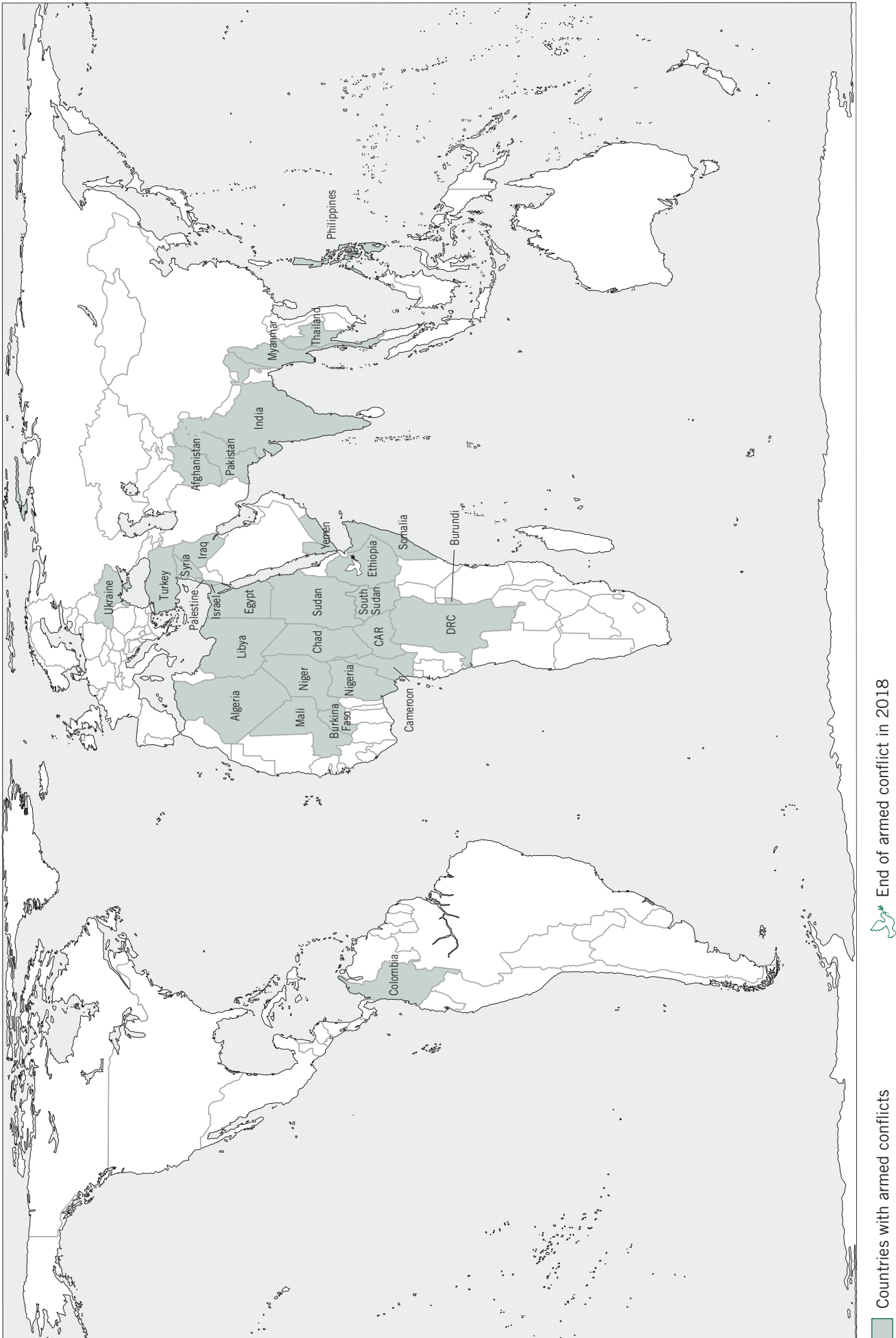


Map 1.1. Armed conflicts



1. Armed conflicts

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

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2018. It is organised into three sections. The first section offers a definition of armed conflict and its characteristics. The second section provides an analysis of the trends of conflicts in 2018, including global and regional trends and other issues related to international conflicts. The third section is devoted to describing the development and key events of the year in the various contexts. Furthermore, a map is included at the start of chapter that indicates the conflicts active in 2018.

1.1. Armed conflicts: definition

An **armed conflict** is any confrontation between regular or irregular armed groups with objectives that are perceived as incompatible in which the continuous and organised use of violence a) causes a minimum of 100 battle-related deaths in a year and/or a serious impact on the territory (destruction of infrastructures or of natural resources) and human security (e.g. wounded or displaced population, sexual violence, food insecurity, impact on mental health and on the social fabric or disruption of basic services) and b) aims to achieve objectives that are different than those of common delinquency and are normally linked to

- demands for self-determination and self-government or identity issues;
- the opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state or the internal or international policy of the government, which in both cases leads to fighting to seize or erode power;
- control over the resources or the territory.

Table 1.1. Summary of armed conflicts in 2018

Conflict ¹ -beginning-	Type ²	Main parties ³	Intensity ⁴
			Trend ⁵
Africa			
Algeria -1992-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS, governments of North Africa and the Sahel	1
	System		↓
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, factions of former armed groups	1
	Government		=
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) -2018-	Internationalised internal	Government of Cameroon, self-proclaimed Interim Government of Ambazonia, the armed groups ADF, SCACUF, SOCADEF and SCDF and dozens of smaller militias	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, MPC, UPC), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, France (Operation Sangaris), MINUSCA, EUFOR, groups linked to the former government of François Bozizé, other residual forces from armed groups (former Armed Forces), LRA armed Ugandan group	2
	Government, Resources		↑
DRC (east) -1998-	Internationalised internal	Government, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Rwanda, MONUSCO	2
	Government, Identity, Resources		=
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	1
	System, Resources		=
DRC (Kasai) -2017-	Internal	Government, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)	2
	Government, Identity		↓
Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-	Internationalised internal	Government, ONLF, OLF, pro-government militias (“Liyu Police”)	1
	Self-government, Identity		End
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Boko Haram (BH), MNJTF regional force (Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)	3
	System		=

1. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. This last option is used in cases involving more than one armed conflict in the same state or in the same territory within a state, for the purpose of distinguishing them.
2. This report classifies and analyses armed conflicts using two criteria: on the one hand, the causes or clashes of interests and, on the other hand, the convergence between the scenario of conflict and the actors involved. The following main causes can be distinguished: demands for self-determination and self-government (Self-government) or identity aspirations (Identity); opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state (System) or the internal or international policies of a government (Government), which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or the struggle for the control of resources (Resources) or territory (Territory). In respect of the second type, the armed conflicts may be of an internal, Internationalised internal or international nature. An internal armed conflict is defined as a conflict involving armed actors from the same state who operate exclusively within the territory of this state. Secondly, an internationalised internal armed conflict is defined as that in which at least one of the parties involved is foreign and/or in which the tension spills over into the territory of neighbouring countries. Another factor taken into account in order to consider an armed conflict as internationalised internal is the existence of military bases of armed groups in neighbouring countries (in connivance with these countries) from which attacks are launched. Finally, an international conflict is one in which state and non-state parties from two or more countries confront each other. It should also be taken into account that most current armed conflicts have a significant regional or international dimension and influence due, among other factors, to flows of refugees, the arms trade, economic or political interests (such as legal or illegal exploitation of resources) that the neighbouring countries have in the conflict, the participation of foreign combatants or the logistical and military support provided by other states.
3. This column shows the actors that intervene directly in the hostilities. The main actors who participate directly in the conflicts are made up of a mixture of regular or irregular armed parties. The conflicts usually involve the government, or its armed forces, fighting against one or several armed opposition groups, but can also involve other irregular groups such as clans, guerrillas, warlords, armed groups in opposition to each other or militias from ethnic or religious communities. Although they most frequently use conventional weapons, and more specifically small arms (which cause most deaths in conflicts), in many cases other methods are employed, such as suicide attacks, bombings and sexual violence and even hunger as a weapon of war. There are also other actors who do not directly participate in the armed activities but who nevertheless have a significant influence on the conflict.
4. The intensity of an armed conflict (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation of violence, reduction of violence, unchanged) are evaluated mainly on the basis of how deadly it is (number of fatalities) and according to its impact on the population and the territory. Moreover, there are other aspects worthy of consideration, such as the systematisation and frequency of the violence or the complexity of the military struggle (complexity is normally related to the number and fragmentation of the actors involved, to the level of institutionalisation and capacity of the state, and to the degree of internationalisation of the conflict, as well as to the flexibility of objectives and to the political will of the parties to reach agreements). As such, high-intensity armed conflicts are usually defined as those that cause over 1,000 fatalities per year, as well as affecting a significant proportion of the territory and population, and involving several actors (who forge alliances, confront each other or establish a tactical coexistence). Medium and low intensity conflicts, with over 100 fatalities per year, have the aforementioned characteristics but with a more limited presence and scope. An armed conflict is considered ended when a significant and sustained reduction in armed hostilities occurs, whether due to a military victory, an agreement between the actors in conflict, demobilisation by one of the parties, or because one of the parties abandons or significantly scales down the armed struggle as a strategy to achieve certain objectives. None of these options necessarily mean that the underlying causes of the armed conflict have been overcome. Nor do they exclude the possibility of new outbreaks of violence. The temporary cessation of hostilities, whether formal or tacit, does not necessarily imply the end of the armed conflict.
5. This column compares the trend of the events of 2018 with those that of 2017. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2018 has been more serious than in the previous year; the reduction of violence symbol (↓) indicates an improvement in the situation; and the unchanged (=) symbol indicates that no significant changes have taken place.

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Africa			
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, armed factions linked to Operation Dignity (Libyan National Army, LNA), armed groups linked to Operation Dawn, militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades(BDB), ISIS, AQIM, among other armed groups; USA, France, UK, Egypt, UAE, and other countries	3
	Government, Resources, System		=
Mali ⁶ -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force	3
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Operation Ocean Shield, al-Shabaab	3
	Government, System		=
South Sudan -2009-	Internationalised internal	Government (SPLM/A), SPLM/A-in Opposition armed group (faction of former vice president, Riek Machar), dissident factions of the SPLA-IO led by Peter Gatdet and Gathoth Gatkuoth, SPLM-FD, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM, REMNESA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSDA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwelek), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		↓
Sudan (Darfur) -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, pro-government militias <i>janjaweed</i> , Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, UNAMID	2
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		=
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group SPLM-N, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) armed coalition, PDF pro-government militias, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, South Sudan	1
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		↓
Western Sahel Region -2018-	International	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), Joint Task Force for Liptako-Gourma Region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), USA, Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Macina Liberation Front, Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups	1
	System, Resources, Identity		↑
America			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, ELN, FARC (dissidents), EPL, paramilitary groups	1
	System		↑
Asia			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban militias, warlords, ISIS	3
	System		↑
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1
	System		=
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, United Jihad Council, All Parties Hurriyat Con-ference	2
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Myanmar -1948-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups (Ceasefire signatories: ABSDF, ALP, CNF, DKBA, KNU, KNU/KNLA-PC, PNLO, RCSS, NMSP, LDU; Non-signatories: KIA, NDAA, MNDAA, SSPP/SSA, TNLA, AA, UWSA, ARSA, KNPP)	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias, international militias, USA	2
	System		↓
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura)	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↓
Philippines (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF	2
	Self-government, System, Identity		↓

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

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
Asia			
Philippines (NPA) -1969--	Internal	Government, NPA	1
	System		↑
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, separatist armed opposition groups	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Europe			
Turkey (southeast) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	2
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Ukraine (east) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups in the eastern provinces, Russia	2
	Government, Identity, Self-government		=
Middle East			
Egypt (Sinai) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), other armed groups (Ajnad Misr, Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis, Katibat al-Rabat al-Jihadiya, Popular Resistance Movement, Liwaa al-Thawra Hassam), Israel	2
	System		↓
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi and Kurdish (peshmerga) military and security forces, Shia militias (Popular Mobilization Units, PMU), Sunni armed groups, Islamic State (ISIS), international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Iran, Turkey, PKK	3
	System, Government, Identity		↓
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLR, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, Ahfad al-Sahaba knaf Bayt al-Maqdis (branch of ISIS)	2
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↑
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the PYD/YPJ militias of the PYD), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Turkey, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, among other armed parties	3
	System, Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Yemen (AQAP) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias	1
	System		=
Yemen (Houthis) -2004-	Internationalised internal	Armed forces loyal to Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), armed factions loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias, armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Iran	3
	System, Government, Identity		↑

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

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

1.2. Armed conflicts: analysis of trends in 2018

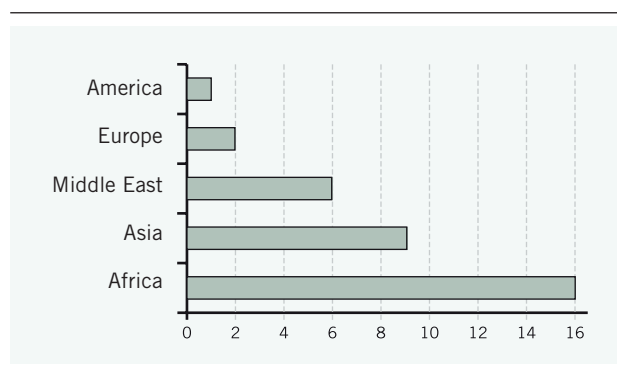
This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2018. This includes an overview of conflicts as compared to that of previous years, the geographical distribution of conflicts and the main trends by region, the relationship between the actors involved and the scenario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

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

1.2.1 Global and regional trends

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.2. Impacts of the conflicts on civilians

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

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

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

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

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

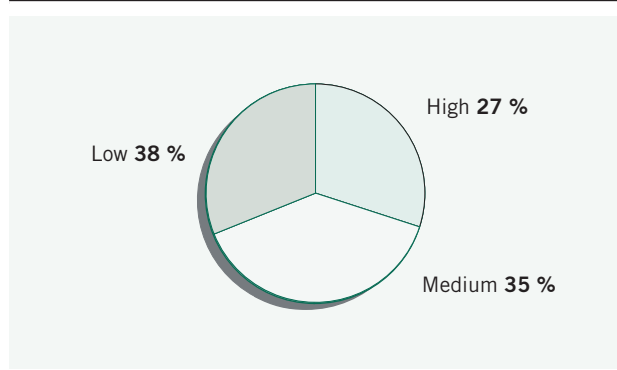
Twenty-seven per cent (27%) of the armed conflicts in 2018 were high-intensity: Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)

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

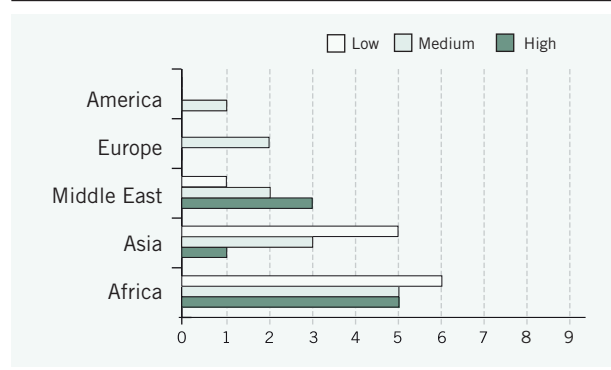
2018 against ISIS had serious humanitarian effects on the population. Aid workers were also targets of violence during 2018, such as in Nigeria, where Boko Haram killed and kidnapped various humanitarian workers, and in Afghanistan, where ISIS attacked the NGO Save the Children, causing several deaths.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

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

Graph 1.2. Intensity of the armed conflicts



Graph 1.3. Intensity of the armed conflicts by region



Box 1.1. Regional trends in armed conflict

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

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

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

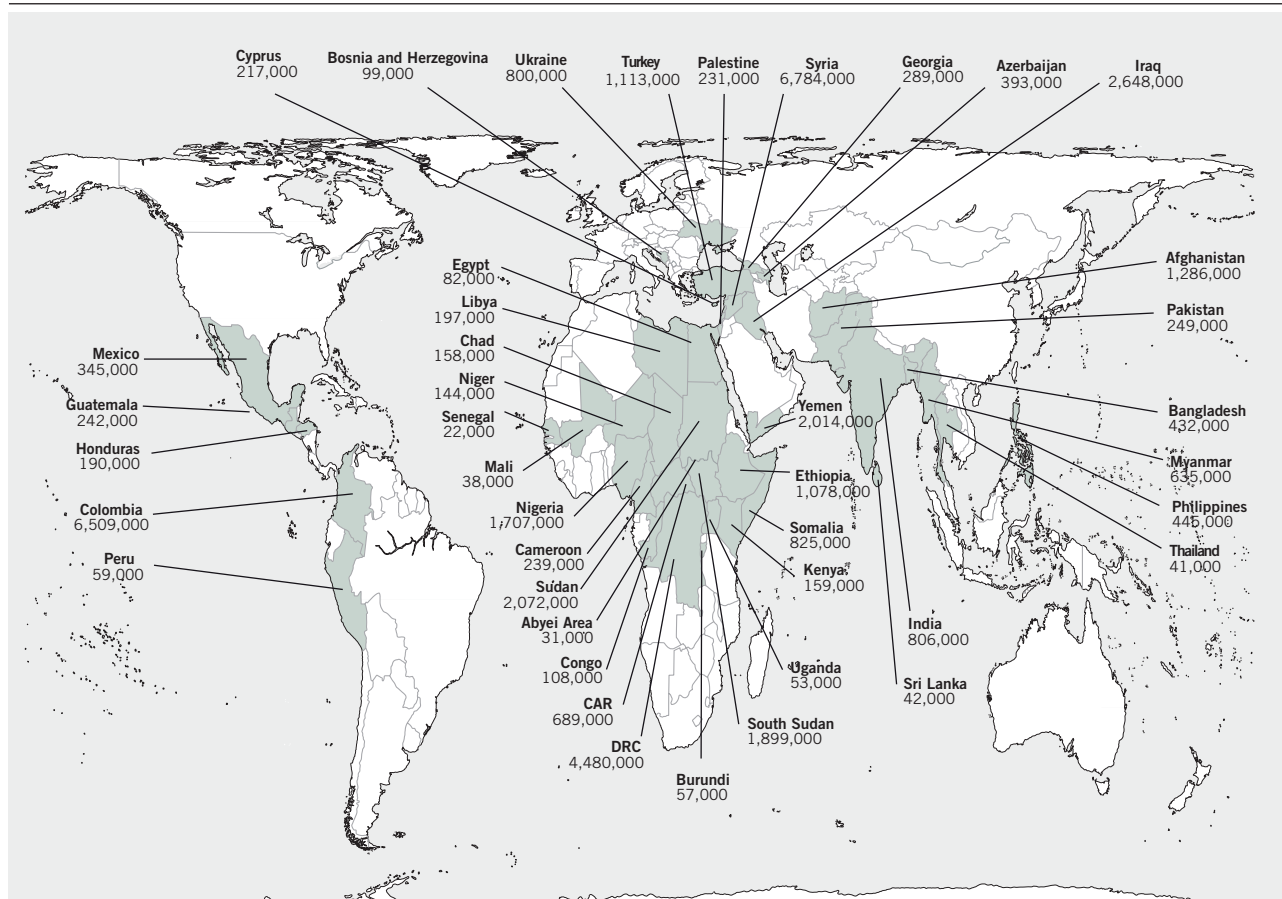
8. See chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security).

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

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

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

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



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

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

1.3. Armed conflicts: annual evolution

1.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

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

Summary:

The process of political and institutional transition that got under way with the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in 2000 was formally completed in 2005. The approval of a new constitution (that formalises the distribution of political and military power between the main two communities, the Hutu and Tutsi) and the holding of elections (leading to the formation of a new government), represent an attempted to lay the foundations for overcoming a conflict that began in 1993. This represented the principal opportunity for ending the ethnic-political violence that has plagued the country since its independence in 1962. However, the authoritarian evolution of the government after the 2010 elections, denounced as fraudulent by the opposition, has overshadowed the reconciliation process and led to the mobilization of political opposition. This situation has been aggravated by the plans to reform the Constitution by the Government. The deteriorating situation in the country is revealed by the institutional deterioration and reduction of the political space for the opposition, the controversial candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza for a third term and his victory in a fraudulent presidential election (escalating political violence), the failed coup d'état in May 2015, violations of human rights and the emergence of new armed groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DRC (east)	
Start:	1998
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, FDLR, factions of the FDLR, Mai-Mai militias, M23 (formerly CNDP), Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, Ituri armed groups, Burundian armed opposition group FNL, Rwanda, MONUSCO
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, there were other incidents involving neighbouring countries in the eastern part of the DRC. In February there was a clash between Congolese and Rwandan troops that left six FARDC soldiers dead. The Rwandan government accused Congolese troops of entering its territory. In the same month, the Tanzanian government arrested and extradited the self-proclaimed General John Tshibangu to the DRC, who had threatened the DRC government with an

armed uprising from within the Congolese Army. In early July, there was an exchange of fire between Ugandan and Congolese troops in Lake Eduardo, bordering both countries, in which a Ugandan soldier lost his life. The DRC government accused Uganda of killing 12 Congolese fishermen and of arresting 100 others. Following a meeting between envoys of both governments in Uganda, the Ugandan government announced three-year prison sentences for 35 fishermen for violating its water rights and for illegal fishing. In a recent incident between bordering countries, in November, troops from Burundi attacked bases of the rebel group RED-TABARA on Congolese soil. Although the Burundian government denied that it had violated the DRC's sovereignty, various soldiers were detained by FARDC troops.

DRC (east - ADF)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militia, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Summary:	
The Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) is an Islamist rebel group operating in the northwest of the Rwenzori massif (North Kivu, between DR Congo and Uganda) with between 1,200 and 1,500 Ugandan and Congolese militiamen recruited mainly in both countries as well as in Tanzania, Kenya and Burundi. It is the only group in the area considered a terrorist organisation and is included on the US list of terrorist groups. It was created in 1995 from the merger of other Ugandan armed groups taking refuge in DR Congo (Rwenzururu, ADF), later adopted the name ADF and follows the ideology of the former ADF, which originated in marginalised Islamist movements in Uganda linked to the conservative Islamist movement Salaf Tabliq. In its early years it was used by Zaire under Mobutu (and later by DR Congo under Kabila) to pressure Uganda, but it also received backing from Kenya and Sudan and strong underground support in Uganda. At first it wanted to establish an Islamic state in Uganda, but in the 2000s it entrenched in the communities that welcomed it in DR Congo and became a local threat to the administration and the Congolese population, though its activity was limited. In early 2013 the group began a wave of recruitment and kidnappings and an escalation of attacks against the civilian population.	

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sudan (Darfur)	
Start:	2003
Type:	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PDF pro-government militias, RSF paramilitary unit, pro-government militias <i>janjaweed</i> , Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, UNAMID
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

Horn of Africa

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

Summary:

Ethiopia has been the object of movements of a secessionist nature or of resistance against the central authority since the 1970s. The ONLF emerged in 1984 and operates in the Ethiopian region of Ogaden, in the south east of the country, demanding a greater level of autonomy for the Somali community that lives in this region. On various occasions, the ONLF has carried out rebellious activities beyond Ogaden, in collaboration with the OLF, which has been demanding greater autonomy from the government for the region of Oromia since 1973. The Somali government has supported the ONLF against Ethiopian, which it confronted for control over the region between 1977 and

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

1978, a war in which 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.

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a coalition of opposing groups rebelled against the dictatorial power of Siad Barre and three years later managed to overthrow him. This situation led to a new fight within this coalition to occupy the power vacuum, which had led to the destruction of the country and the death of more than 300,000 people since 1991, despite the failed international intervention at the beginning of the 1990s. The diverse peace processes to try and establish a central authority came across numerous difficulties, including the affronts between the different clans and sub clans of which the Somalia and social structure was made up, the interference of Ethiopia and Eritrea and the power of the various warlords. The last peace initiative was in 2004 by the GFT, which found support in Ethiopia to try to recover control of the country, partially in the hands of the ICU (Islamic Courts Union) The moderate faction of the ICU has joined the GFT and together they confront the militias of the radical faction of the ICU which control part of the southern area of the country. In 2012 the transition that began in 2004 was completed and a new Parliament was formed which elected its first president since 1967. The AU mission, AMISOM (which included the Ethiopian and Kenyan troops present in the country) and government troops are combating al-Shabaab, a group that has suffered internal divisions.

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

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

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

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

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

Maghreb – North Africa

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

Summary:

The armed conflict has pitted the security forces against various Islamist groups since the beginning of the 1990s following the rise of the Islamist movement in Algeria due to the population's discontent, the economic crisis and the stifling of political participation. The conflict began when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was made illegal in 1992 after its triumph in the elections against the historic party that had led the independence of the country, the National Liberation Front. The armed struggle brought several groups (EIS, GIA and the GSPC, a division of the GIA that later became AQIM in 2007) into conflict with the army, supported by the self-defence militias. The conflict caused some 150,000 deaths during the 1990s and continues to claim lives. However, the levels of violence have decreased since 2002 after some of the groups gave up the armed fight. In recent years, the conflict has been led by AQMI, which became a transnational organisation, expanding its operations beyond Algerian territory and affecting the Sahel countries. Algeria, along with Mali, Libya, Mauritania, Niger and others, has fought AQIM and other armed groups that have begun operating in the area, including the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and al-Mourabitoun organisations (Those Who Sign with Blood), Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS) and ISIS.

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

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

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

Libya	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, Resources, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, several armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA), militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades, ISIS, AQIM, among others; USA, France, UK, Egypt, UAE, among other countries
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Summary:	
In the context of the uprisings in North Africa, popular protests against the government of Muammar Gaddafi began in February 2011. In power since 1969, his regime was characterized by an authoritarian stance repression of dissent, corruption and serious shortcomings at the institutional level. Internal conflict degenerated into	

an escalation of violence leading to a civil war and an international military intervention by NATO forces. After months of fighting and the capture and execution of Gaddafi in late October, the rebels announced the liberation of Libya. However, the country remains affected by high levels of violence derived from multiple factors, including the inability of the new authorities to control the country and ensure a secure environment; the high presence of militias unwilling to surrender their weapons; and disputes over resources and trafficking routes. The situation in the country deteriorated from mid-2014 onward, with higher levels of violence and the formation of two parliaments and two governments in Tobruk and Tripoli, which have the support of respective armed coalitions. Efforts to solve the situation have been hampered by this scene of fragmentation and a climate of instability has assisted the expansion of ISIS in the North African country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

West Africa

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), there were around 200 acts of war from September 2017 to the end of 2018, claiming the lives of 844 people. Half of these attacks had been carried out since September 2018, on the eve of the election.¹⁷ Other sources raised the death toll of the conflict to 1,500.

One of the main attacks of the year was conducted by the security forces in Menchum (North West) in early September, killing 27 separatists. The most significant incidents included the death of a major commander of the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) in clashes with government security forces on 21 December, the attack on the French secretary of state's convoy in the town of Fako, in the province of South West, on 29 June, while on his way to Buea, killing two soldiers and wounding many others, and the attack on the Cameroonian defence minister's convoy during an official trip to South West, in Small Ekombe, on 12 July. At least 70 schools have been burned since the crisis began in 2016. On the eve of the elections in October and during the resumption of the academic year in September, various schools and places of learning were attacked and students and teachers were abducted.

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

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

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

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Boko Haram (BH), MNJTF regional force (Niger, Benin, Cameroon and Chad)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

The Islamist sect Boko Haram demands the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria and considers that Nigeria's public institutions are "westernised" and, therefore, decadent. The group forms part of the fundamentalist branch initiated by other groups in Nigeria following independence in 1960 and which, invariably, triggered outbreaks of violence of varying intensity. Despite the heavy repression to which its followers have been subjected—in 2009, at least 800 of its members died in confrontations with the army and the police in Bauchi State—the armed group remains active. The scope of its attacks has widened, aggravating insecurity in the country as the government proves incapable of offering an effective response to put an end to the violence. International human rights organizations have warned of the crimes committed by the group, but also on government abuses in its campaign against the organization. In 2015 the conflict was regionalized, also affecting the countries bordering Lake Chad: Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

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

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

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

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

Mali ¹⁸	
Start:	2012
Type:	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

the murders and announced an investigation. Intercommunal clashes between the Dogon and Fulani

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3.2. America

Colombia	
Start:	1964
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ELN, FARC (dissidents), paramilitary groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Summary: In 1964, in the context of an agreement for the alternation of power between the Liberal party and the Conservative party (National Front), which excluded other political options, two armed opposition movements emerged with the goal of taking power: the ELN (made up of university students and workers, inspired by Guevara) and the FARC (a communist-oriented organisation that advocates agrarian reform). In the 1970s, various groups were created, such as the M-19 and the EPL, which ended up negotiating with the government and pushing through a new Constitution (1991) that established the foundations of a welfare state. At the end of the 1980s, several paramilitary groups emerged, instigated by sectors of the armed forces, landowners, drug traffickers and traditional politicians, aimed at defending the status quo through a strategy of terror. Drug trafficking activity influenced the economic, political and social spheres and contributed to the increase in violence. In 2016, the signing of a peace agreement with the FARC led to its demobilisation and transformation into a political party.	

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

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

1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

South Asia

Afghanistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, international coalition (led by USA), NATO, Taliban militias, warlords, ISIS
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Summary: The country has lived with almost uninterrupted armed conflict since the invasion by Soviet troops in 1979,	

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

India (Jammu and Kashmir)

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

January and September. Armed clashes and attacks during the year between the security forces and the Taliban insurgency, which as a result of security operations in recent years had shifted to areas where it previously had not been active, raised doubts about the real effectiveness of the

military strategy to end the armed conflict. Many of the TTP factions have recently moved to KP districts such as Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, and to FATA areas such as South Waziristan and Kurram, though some groups may have returned to North Waziristan. In February, the TTP acknowledged that the organisation's second-in-command, Khalid Mehsud, had been killed in a US drone strike in North Waziristan. Mullah Fazlullah, who had been the TTP leader since 2013, was killed in Afghanistan in July in another drone strike coordinated between Afghan and US forces. Another serious attack took place in November in the Orakzai district in KP, where bomb exploded in a market, killing at least 35 people. Many attacks taking place around the general elections, held in July, may have caused the deaths of approximately 200 people, including political leaders. One of the most serious attacks happened in Peshawar during an ANP party rally that killed 22 people and injured 66. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack. The FATA were integrated in the province of KP during the year to extend application of the Constitution and to end the colonial legislation in force until then. Relations with the US also deteriorated considerably, which led to the withdrawal of US military economic aid.

Pakistan (Balochistan)	
Start:	2005
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, Pakistani Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, civil society, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura), ISIS
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

Since the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, Balochistan, the richest province in terms of natural resources, but with some of the highest levels of poverty in the country, has suffered from four periods of armed violence (1948, 1958, 1963-69 and 1973-77) in which the rebel forces stated their objective of obtaining greater autonomy and even independence. In 2005, the armed rebel forces reappeared on the scene, basically attacking infrastructures linked to the extraction of gas. The opposition armed group, BLA, became the main opposing force to the presence of the

central government, which it accused of making the most of the wealth of the province without giving any of it back to the local population. As a result of the resurgence of the armed opposition, a military operation was started in 2005 in the province, causing displacement of the civilian population and armed confrontation. In parallel, a movement of the civilian population calls clarifying the disappearance of hundreds, if not thousands, of Baluchi at the hands of the security forces of the State.

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

South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups (KNU/KNLA, SSA-S, SSA-N KNPP, UWSA, CNF, ALP, DKBA, KNPLAC, SSNPLO, KIO, ABSDF, AA, TNLA, HaY, MNDAA)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Summary:	
Since 1948, dozens of armed insurgent groups of ethnic origin have confronted the government of Myanmar,	

demanding recognition of their particular ethnic and cultural features and calling for reforms in the territorial structure of the State or simply for independence. Since the start of the military dictatorship in 1962, the armed forces have been fighting armed groups in the ethnic states. These groups combined demands for self-determination for minorities with calls for democratisation shared with the political opposition. In 1988, the government began a process of ceasefire agreements with some of the insurgent groups, allowing them to pursue their economic activities (basically trafficking in drugs and precious stones). However, the military operations have been constant during these decades, particularly directed against the civil population in order to do away with the armed groups' bases, leading to the displacement of thousands of people. In 2011 the Government began to approach the insurgency and since then there has been a ceasefire agreements with almost all of the armed groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philippines (NPA)	
Start:	1969
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Government, NPA
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The NPA, the armed branch of the Communist party of the Philippines, started the armed fight in 1969 which reached its zenith during the 1980s under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Although the internal purges, the democratisation of the country and the offers of amnesty weakened the support and the legitimacy of the NPA at the beginning of the 1990s, it is currently calculated that it is operational in most of the provinces in the country. After the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001, its inclusion in the list of terrorist organisations of the USA and the EU greatly eroded confidence between the parties and, to a good degree, caused the interruption of the peace conversations with Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's government. The NPA, whose main objective is to access power and the transformation of the political system and the socio-economic model, has as its political references the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front (NDF), which bring together various Communist organisations. The NDF has been holding peace talks with the government since the early 1990s.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

The conflict in the south of Thailand dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the then Kingdom of Siam and the British colonial power on the 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 were the lowest since the conflict began in 2004, though the body count was very similar to that of the previous year.

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

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

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

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

Ukraine (east)	
Start:	2014
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, pro-Russian armed actors in eastern provinces, Russia
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=

Summary:

Considered in transition since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and a country of great geostrategic importance, Ukraine is undergoing a major socio-political crisis and armed conflict in its eastern regions as the scenario of the most serious crisis between the West and Russia since the Cold War. Preceded by a cluster of hotspots across the country (mass pro-European and anti-government

demonstrations, the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich and his regime, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, anti-Maidan protests and the emergence of armed groups in the east), the situation in eastern Ukraine degenerated into armed conflict in the second quarter of 2014, pitting pro-Russian separatist militias, supported by Moscow, against state forces under the new pro-European authorities. Over time, issues such as the status of the eastern provinces were added to the international geostrategic dimension (political, economic and military rivalry between Russia and the West in Eastern Europe and Russia's demonstration of force for the benefit of its own public opinion, among other issues). Affecting the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, the war has had great impact on the civilian population, especially in terms of forced displacement. The parties to the conflict are participating in negotiations led by the Trilateral Contact Group (OSCE, Russia and Ukraine).

The armed conflict in Ukraine witnessed a drop in the number of civilian fatalities, although ceasefire violations were maintained and military tension increased between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov.

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

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

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

The regional context deteriorated in the second half of the year due to increased military tension between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait that escalated in November, with Russia's capture of three Ukrainian ships, arrest of 24 crew members and injury of three of them, preceded by other incidents and accusations in previous months.

The attack sparked international criticism of Russia and the cancellation of a planned meeting between the US and Russian presidents in the G20. In addition, the Ukrainian government responded one day after the attack by establishing martial law for one month in ten provinces bordering Russia, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea and the neighbouring Transdnistria region. Ukraine also imposed a ban on the entry of Russian nationals between the ages of 16 and 60 into the country, a restriction that remained in force for the remainder of the year. Russia strengthened its control over Crimea during the year,

building a bridge connecting the peninsula with Russia, which opened in May, and a fence separating Crimea from Ukraine, which was completed in December. At various times of the year, the UN warned of deterioration in the human rights situation in Ukraine. Among other events, starting in April the Roma population in Ukraine was attacked for several months with impunity by extreme right-wing groups, such as the National Druzhyna paramilitary organisation, which consists of former combatants of the Azov battalion, an irregular unit at the beginning of the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and the ultranationalist C14. The attacks included assaults on homes in several locations, as well as beatings and destruction. Several Roma people were killed and several were injured.

South-east Europe

Turkey (south-east)	
Start:	1984
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Summary:	
The PKK, created in 1978 as a political party of a Marxist-Leninist nature and led by Abdullah Öcalan, announced in 1984, an armed offensive against the government, undertaking a campaign of military rebellion to reclaim	

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

The number of deaths caused by the armed conflict continued to decrease, although new incidents of violence did occur and the conflict maintained a high risk of escalation regarding the conflict between Turkey and the Syrian Kurdish YPG forces, linked to the PKK.²⁸ According to the International

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

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

killed several commanders and prominent members of the PKK in August, including Ibrahim Coban (aka Mahir Atakan), Baris Oner (Tarik the Turk), Yusuf Sungur and Ismail Ozden (Zaki Shingali). In September, the interior minister claimed that the end of the PKK was drawing near. Turkey and Iraq also agreed to intensify their cooperation against the PKK. The conflict also spilled into in Syria, where Turkey carried out a military operation in January in the region of Afrin (northwestern Syria, bordering with Turkey), which was controlled by the YPG, a group linked to the PKK and accused by Turkey of being one and the same. The Turkish Army took control of Afrin in March. Turkey then threatened to fight the Kurdish forces in Manbij (Syria), where US troops (allies of the YPG) are stationed, and in Sinjar (Iraq). In December, Turkey warned of the imminent launch of its operation in Manbij, while the US announced that it would soon withdraw troops from Syria and Syrian regime forces entered Manbij in response to calls from the YPG. The situation in Syria generated uncertainty about the impact that its development may have on the conflict between Turkey and the PKK. In November, the US announced large cash rewards to anyone who provided information on three PKK leaders (Murat Karayilan, Cemil Bayik and Duran Kalkan). In July, Turkey lifted the state of emergency imposed after the failed coup d'état. In its place, the government passed a new anti-

terrorism law that same month laying down restrictions, with repercussions for the Kurdish issue. All this happened in a year in which Recep Tayip Erdogan officially became the head of state and the head of the government after the early presidential

and legislative elections in June in the new context of the presidential regime, with 52.5% of the votes in the presidential election and 53.66% of the votes for the coalition of his party, the AKP, and the MHP. The pro-Kurdish HDP party overcame the 10% threshold of votes, with 11.70% and 67 seats.

Turkey killed several prominent figures of the PKK in 2018

1.3.5. Middle East

Mashreq

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

28. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International ³³
Main parties:	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLF, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑
Summary:	
The conflict between Israel and the various Palestinian actors started up again in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, favoured by the failure of the peace process promoted at the beginning of the 1990s (the Oslo Accords, 1993-1994). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict started in 1947 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 divided Palestinian territory under British mandate into two states and soon after proclaimed the state of Israel (1948), without the state of Palestine having been able to materialise itself since then. After the 1948-49 war, Israel annexed West Jerusalem and Egypt and Jordan took over control of Gaza and the West Bank, respectively. In 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza after winning the “Six-Day War” against the Arab countries. It was not until the Oslo Accords that the autonomy of the Palestinian territory would be formally recognised, although its introduction was to be impeded by the military occupation and the control of the territory imposed by Israel.	

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict intensified significantly in 2018 and reported the worst levels of violence since

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Gulf

Yemen (AQAP)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, AQAP/Ansar Sharia, ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Summary: With a host of conflicts and internal challenges to deal with, the Yemeni government is under intense international pressure –mainly the USA and Saudi Arabia– to focus on fighting al-Qaeda's presence in the country, especially after the merger of the organisation's Saudi and Yemeni branches, through which al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was founded in 2009. Although al-Qaeda is known	

to have been active in Yemen since the 1990s and has been responsible for high profile incidents, such as the suicide attack on the US warship USS Cole in 2000, its operations have been stepped up in recent years, coinciding with a change of leadership in the group. The failed attack on an airliner en route to Detroit in December 2009 focused the world's attention on AQAP. The group is considered by the US government as one of its main security threats. Taking advantage of the power vacuum in Yemen as part of the revolt against president Ali Abdullah Saleh, AQAP intensified its operations in the south of the country and expanded the areas under its control. From 2011 the group began to carry out some of its attacks under the name Ansar Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law). More recently, particularly since mid-2014, AQAP has increasingly been involved in clashes with Houthi forces, which have advanced their positions from the north of Yemen. AQAP has taken advantage of the climate of instability and the escalation of violence in the country since March 2015 in the framework of the conflict between the Houthis and the forces loyal to the Government of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi. The al-Qaeda branch has faced both sides. Yemen's conflict scenario has also favoured the rise of ISIS, which has begun to claim various actions in the country.

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

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

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

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

Yemen (Houthis)	
Start:	2004
Type:	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Armed forces loyal to Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), armed factions loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, tribal militias linked to the al-Ahmar clan, Salafist militias, armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Iran
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Summary:	
The conflict started in 2004, when the followers of the religious leader al-Houthi, belonging to the Shiite minority, started an armed rebellion in the north of Yemen. The government assured that the rebel forces aimed to re-establish a theocratic regime such as the one that governed in the area for one thousand years, until the triumph of the Republican revolution in 1962. The followers of al-Houthi denied it and accused the government of corruption and not attending to the northern mountainous regions, and also opposed the Sanaa alliance with the US in the so-called fight against terrorism. The conflict has cost the lives of thousands of victims and has led to massive forced displacements. Various truces signed in recent years have been successively broken with taking up of hostilities again. As part of the rebellion that	

ended the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011, the Houthis took advantage to expand areas under its control in the north of the country. They have been increasingly involved in clashes with other armed actors, including tribal militias, sectors sympathetic to Salafist groups and to the Islamist party Islah and fighters of AQAP, the affiliate of al-Qaeda in Yemen. The advance of the Houthis to the centre and south of the country exacerbated the institutional crisis and forced the fall of the Yemeni government, leading to an international military intervention led by Saudi Arabia in early 2015. In a context of internationalisation, the conflict has acquired sectarian tones and a regional dimension.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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