaac Muivah

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang

NTC: National Transitional Council of Lybia

OAS: Organization of American States

OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OFDM: Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement

OIC: Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

OLF: Oromo Liberation Front

OMIK: OSCE Mission in Kosovo

ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front

OPC: Oromo People's Congress

OPM: Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Organization)

OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OXFAM: Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

PALU: Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (Unified Lumumbist Party)

PARECO : Patriotes Résistants Congolais (Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance)

PCP : Partido Comunista de Perú (Comunist Party of Peru)

PDKI: Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan

PDLF: Palestinian Democratic Liberation Front

PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PJAK: Party of Free Life of Kurdistan

PKK: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Worker's Party)

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PNA: Palestinian National Authority

POLISARIO Front: Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro

PPP: Pakistan People's Party

PPRD: Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy)

PREPAK: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak

PREPAK Pro: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak Progressive

PYD: Democratic Union Party

RAMSI: Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands

RENAMO: Mozambican National Resistance

RFC: Rassemblement des Forces pour le Changement (Coalition of Forces for Change)

RPF: Revolutionary Patriotic Front

RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front

RSADO: Red See Afar Democratic Organization

RTF: Regional Task Force

SADC: Southern Africa Development Community

SADR: Saharan Arab Democratic Republic

SAF: Sudanese Armed Forces

SCUD: Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité Nationale et la Démocratie (Platform for Change, National Unity and Democracy)

SSA-S: Shan State Army-South

SSC: Sool, Saanag and Cayn

SFOR: NATO Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

SLA: Sudan Liberation Army

SLA-Nur: Sudan Liberation Army-Nur

SLDF: Sabaoth Land Defence Forces

SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region

SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army

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SSA-S: Shan State Army-South
SSDM/A: South Sudan Democratic Movement/ Army
SSLA: South Sudan Liberation Army
SSNPLO: Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization
TAK: Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons)
TFG: Transitional Federal Government
TIPH: Temporary International Presence in Hebron
TMLP: Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party
TPLF: Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TTP: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAD: Union pour l'Alternance Démocratique (Union for Democratic Changeover)
UCPN-M: Unified Communist Party of Nepal
UFDD: Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (Union of Forces for Democracy and Development)
UFDG: Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (Democratic Forces Union of Guinea)
UFDR: Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (Union of Democratic Forces Coalition)
UFF: Ulster Freedom Fighters
UFR: Union des Forces de la Résistance (United Resistance Forces)
ULFA: United Liberation Front of Assam
UN: United Nations
UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI: United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq
UNAMID: United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur
UNDOF: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNEF: United Nations Emergency Force
UNFICYP: United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Fund
UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNIOGBIS: United Nations Integrated Peace-Building Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNIPSIL: United Nations Peace-building Office in Sierra Leone
UNISFA: United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNITAF: Unified Task Force
UNLF: United National Liberation Front
UNMIK: United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS: United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMIT: United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNMOGIP: United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOCA: United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
UNOCI: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOGBIS: United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNOWA: United Nations Office in West Africa
UNPOS: United Nations Political Office in Somalia
UNRCCA: United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO: United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East
UNSCOL: Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNSMIL: United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNMIT: United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNSOM: United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNTSO: United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation
UPC: Union pour la Paix à Centrafrique (Union for Peace in the Central African Republic)
UPDS: United People's Democratic Solidarity
UPPK: United People's Party of Kangleipak
UPRONA: Union pour le Progrès National (Union for National Progress)
USA: United States of America
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USAID: United States Agency for International Development
UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force
UWSA: United Wa State Army
VRAE: Valley between Rivers Apurimac and Ene
WB: World Bank
WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WFP: World Food Programme
WPNLC: West Papua National Coalition for Liberation
WTO: World Trade Organisation
YPG: People's Protection Units
ZANU-PF: Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZUF: Zeliangrong United Front

Escola de Cultura de Pau

The Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace, hereinafter ECP) is an academic peace research institution located at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The School for a Culture of Peace was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through research, Track II diplomacy, training and awareness generating activities.

The main fields of action of the Escola de Cultura de Pau are:

- Research. Its main areas of research include armed conflicts and socio-political crises, peace processes, human rights and transitional justice, the gender dimension in conflict and peacebuilding, and peace education.
- Track II diplomacy. The ECP promotes dialogue and conflict-transformation through Track II initiatives, including facilitation tasks with armed actors.
- Consultancy services. The ECP carries out a variety of consultancy services for national and international institutions.
- Teaching and training. ECP staff gives lectures in postgraduate and graduate courses in several universities, including its own Graduate Diploma on Culture of Peace at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. It also provides training sessions on specific issues, including conflict sensitivity and peace education.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising. Initiatives include activities addressed to the Spanish and Catalan society, including contributions to the media.

Escola de Cultura de Pau

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Tel: +34 93 586 88 42

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Alert 2018! 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 2017 and of the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main armed conflicts and socio-political crises that currently exist in the world makes it possible to provide a comparative regional overview and to identify global trends, as well as risk and early warning elements for the future. Similarly, the report also identifies opportunities for peacebuilding and for reducing, preventing and resolving conflicts. In both cases, one of the main aims of this report is to place data, analyses and the identified warning signs and opportunities for peace in the hands of those actors responsible for making policy decisions or those who participate in peacefully resolving conflicts or in raising political, media and academic awareness of the many situations of political and social violence taking place around the world.

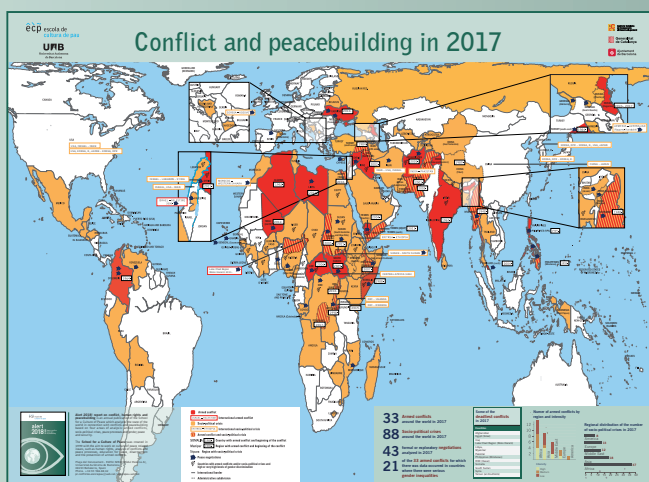
The Alert report is a key reference for any analysts or experts in matters relating to armed conflicts. The 2018 edition of this report is an especially relevant one, given the increase in conflicts around the world and the subsequent shrinking of spaces for dialogue and negotiation.

Mark Freeman,
Executive Director, Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT)

The annual report of the School for a Culture of Peace has become an essential tool for anyone who is committed to defending human rights, conflict resolution and the implementation of peace policies with the aim of living in a world of solidarity that is more just and with fewer inequalities. *Alert 2018!* brings a thorough and rigorous analysis of the 33 armed conflicts registered in 2017, almost one hundred scenarios of socio-political crisis and the increase of gender-based violence or severe gender inequalities that mark the vast majority of armed conflicts. It is, ultimately speaking, a report that is published year after year and offers an in-depth and academically solid vision to understand a world that is deeply unjust and violent, while also offering the narrative and theoretical instruments necessary to fight against human rights violations and the prevalence of violence.

Antoni Segura i Mas,
Professor of Contemporary History and President of Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB)

Foreword by Diana de la Rúa Eugenio
President of International Peace Research Association Foundation (IPRA Foundation)



Foldable map on conflict and peacebuilding
attached inside

With the support of: