

# Executive Summary

**Alert 2019! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding** is an annual report analyzing the state of the world in terms of conflict and peacebuilding based on three main axes: armed conflict, tensions, gender and peace and security. The analysis of the most relevant events in 2018 and the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main scenarios of armed conflict and social and political tension around the world allows for a regional comparative vision and also allows identifying global trends and elements of risk and preventive warnings for the future. Furthermore, the report also identifies peacebuilding opportunities or opportunities to scale down, prevent or resolve conflicts. In both cases, one of the main objectives in this report is to make available all of the information, analyses and identification of warning factors and peace opportunities for decision-makers, those intervening for the peaceful resolution to conflicts, or those giving a greater political, media or academic visibility to the many situations of political and social violence in the world.

As for the methodology, the contents of this report mainly draw on a qualitative analysis of studies and information made available by many sources –the United Nations, international organizations, research centres, communication media or NGOs, among others– as well as on field research in conflict-affected countries.

Some of the most relevant conclusions and information in the *Alert 2019!* report are listed below:

- During 2018, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, of which 33 were still active by the end of the year. Most of these were in Africa (14), and Asia (9), followed by the Middle East (6), Europe (3), and the Americas (1). The total number of armed conflicts has remained fairly stable and without significant fluctuations in the last five years.
- In 2018 the situation in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia was no longer considered an armed conflict after a historic peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF. On the other hand, two new cases –Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) and the Western Sahel Region– were analyzed as armed conflicts because of the drastic increase of violence.
- Regarding the intensity of violence, 38% of the conflicts were low (13 cases), 35% medium (12 cases) and another 27% high (nine cases).
- The most serious conflicts in 2018 were Libya, Mali, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).
- The number of fatalities in some conflicts greatly exceeded 1,000 in one year, such as Afghanistan, with 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 war began in 2011.
- 30% of armed conflicts experienced an escalation of violence: Cameroon, Mali, the Western Sahel Region, RCA, Colombia, Afghanistan, the Philippines (NPA), India (Jammu and Kashmir) –where the highest number of fatalities since 2009 was registered–, Israel-Palestine –also with the worst figures since 2014– and Yemen (Houthis).
- More than one-third of the conflicts experienced a decline in hostilities and levels of violence over the previous year, while 32% of the cases did not face significant changes
- Beyond the multi-cause nature of armed conflict, 71% of conflicts (24 of the 34 cases) were mainly driven by opposition to domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State. Also, claims based on identity or calls for self-government were one of the main causes in 59% of cases (20 conflicts).
- 82% of armed conflicts were 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.
- 12% of the armed conflicts (four cases) were internal, meaning that they were between armed actors of the same country, operating exclusively in and from its borders. Only two cases were considered international: the conflict in the Western Sahel region and the conflict between Israel and Palestine.
- Armed conflicts continued to provoke and/or exacerbate situations of humanitarian crisis. Cases like Yemen –the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than 24 million people in need of assistance–, Iraq –where 6.7 million people continued to need help–, Syria – increased from 520,000 to 4.2 million the number of people in need of humanitarian aid in the areas of Idlib and Aleppo–, Burundi –where 3.6 million people needed humanitarian aid– or RCA –where 2.9 of the 4.5 million people in the country needed humanitarian aid.
- One of the impacts of armed conflicts continued to be the phenomenon of sexual violence. The use of sexual violence in contexts such as Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, RCA, DRC, Somalia and Sudan of the South was denounced during 2018.
- Forced displacement was, one year more, one of the most serious consequences of armed conflicts globally. Figures published in 2018 highlighted that, until the end of 2017, a total of 68.5 million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of situations of conflict, persecution, violence and/or human rights violations, 2.9 million more than at the end of the previous year.
- During 2018 83 scenarios of tension were identified around the world. These cases were mainly concentrated in Africa (33), and Asia (18), whereas the remaining cases were spread around Europe (12), Middle East (11) and the Americas (nine).
- Half of the crises were of low intensity (50%, a

percentage higher than the 47% reported in 2017), one third were of average intensity (similar to the figure in the previous year) and only 15% had high levels of tension (13). Compared with previous years, the number of serious tensions followed the downward trend in recent years (representing 15% in 2018, 20% in 2017 and 24% in 2016).

- Slightly more than half of the crises in the world were internal in nature (45 crises, or 54%), almost one third of the crises around the world were internalised (24 crises, or almost 29%), and one sixth of the crises were international (14, or almost 17%).
- As for the evolution of tensions, many (40%) of the crises did not experience significant changes, 30% saw some improvement and the remaining 30% deteriorated compared to 2017.
- Practically 70% of the crises in the world were mainly caused by opposition to internal or international policies implemented by the respective governments, and the main causes of nearly half the crises (45%) included demands for self-government and/or identity. Disputes over the control of territory and/or resources were particularly relevant in around one third of the crises (31%), although this is a factor that fuels many situations of tension to varying degrees.
- 13 of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination.
- The UN Secretary-General expressed concern at the lack of progress regarding the basic commitments on peace and security, human rights and gender equality.
- With regard to the inclusion of gender equality in peace agreements, only three of 11 agreements (27%) signed in 2017 included provisions in this regard. This data is especially worrying, since it consolidates and aggravates the trend started in 2016, when gender issues were included in 50% of the agreements, compared to 70% of 2015.
- The *Alert 2019!* report identifies five opportunities for peace: the window of opportunity for peace in the Horn of Africa opened after the historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the process of implementing the agreement between the Government and the MILF in the south of the Philippines; the advances in the dialogue process on Transnistria; the networks of women mediators developed in the framework of the implementation of the gender, peace and security agenda; and the possibilities of recognition and inclusion of the young population as a peace agent after the approval of resolution 2250 of the United Nations Security Council and the implementation of the youth agenda, peace and security.
- The report highlights five warning scenarios: the escalation of violence in the Western Sahel region,

the effects of the political and economic crisis on the instability scenarios in Sudan, the increase of violence in the Indonesian region of Western Papua 50 years after the failed self-determination referendum, the risks derived from the absence of dialogue in the conflict between Turkey and the PKK, and the serious human security impacts of the hunger-conflict binomial.

## Structure

The report has five chapters. The first two look at conflicts globally –causes, types, dynamics, evolution and actors in situations of armed conflict or tension. The third chapter looks at the gender impacts in conflicts and tensions, as well as the initiatives being carried out within the United Nations and other local and international organizations and movements with regards to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. Chapter four identifies peace opportunities, scenarios where there is a context that is favourable to resolution of conflicts or to progress towards or consolidate peace initiatives. The final chapter studies risk scenarios in the future. Besides these five chapters, the report also includes a foldable map identifying the scenarios of armed conflict and social-political tension.

## Armed conflicts

The first chapter (**Armed conflicts**)<sup>1</sup> describes the evolution, type, causes and dynamics in active conflicts during the year; global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2018 are analyzed, as well as the impacts of such conflicts on the civilian population.

**During 2018, 34 armed conflicts were recorded, a figure that follows the trend observed in previous years (33 cases in 2016 and 2017, 35 conflicts in 2015, 36 in 2014, 35 in 2013).** Of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018, 33 were still active by the end of the year, given that the situation in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia was no longer considered an armed conflict after a historic peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF and the hostilities subsided. On the other hand, there were two new armed conflicts in 2018: Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) –where the situation of violence affecting the English-speaking majority regions of Cameroon since 2016 worsened significantly in 2018– and Western Sahel Region –where increasing attacks by jihadist groups in northern Burkina Faso and northern Niger were registered.

1. In this report, an armed conflict is understood as any confrontation between regular or irregular armed groups with objectives that are perceived as incompatible, in which the continuous and organised use of violence: a) causes a minimum of 100 fatalities in a year and/or has a serious impact on the territory (destruction of infrastructure or of natural resources) and on human safety (e.g., injured or displaced people, sexual violence, food insecurity, impact on mental health and on the social fabric or the disruption of basic services); and b) aims to achieve objectives different from those of common crime normally related to:

- demands for self-determination and self-government or identity-related aspirations;
- opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state or the internal or international policy of a government, which in both triggers a struggle to seize or undermine power;
- the control of resources or land.

## Armed conflicts in 2018\*

AFRICA (16)	ASIA (9)	MIDDLE EAST (6)
Algeria (AQMI) -1992- Burundi -2015- Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) -2018- CAR -2006- DRC (east) -1998- DRC (east-ADF) -2014- DRC (Kasai) -2017- <i>Ethiopia (Ogaden) -2007-</i> Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011- Libya -2011- Mali (north) -2012- Somalia -1988- Sudan (Darfur) -2003- Sudan (South Kordofan & Blue Nile) -2011- South Sudan -2009- Western Sahel Region -2018-	Afghanistan -2001- India (CPI-M) -1967- India (Jammu & Kashmir) -1989- Myanmar -1948- Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005- Pakistan -2001- Philippines (NPA) -1969- Philippines (Mindanao) -1991- Thailand (south) -2004-	Egypt (Sinai) -2014- Iraq -2003- Israel-Palestine -2000- Syria -2011- Yemen (Houthis) -2004- Yemen (AQPA) - 2011-
		EUROPE (2)
		Turkey (south-east) -1984- Ukraine -2014-
		AMERICAS (1)
		Colombia -1964-

\*Between hyphens is the date on which the conflict started. In *Italics* are the conflicts that ended during 2018

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). For the remaining conflicts, six were in the Middle East, three in Europe and one in the Americas. 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.

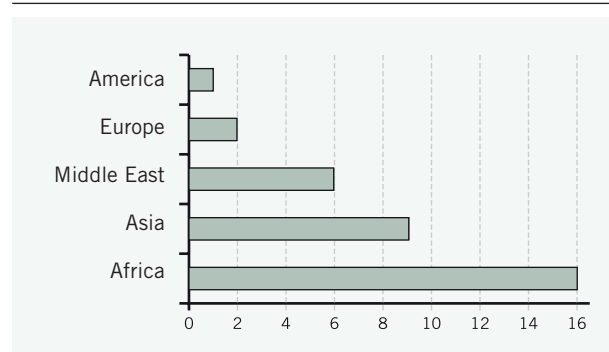
Regarding armed conflict causes, the vast majority of the conflicts had among its main causes opposition to the domestic or international policies of the respective governments or to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a certain state, which resulted in struggles to gain power or 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

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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. 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%). 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.

With regards to the evolution of armed conflicts in 2018, the hostilities and levels of violence subsided in over one third of the conflicts compared to the previous year (13 cases). There were no significant changes in

### Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2018



32% of the conflicts (11), while the violence escalated in 30%. 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 Israel-Palestine and India (Jammu and Kashmir) reported the highest number of casualties since 2009 and 2014, respectively.

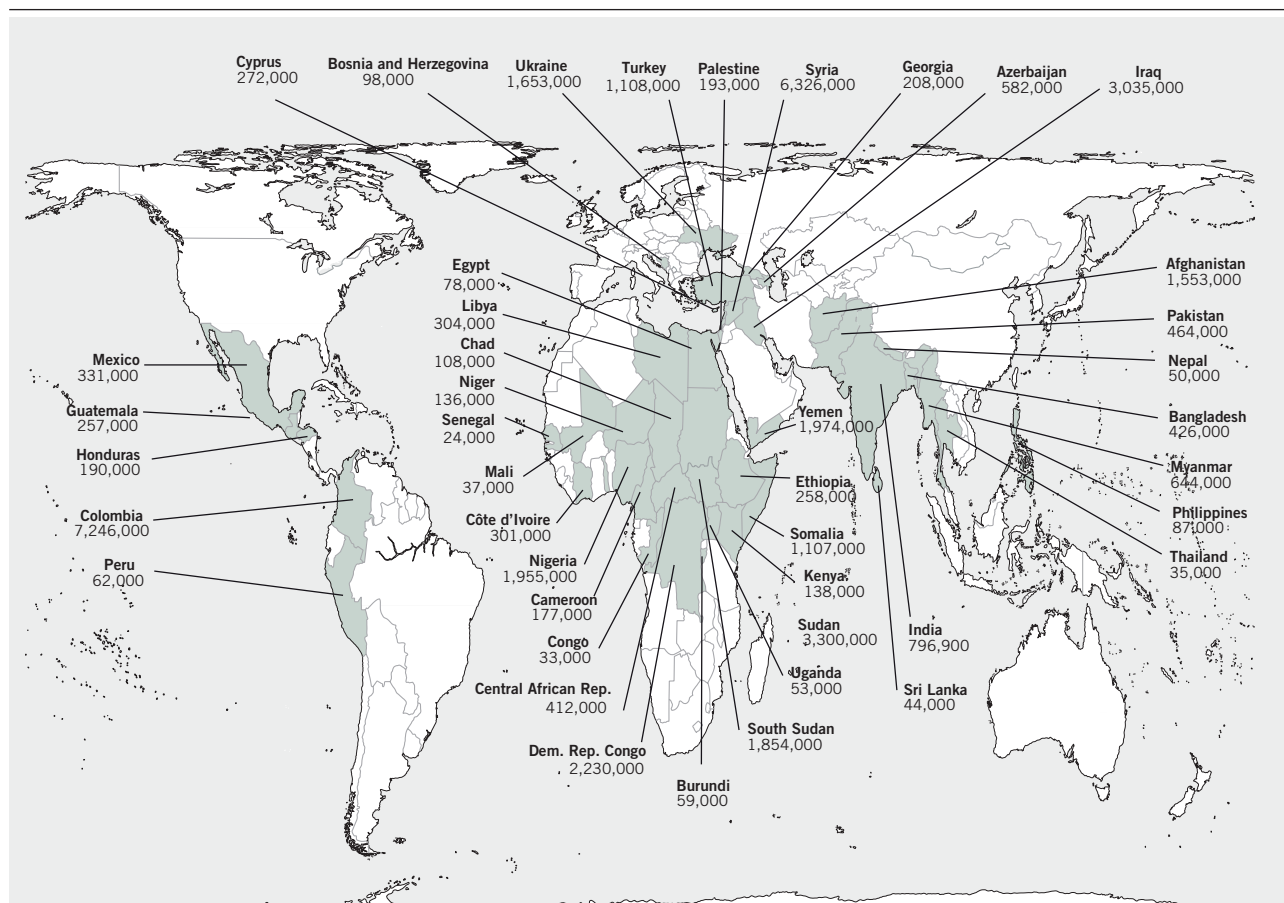
With regards to intensity, the violence was low in 38% of the conflicts (13), medium in 35% (12) and high in 27% (nine). **In 2018 there was a drop in high-intensity conflicts with respect to 2017 (40%, equivalent to 13 of the 33 conflicts that year).** The nine most serious conflicts in 2018 took place 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 war began in 2011.

***The nine most serious conflicts in 2018 were Libya, Mali, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)***

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.

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

## Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2017



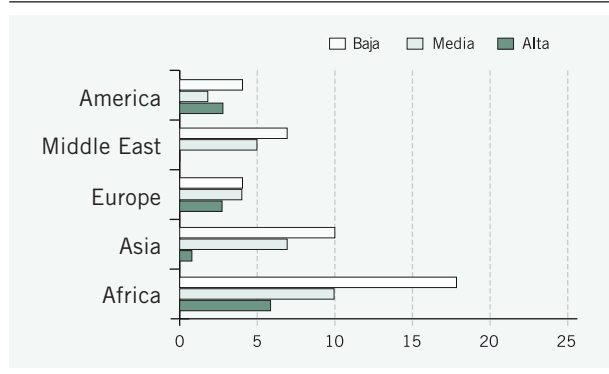
Source: IDMC, *GRID 2018: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2018.



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.

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 with 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). 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).

## Intensity of the socio-political crises by region



## Tensions

The second chapter (**Tensions**)<sup>2</sup> looks at the most relevant events regarding social and political tensions recorded during the year and compares global and regional trends. During 2018 83 scenarios of tension were recorded globally. As in previous years, the largest number of socio-political tensions took place in Africa, with 33 cases, followed by Asia, where 18 cases were recorded. Europe and the Middle East experienced 12 and 11 such scenarios respectively, while in the Americas there were eight contexts of this type.

The situations of tension had multiple causes, with more than one main factor in the large majority of cases. Similarly to previous years, 70% of cases included among the main causes **opposition to domestic or international policies implemented by the respective governments** or opposition to the political, social or ideological system of the states, leading to struggles to erode or gain power. In Latin America, for instance, all of the identified tensions were linked to some of these variables. In turn, **almost half of the tensions (45%) found one of their main causes in claims for self-government or identity causes, but this percentage was clearly higher in regions like Europe (around 66%) or Asia (more than 55%)**. For around one third of the tensions (34%), disputes over the control of territories and/or resources were a highly relevant element, even if this is a factor that fuels many situations of tension to varying degrees.

Following the trend of previous years, **slightly more than half of the tensions in the world were domestic (45 cases or 54%)**, with the case of Latin America being especially paradigmatic, where practically all cases (except Haiti) were of this type. Conversely,

2. A socio-political crisis is defined as that in which the pursuit of certain objectives or the failure to satisfy certain demands made by different actors leads to high levels of political, social or military mobilisation and/or the use of violence with a level of intensity that does not reach that of an armed conflict and that may include clashes, repression, coups d'état and bombings or attacks of other kinds, and whose escalation may degenerate into an armed conflict under certain circumstances. Socio-political crises are normally related to: a) demands for self-determination and self-government, or identity issues; b) opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state, or the internal or international policies of a government, which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or c) control of resources or territory

almost one third of the tensions worldwide were internationalized domestic tensions (24 cases or 29%), but this percentage was clearly higher in regions like Europe (around half of the cases) or the Middle East (45%) or significantly lower in Africa (15%) and Latin America (11%). One sixth of tensions were international (14 cases or 16%), although in regions like Latin America no such tensions were identified. Regarding the evolution of tensions, most contexts (40%) did not experience significant changes, in 30% of cases there was a certain improvement and in the remaining 30% of the crises there was a deterioration with respect to 2017. Except in Asia, where there were more cases of improvement than deterioration of the situation, in aggregate terms the number of tensions whose situation worsened was equal to those in which there was an improvement in the situation. Regarding the intensity of sociopolitical crises, half of them in 2018 showed a low intensity, one third recorded a mean intensity and only 15% of cases had high voltage levels (13 cases).

*Africa and Asia were the continents with the largest number of social and political crisis in 2018 (33 and 18, respectively)*

well as the different initiatives launched by the United Nations and other local and international organizations and movements with regards to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. This perspective brings to light the differential impacts that armed conflicts have on women and men, but also to what extent and how

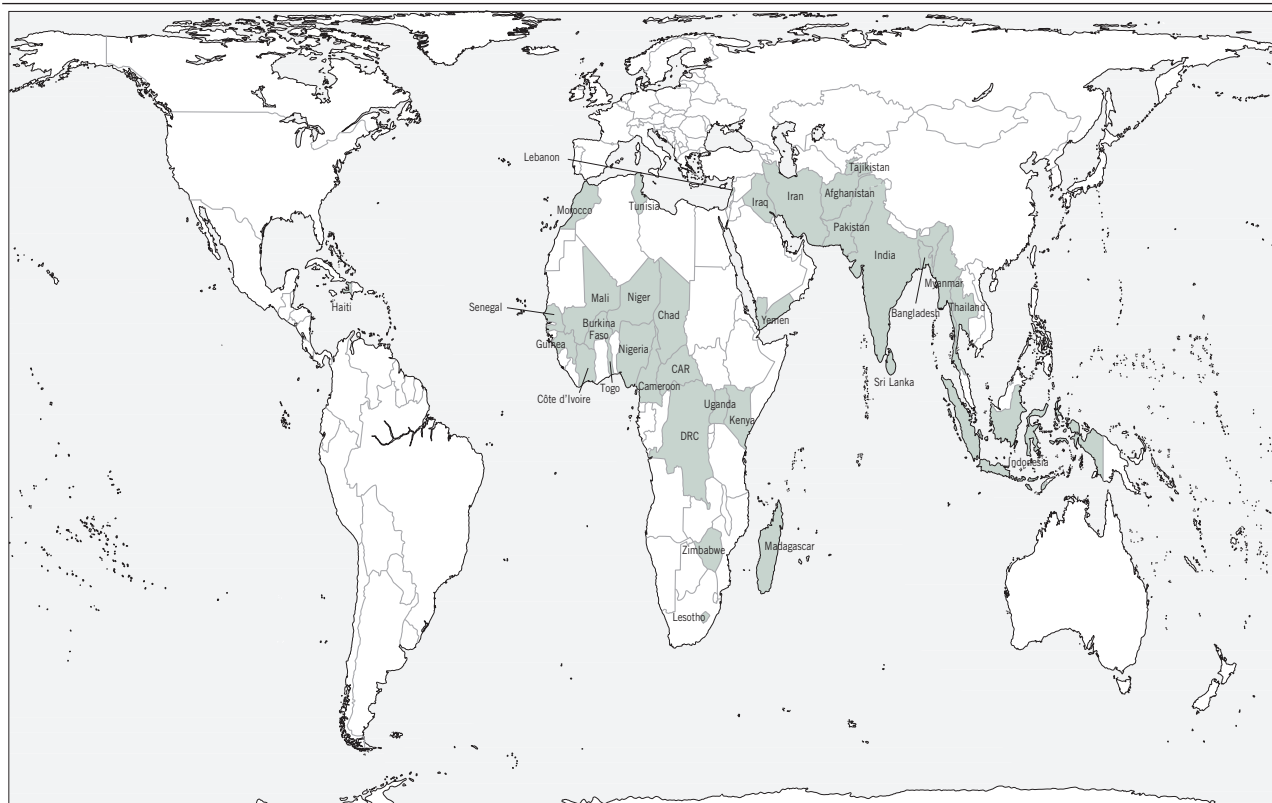
one and other participate in peacebuilding and what are the contributions made by women in this process. The chapter is structured into three main parts: the first looks at the global situation with regards to gender inequalities by taking a look at the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI); the second part studies the gender dimension in terms of the impact of armed conflicts and social-political crises; and the last part is on peacebuilding from a gender perspective. At the start of the chapter there is a map showing the countries with severe gender inequalities based on the Social Institutions and Gender Index. The chapter monitors the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, which was established following the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in the year 2000.

## The gender dimension in peacebuilding

Chapter three (Gender, peace and security)<sup>3</sup> studies the gender-based impacts in conflicts and tensions, as

According to the SIGI, the levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 29 countries, concentrated mainly in Africa, Asia and the Middle

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



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

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

	Medium levels of discrimination	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination	No data
<b>Armed conflicts</b>	Burkina Faso DRC (3) India (2) Thailand	CAR Chad Mali Myanmar Nigeria <sup>7</sup>	Afghanistan Cameroon Iraq Niger Pakistan (2) Yemen (2)	Algeria Burundi Egypt Israel Libya Niger Palestine Somalia South Sudan Sudan (2) Syria
<b>Socio-political crises</b>	DRC (4) Haiti India (4) Kenya Lesotho Senegal Tajikistan Thailand Zimbabwe	Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia Iraq Madagascar Morocco Nigeria (2) Sri Lanka Togo Tunisia Uganda	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Lebanon (2) Pakistan (2)	Angola Bahrain China Djibouti Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Gambia Guinea Bissau Israel (2) Palestine Republic of the Congo Saudi Arabia Somalia South Sudan (2) Sudan (2) Uzbekistan Venezuela Syria

\* The number of armed conflicts or socio-political crises in the country appears between parentheses.

Table created based on levels of gender discrimination found in the SIGI (OECD), as indicated in the latest available report (2019), and on Escola de Cultura de Pau's classifications for armed conflicts and socio-political crises (see chapter 1, Armed conflicts, and chapter 2, Socio-political crises). The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

East. Crossing the data from this index with that of countries living an armed conflict reveals that **13 of the 34 armed conflicts that were active in 2018 took place in countries with serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination, seven in countries with medium levels of discrimination, and that 11 armed conflicts were taking place in countries with no available data on this topic –Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan–**. So, more than 54% of the armed conflicts for which data is available on gender equity took place in contexts with serious or very serious gender inequalities. This figure amounts to 79% if the contexts with medium levels of discrimination are included. Also, in four other countries with one or more ongoing armed conflicts, the level of discrimination was lower, in some cases low (Ethiopia, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low (Colombia), according to SIGI. With regards to social and political crises, at least 26 of the 83 active tensions in 2018 were in countries that experienced serious gender inequalities (high or very high levels according to the SIGI), representing 41% of tensions for which data was available. This figure amounts to 56% if countries with average levels of discrimination are included. 18 tensions were in countries with no available data (Angola, Bahrain, China, Congo, Djibouti,

Egypt, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Gaza and West Bank, Guinea Bissau, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan).

As in previous years, during 2018 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts. Its use, which in some cases was part of the deliberate war strategies of the armed actors, was documented in different reports, as well as by local and international media. In April, the UN Security Council held an open discussion on sexual violence in armed conflicts. The Secretary-General presented his annual monitoring and evaluation report on the issue. The Secretary-General's report covered the year 2017 and analysed the situation in 19 countries, 13 of which experienced armed conflict: Afghanistan, the CAR, Colombia, the DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Syria and Yemen, as well as the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which includes Nigeria. The report also identified governmental and non-governmental actors responsible for the use of sexual violence in conflicts, stated that 21 female protection advisors were deployed in seven missions and added that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict conducted activities in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar,

***13 of the 34 armed conflicts in 2018 were in countries with severe gender inequalities***

Nigeria, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan in 2017. The report noted the deteriorating conditions for civil society organisations around the world and how violence has been used to assault human rights advocates and intimidate witnesses in trials for crimes of sexual violence and war crimes. The Secretary-General's report noted that most of the victims are economically and politically marginalised women and girls, often in remote rural areas or in situations of forced displacement. Sexual violence was also a factor causing displacement and an obstacle to the return of refugees or internally displaced persons. Nine of the 19 armed conflicts that were analysed in the UN Secretary-General's report experienced high levels of intensity in 2018 –Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), South Sudan Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)–, topping 1,000 fatalities during the year and producing serious impacts on people and the territory, including conflict-related sexual violence.

Throughout the year there were different initiatives to respond to sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts. Concerning the activity of the UN Security Council, two resolutions were approved imposing sanctions on Libya and Somalia in 2018 that included aspects related to sexual violence and gender violence. The United Nations continued to deploy its strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel. Unveiled by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017, the strategy focuses on four areas of action: the rights and dignity of the victims, the end of impunity, the participation of civil society and external partners and the improvement of strategic communication. As part of the deployment, 34 United Nations agencies facilitated country strategies and action plans. Regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by military and civilian personnel deployed in United Nations missions, the UN Secretary-General's report found a decrease in the number of complaints reported in 2017 compared to 2016. 62 complaints were filed in 2017, 20 of which referred to sexual abuse and 42 to sexual exploitation (compared with 145 complaints in 2016, 99 in 2015 and 80 in 2014). In addition, the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the CEDAW Committee signed in 2018 a cooperation framework agreement to promote and protect the rights of women and girls affected by sexual violence related to conflicts. It is the first cooperation framework between a body with a mandate established by the Security Council and a human rights mechanism. Finally, it must be highlighted that the International Criminal Court opened a preliminary investigation into the crimes committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar, which could lead to a formal investigation. The ICC prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced the start of this investigation that will include acts of sexual violence and other human rights violations.

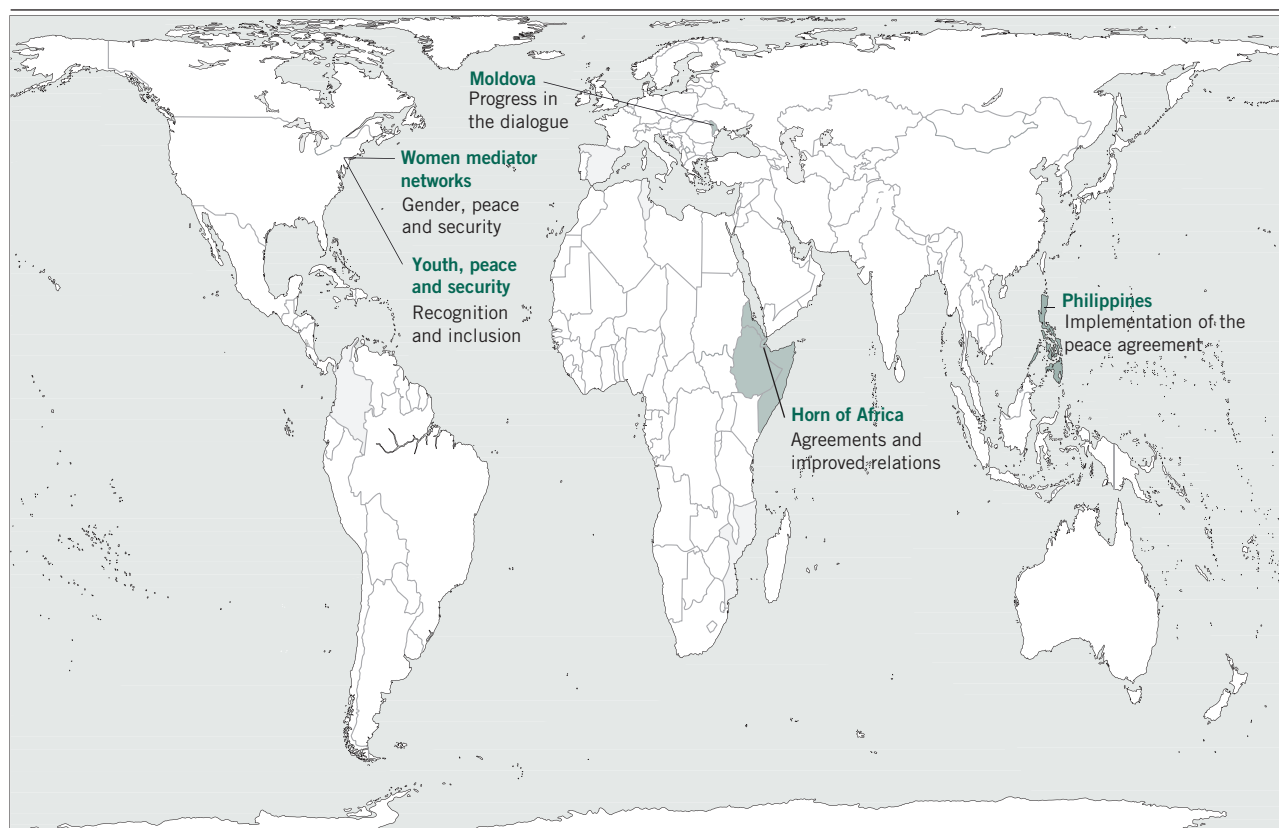
***In recent years, there has been a decline in the inclusion of gender equality-related aspects in peace agreements: they were included in 70% of the agreements in 2015, but in 50% in 2016 and in only 27% in 2017***

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and crises had other serious gender impacts. In the report *Situation of Human Rights Defenders*, published in early 2019, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the situation of women human rights defenders warned of the serious risks that they run, including the lack of recognition of their role and work as human rights advocates, their marginalisation and systematic exclusion; their social discrediting, stigmatisation and attacks on their honour and reputation; risks, threats and attacks in the private sphere and against family members and people close to them; physical aggression, sexual violence, torture, murder and forced disappearance; harassment, violence and attacks over the Internet; judicial harassment and criminalisation; denial of participation, restrictions and reprisals for collaborating with international and regional human rights systems; threats to legal status; physical imprisonment; and attacks against female human rights defence groups and movements. The report

also indicated the specific risks faced by groups of female human rights advocates, such as girls; women who do not conform to hegemonic gender norms; indigenous female advocates and defenders of minority groups; human rights defenders with disabilities; female journalists and lawyers; female advocates in leadership positions; female activists in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations; female refugees defenders, female migrants and victims of human trafficking; female activists deprived of their freedom; environmental activists; female defenders of women's human rights; and female activists who defend the rights of sex workers.

In relation to resolution 1325 and the international agenda for women, peace and security, the Secretary-General expressed concern at the lack of progress with respect to the basic commitments in the area of peace and security, human rights and gender equality within the framework of the annual debate on women, peace and security at the UN Security Council. Regarding the participation of women in peace processes, only three of 11 peace agreements (27%) signed in 2017 included provisions on gender equality. This figure is particularly worrying, as it consolidates and aggravates the trend that began in 2016, when gender issues were included in only 50% of the agreements, compared to 70% in 2015. Regarding national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, in 2018 six countries presented their plans for the first time: Luxembourg, Albania, Poland, Tunisia, Moldova and Mozambique. Thus, according to the data compiled by WILPF, a total of 79 countries had an action plan at the end of 2018. However, WILPF points out that only 43% of these plans have a specific budget associated with implementing the plan, which it describes as a severe obstacle to achieving the objectives of the gender, peace and security agenda and reveals a notable lack of governments' commitment to it.





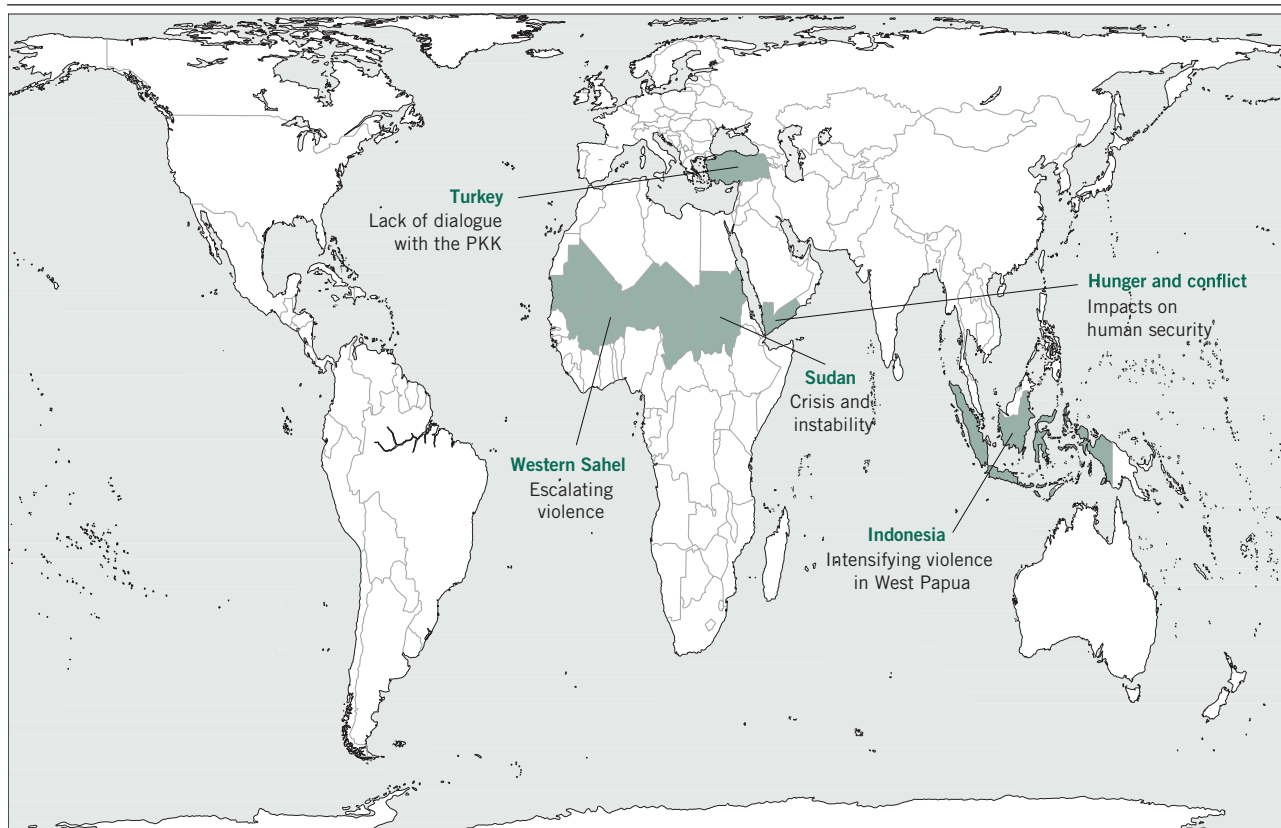
**Sexual violence was present in a large number of armed conflicts that remained active during the year 2018.** One of the armed conflicts where sexual violence had a largest impact in 2017 was Myanmar, where many international and local human rights organizations denounced sexual violence carried out by Myanmar's armed forces on the Rohingya population, especially women and girls. Another serious case was South Sudan, where armed actors continued to perpetrate sexual violence on a mass level targeting people from ethnic groups considered rivals. As in previous years, the UN Secretary-General's report on the impact of sexual violence in armed conflicts, released in April 2017 and covering the period from January to December 2016, identified armed actors responsible for committing systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. The report also documents trends and patterns regarding the use of sexual violence in the framework of the conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Darfur (Sudan), Syria, Yemen. Also in the post-conflict cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal and Sri Lanka, as well as in Burundi and Nigeria. It is important to note that from the 17 armed conflicts that, according to the UN Secretary-General's report, registered sexual violence in 2016, ten of these conflicts were high intensity in 2017 –Libya, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Also, in ten of these there was also an escalation of violence during 2017 compared to the previous year

***The use of sexual violence and other gender-based violence was denounced in countries with armed conflicts and/or social-political tension during 2018***

–Libya, Mali (north), CAR, DRC (east), DRC (Kasai), Somalia, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis).

Also, during the year there were several initiatives to respond to sexual violence within the framework of armed conflicts. Among these, in the DRC 11 members of the Djeshi ya Yesu militia were sentenced to life imprisonment for using sexual violence against 40 girls, in a process that was supported by civil society and the United Nations. This ruling was considered to be highly relevant in the fight against impunity. Also, the UN Secretary-General presented the four pillars of the new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse: putting the rights and dignity of victims first; ending impunity; collaborating with civil society, external experts and other organizations; and addressing communication to raise awareness. As part of the new strategy, in 2017 a new position was created, that of the Victims' Rights Advocate. According to the UN report presented in 2017, during the year 2016 145 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN missions were reported (65 cases perpetrated by civilian staff and 80 by uniformed staff), compared to 99 cases in 2015 and 80 in 2014.

Besides sexual violence, countries with armed conflicts and/or social-political tension continued to face other gender-based violence. A case worth mentioning is that of El Salvador, with high rates of femicide (468 women killed in 2017), to which we should add the serious violation of women's human rights due to the



total prohibition of abortion and the high number of sexual crimes (3,947 sexual crimes reported in 2016, according to figures provided by the National Police, out of which 47% were cases of girls younger than 15 being raped, and 26% of girls aged 15 to 18). The attempts at restricting the freedom of movement for women by armed actors in Libya, or the reports on the kidnapping of homosexual men –or anyone suspected of being a homosexual– in Chechnya by non-State actors and security forces were some of the other cases of gender-based violence in contexts of conflict and tension in 2017.

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

## Peace Opportunities for 2019

Chapter four of the report (**Peace Opportunities for 2019**) identifies and analyzes five scenarios that are favourable for positive steps to be taken in terms of peacebuilding in 2019. The opportunities identified in 2018 refer to different regions and topics.

- **Horn of Africa:** The historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia in September 2018 has been the result of numerous complicities on both sides of the Red Sea and important changes in Ethiopia that have generated an extraordinary scenario in which several peace initiatives have been launched and new agreements between its neighbours have been reached. The new scenario derived from this

process has created a momentum for peace in the Horn of Africa, not risk-free, as it focuses on endogenous fragility elements and a complex network of relationships between the countries of the region and their neighbours in the Arabian Peninsula, which compete to expand their areas of influence.

- **Philippines:** After several years of delays and numerous difficulties, the approval of the so-called Organic Law of Bangsamoro opens the door to the replacement of the current Autonomous Region of the Muslim Mindanao by another entity with expanded competencies and territory on the southern island of Mindanao. The approval of the aforementioned law also facilitates the full implementation of the peace agreement, including the demobilization of tens of thousands of MILF combatants.
- **Moldova (Transdnistria):** The renewal of the negotiations since 2016, the significant steps between 2017 and 2018 and factors such as the pragmatic approach of the current negotiations, the impetus of third parties and the support of Russia to the process, can lead to new advances in the future for the resolution of this prolonged conflict, despite the obstacles, including the divergences surrounding the future status of Transdnistria.
- **Women mediators:** Since 2015, various networks of women mediators have emerged with the aim of

promoting the significant participation of women in peace processes. Those networks reinforce innovative experiences that promote the inclusiveness of processes and the overcoming of traditional barriers to women in the peace negotiations.

- **Peace and youth:** In recent years more attention has been devoted to the role of the young population as a peace actor and agent for the transformation of conflicts, especially after the approval of resolution 2250 (2015) by the UN Security Council. The first balance of the implementation of the youth peace and security agenda offers a panoramic view of the contribution of youth in this field and outlines a series of recommendations for their further inclusion in peace initiatives in the future.

*The Alert! report identifies five contexts that are favourable in terms of peacebuilding in 2019*

## Risk Scenarios for 2019

Chapter six of the report (**Risk Scenarios for 2019**), identifies and analyzes five scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen and become sources of more severe instability and violence in 2018.

- **Indonesia:** The end of 2018 saw the most serious episodes of violence in Papua in recent times. The fact that in 2019 presidential elections are being held and the 50th anniversary of the referendum that sanctioned the annexation of Papua to Indonesia is commemorated can be a good opportunity for the Papua pro-independence movement to

*The report identifies and analyzes five scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen in 2019*

advance its demands and increase its armed activity.

- **Sudan:** Despite the reduction in 2018 in the intensity of violence in the regions of Darfur (west) and Kordofan del Sur and Blue Nile (south), massive popular protests throughout the year, reaching their highest point in December and the beginning of 2019, mainly caused by the worsening economic and political crisis at the national level, may augur greater instability in 2019 and open questions about the permanence of Omar al-Bashir in power.
- **Western Sahel:** The region faces in recent years and especially in 2018 an increase in political violence with multiple expressions of inter-communal and criminal violence that can have a serious regional impact. The militarization of the region, with the deployment of regional and international initiatives, can have serious consequences for the civilian population and not solve those root issues of the conflict in the area.
- **Turkey:** The deterioration of the general situation in Turkey in recent years, with allegations of human rights violations; the military fortification of the armed actors faced; and the conflict regional dynamics of are some of the elements that create risks of destabilizing the conflict between Ankara and the PKK, despite the opportunities to redirect the dispute through negotiations.
- **Hunger and conflicts:** Recent reports points to an increase in the population that is hungry worldwide and stress that most of them live in areas affected by conflicts. Given this tendency, numerous voices warn about the relationship between conflict, violence and food insecurity and the deliberate blockade of humanitarian aid and the use of hunger as a weapon of war in various contexts.





# Conflict overview 2018

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	
Africa	<i>Libya</i> <i>Mali</i> <i>Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)</i> <i>Somalia</i> <i>South Sudan</i>	Cameroon (Ambazonia / North West and South West) CAR DRC (east) DRC (Kasai) <i>Sudan (Darfur)</i>	Algeria <i>Burundi</i> DRC (east-ADF) <i>Ethiopia (Ogaden)*</i> <i>Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)</i> Western Sahel Region	Chad <i>DRC</i> <i>Ethiopia</i> <i>Ethiopia (Oromiya)</i> Kenya Nigeria	Angola (Cabinda) Côte d'Ivoire Eritrea Lesotho <i>Mozambique</i> <i>Nigeria (Delta Niger)</i> Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland) <i>Sudan</i> <i>Togo</i> Tunisia	Central Africa (LRA) <i>Congo, Rep. of</i> Djibouti Equatorial Guinea <i>Eritrea – Ethiopia</i> <i>Gambia</i> Guinea Guinea-Bissau Madagascar <i>Morocco - Western Sahara</i> DRC – Rwanda DRC – Uganda Rwanda <i>Senegal (Casamance)</i> <i>Sudan - South Sudan</i> Uganda Zimbabwe	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>49</b>
America			<i>Colombia</i>	Mexico <i>Nicaragua</i> <i>Venezuela</i>	El Salvador Honduras	Bolivia Guatemala Haiti Perú	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>
Asia and Pacific	<i>Afghanistan</i>	Philippines (Mindanao) India (Jammu and Kashmir) Pakistan	India (CPI-M) <i>Myanmar</i> Pakistan (Balochistan) <i>Philippines (NPA)</i> <i>Thailand (south)</i>	India - Pakistan	Bangladesh China (Xinjiang) <i>India (Assam)</i> India (Manipur) Indonesia (West Papua) Pakistan Tajikistan	<i>China (Tibet)</i> China - Japan <i>India (Nagaland)</i> <i>Korea, RPD - USA,</i> <i>Japan, Rep. Of Korea</i> <i>Korea, RPD - Rep. of Korea</i> Kyrgyzstan Lao, RPD Sri Lanka Thailand Uzbekistan	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>27</b>
Europe		Turkey (southeast) <i>Ukraine (east)</i>			<i>Armenia - Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)</i> Russia (Chechnya) Russia (Dagestan) <i>Serbia – Kosovo</i> Turkey	Armenia Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>Cyprus</i> <i>Georgia (Abkhazia)</i> <i>Georgia (South Ossetia)</i> <i>Moldova, Rep. of (Transnistria)</i>	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>2</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
Middle East	<i>Iraq</i> <i>Syria</i> <i>Yemen (Houthis)</i>	Egypt (Sinai) <i>Israel - Palestine</i>	Yemen (AQPA)	Egypt Iran (northwest) Israel - Syria - Lebanon	Iran (Sistan Baluchistan) <i>Iran - USA, Israel</i> Lebanon Saudi Arabia	Bahrain Iran Iraq (Kurdistan) <i>Palestine</i>	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>117</b>

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics. With asterisk, armed conflicts ended during 2018. For more information on negotiations and peace processes, see School of Culture of Peace, *Peace Talks in Focus 2019. Report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.