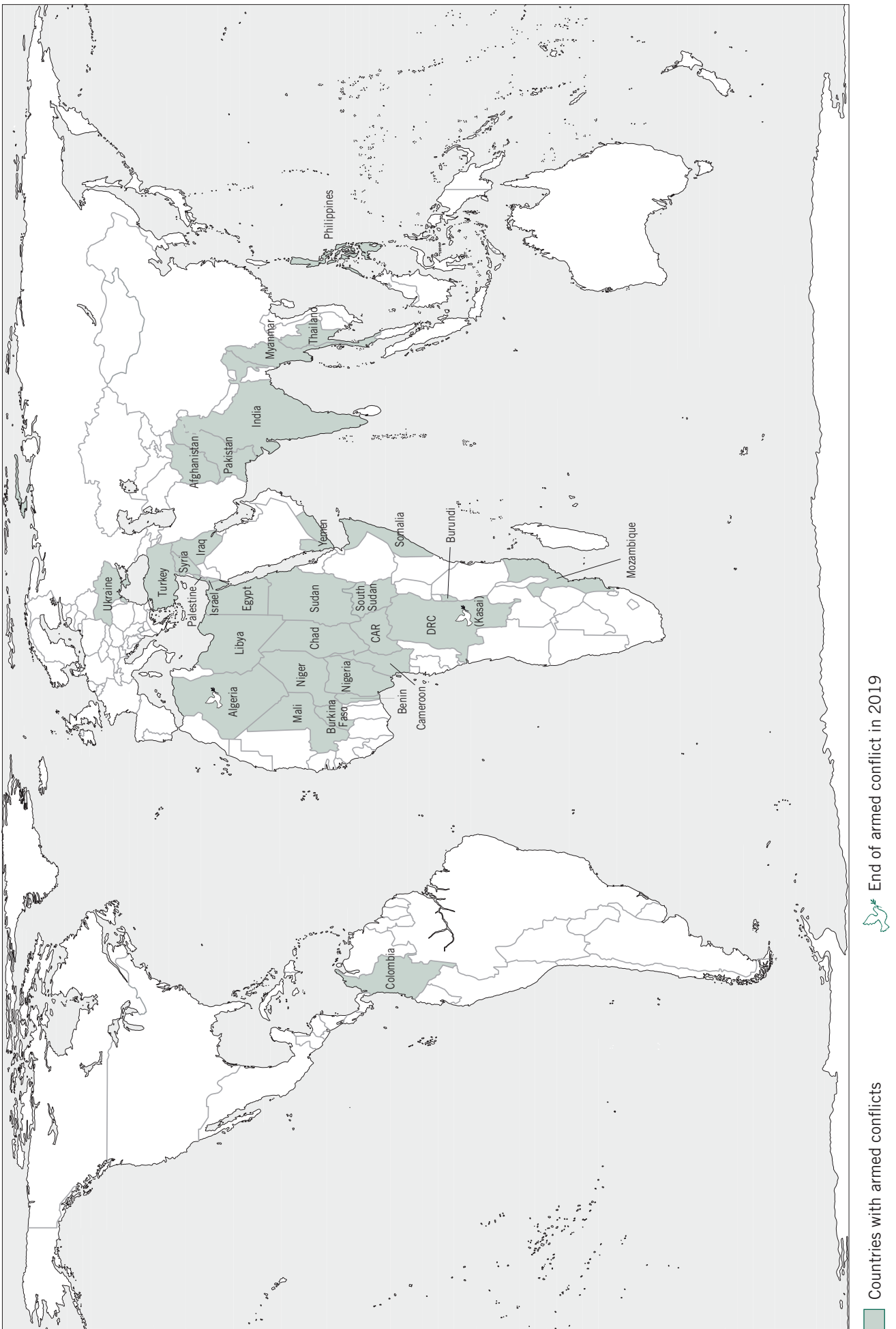


Map 1.1. Armed conflicts



1. Armed conflicts

- 34 armed conflicts were reported in 2019, 32 of them remained active at the 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).
- Repression by the Burundian government and the youth wing of the ruling party CNDD-FDD, the Imbonerakure, intensified prior to the 2020 elections.
- The widespread reduction of violence and the beginning of the demobilisation of armed groups led to the end of the armed conflict in the Congolese region of Kasai.
- There was an escalation of violence by the ADF in eastern DRC as a result of a military operation conducted by the Congolese Armed Forces in the last quarter of the year.
- Various analysts highlighted that ISIS would be seeking a greater role in the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which mainly affects northeast Nigeria and the neighbouring regions of Chad, Cameroon and Niger, due to the increase in the group's actions.
- Violence in the Cabo Delgado province in northern Mozambique increased due to the presence of armed groups calling themselves jihadists.
- South Sudan, with 2.21 million refugees, ranked as the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the third largest in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan.
- Violence in the Liptako-Gourma region (Western Sahel) has increased fivefold since 2016, with around 4,000 people killed in 2019.
- The armed conflict in Libya worsened in 2019, with clashes and airstrikes in various parts of the country encouraged by continued violations of the arms embargo.
- With a body count of 42,000, according to ACLED, Afghanistan became the armed conflict with the highest number of fatalities in 2019.
- In line with the trend in recent years, violence in southern Thailand fell again and was at its lowest levels since the start of the conflict in 2004.
- The Turkish government stepped up pressure against the PKK in Iraq and Syria, while repression against Kurdish political actors inside Turkey continued.
- The armed conflict in Iraq was marked by persisting hostilities between the security forces and ISIS and by the growing projection of the struggle between Iran and the United States in the country.
- The Syrian armed conflict continued to be characterised by high levels of violence, the participation of many armed actors, the strong influence of regional and international actors and very serious impacts on the civilian population.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2019. 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 2019, 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 2019.

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 2019

Conflict ¹ -beginning-	Type ²	Main parties ³	Intensity ⁴
			Trend ⁵
Africa			
Algeria -1992-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups AQIM (formerly GSPC), MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Jund al-Khilafa (branch of ISIS), ISIS, governments of North Africa and the Sahel	1
	System		End
Burundi -2015-	Internationalised internal	Government, Imbonerakure Youth branch, political party CNDD-FDD, political party CNL, armed groups RED-TABARA, FPB (previously FOREBU), FNL	1
	Government		↑
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) -2018-	Internationalised internal	Government of Cameroon, self-proclaimed Interim Government of Ambazonia, the armed groups ADF, SCACUF, SOCADEF and SCDF and dozens of smaller militias	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, rebel groups of the former coalition Séléka (FPRC, RPRC, MPC, UPC, MLCJ), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, LRA armed Ugandan group, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, EUFOR	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	Govenrment of DRC, Government of Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	2
	System, Resources		↑
DRC (Kasai) -2017-	Internal	Government, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)	1
	Government, Identity		End
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of Nigeria, Boko Haram (BH), Boko Haram-ISWAP, Boko Haram-Abubakar Shekau, civilian militias, MNJTF regional force (Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad)	3
	System		↑
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Accord with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk/Bayda, numerous armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA), militias from Misrata, Petroleum Facilities Guard, Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB), ISIS, AQIM, mercenaries; USA, France, UK, Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Russia, among other countries	3
	Government, Resources, System		↑

1. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict. 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 2019 with those of 2018. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2019 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			
Mali ⁶ -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), MSA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQIM, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, JNIM/GSIM, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP), Katiba Macina, MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso)	3
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Mozambique (North) -2019-	Internationalised internal	Government, Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ), Russian mercenaries (Wagner Group)	2
	System, 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, REMNASA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSDA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwelek), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), 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	1
	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 (FML), Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups	3
	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 (ISIS-KP)	3
	System		↑
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1
	System		=
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, United Jihad Council, All Parties Hurriyat Conference	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		↓

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 (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlay Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, factions of MILF and MNLF	2
	Self-government, System, Identity		=
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, USA, Iran, Turkey, Israel	3
	System, Government, Identity, Resources		=
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLF, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (coalition that includes the YPG/YPJ militias of the PYD), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, Turkey, Hezbollah, Iran, Russia, among other armed parties	3
	System, Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Yemen (AQAP) - 2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, AL Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP/Ansar Sharia), ISIS, USA, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, UAE, tribal militias, Houthi militias/Ansar Allah	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, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran	3
	System, Government, Identity		=

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

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

1.2. Armed conflicts: analysis of trends in 2019

This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2019. This includes an overview of conflicts as compared to that of previous years, the geographical distribution of conflicts and the main trends by region, the relationship between the actors involved and the scenario of the dispute, the main causes of the current armed conflicts, the general evolution of the contexts and the intensity of the conflicts according to their levels of violence and their impact. Likewise, this section analyses some of the main consequences of armed conflicts in the civilian population, including forced displacement due to situations of conflict and violence.

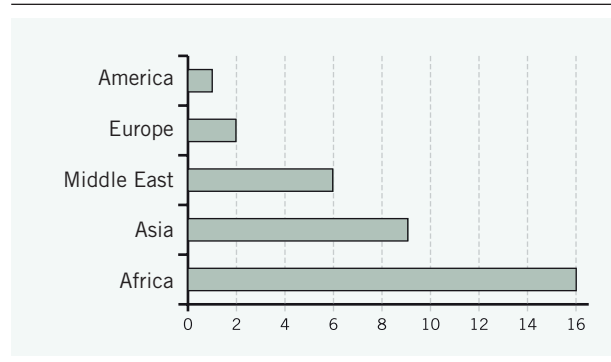
1.2.1 Global and regional trends

The previous years' trend regarding the number of armed conflicts was maintained in 2019, **with 34 cases, the same number as in 2018 and one more than in 2017 and 2016 (and similar to previous periods: 35 in 2015, 36 in 2014 and 35 in 2013)**. Thirty-two of the 34 cases reported in 2019 remained active at the end of the year and two others were no longer considered armed conflicts. This was the case in Algeria, where there has been a drop in hostilities between jihadist armed groups (mainly AQIM) in recent years and in the mortality associated with the conflict, although AQIM stepped up its activity in the armed conflict in the Western Sahel. The other conflict considered to have ended in 2019 affected the Kasai region in the DRC, pitting the state security forces against various militias and each in turn against the civilian population. Large-scale surrenders in 2019, mainly from the Kamwina Nsapu group, led to the end of the conflict. Compared to 2018, a new armed conflict was reported, considered a socio-political crisis in previous years. It took place in Mozambique (north), in the province of Cabo Delgado, where the armed jihadist organisation Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) fought against the security forces amidst the marginalisation and grievances of the Muslim minority in the country, as well as extreme poverty in the province.

Regarding the geographical distribution of armed conflicts worldwide, most of the cases occurred in Africa, which was the scene of 47% of the armed conflicts (16 cases) and Asia, with 26% (nine cases), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (two) and the Americas (one).

Regarding the relationships between the actors involved and the scenario of the dispute, the conflicts were identified as being of an internal, international and, mainly, internationalised internal nature. Like in 2018, 12% of the armed conflicts (four) were internal in 2019, meaning that they were conflicts between armed actors

Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2019



of the same state operating exclusively within its borders: the DRC (Kasai), which ended that year, the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). 6% were considered international: the conflict in the Western Sahel region and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The remaining 82% were internationalised internal, 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 in the role of conflict parties, including international missions, regional and international ad-hoc military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders and others.**

Regarding the role of third countries, Syria stood out for another year in 2019, where Russia and the Syrian regime intensified their offensive in Idlib, with serious impacts on forced population displacement. Another notable development was the withdrawal of US troops from northeastern Syria, which opened the door for Turkey to launch an air and ground offensive in the north against Kurdish forces, seriously affecting the civilian population. In Yemen (Houthis), the conflict was influenced by increasing tensions between the US and Saudi Arabia on one side and Iran on the other. The Hadi government accused the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of supporting the military campaign of secessionist actors in southern

Yemen amidst escalating tensions among the anti-Houthi side. In relation to Iraq, another notable case of internationalisation, rising tensions between Washington and Tehran and a series of acts of violence that affected both US and Iranian interests in Iraq aggravated the situation in 2019. Israel also increased its armed attacks in Iraq, which were described as a declaration of war by the pro-Iranian parliamentary bloc in Iraq. In relation to the conflict in the Western Sahel, France announced the deployment of ground troops as part of Operation Bourgou IV, led by its Operation Barkhane, and which will also have troops from the G5-Sahel Joint Force (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

Some of these states and other countries intervened militarily through various channels, individually and

as part of regional and international coalitions such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which is involved in northern Mali and in the conflict affecting the Western Sahel region, in the area known as Liptako-Gourma. The G5 Sahel requested greater cooperation from the UN under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, while also planning to expand its military deployment. Other coalitions included the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), consisting of Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, which fought Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region; the conglomerate of military forces led by Saudi Arabia and made up of a dozen countries that are fighting in Yemen; the US-led international anti-Islamic State (ISIS) coalitions militarily involved in Iraq and Syria; and the US-led coalition fighting the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.

The military involvement of UN missions continued, particularly in conflicts in Africa, including MINUSMA in Mali and in the Western Sahel Region, MINUSCA in the CAR, MONUSCO in the DRC (east), AMISOM in Somalia, UNAMID (hybrid UN-AU mission) in Sudan and UNMISS in South Sudan. In Mali, MINUSMA suffered one of its worst attacks ever in 2019, with the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM) claiming responsibility. AMISOM, which supported the Somali Army in offensives to regain territory controlled by al-Shabaab, was also the target of many attacks during the year. In turn, the UN Security Council decided to shrink AMISOM, following the 2017 plan for the Somali Army to gradually assume its responsibilities, although the AU warned that the situation could deteriorate in 2020 due to the elections. In relation to the conflict in Darfur (Sudan), the UN went ahead with its road map to reconfigure and reduce the mission in the country, which was planned to be completed in 2020, while international human rights NGOs questioned the plan due to the continued violence in the country. In addition, regional organisations continued to be militarily involved in various conflicts through missions or operations, such as the AU (AMISOM in Somalia), the EU (EUFOR RCA, EUNAVFOR in Somalia) and NATO (Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan). Hybrid missions were also active, such as Operation Ocean Shield, a military operation in the waters of the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, led by the United States and involving the EU, NATO and other countries such as Japan, India and Russia.

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 elements

Thirty-two of the 34 armed conflicts in 2019 remained active until the end of the year following the drop in violence between jihadist groups and security forces in Algeria and the mass surrender of insurgents in the Congolese region of Kasai

73% of the armed conflicts had among its main causes an attempt to change the government or the system

was present in 73% of the cases in 2019 (25 of 34), in line with previous years (71% in 2018 and 73% in 2017). 19 of these 25 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, Lake Chad Region, Western Sahel Region, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries; the various branches of al-Qaeda operating in North Africa and the Middle East, including AQIM (Algeria, Sahel and Lybia) and AQAP (Yemen); the Taliban militias active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia, among others.

In 2019, in some cases, self-styled jihadist armed groups intensified their trend of proliferation. Thus, the increase in violence in northern Mozambique, pitting jihadist fighters, mainly from the Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) group, against the security forces, led to classify the situation as an armed conflict. In addition, ISIS announced that it had established itself in that country for the first time, although analysts and security forces denied that there was evidence of any effective presence. In Mali, however, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) first formally appeared in 2019, while the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM) claimed responsibility for one of the most serious attacks suffered by the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA), which killed 10 troops and wounded 25. In the Lake Chad Region, some analysts indicated that ISIS was making a global call to join its branch ISWAP. In October, ISIS claimed its first lethal action in northwestern Nigeria. Likewise, the media pointed out that Afghanistan was the country in which ISIS was the most active during 2018 and 2019, except for Iraq and Syria. In Egypt (Sinai), the ISIS branch announced plans to expand its actions to the governorate of South Sinai, including the Red Sea area.

Other main causes of the conflicts were over identity-related issues and demands for self-government, which were main factors in 59% (20 cases), the same percentage as in 2018. These included the armed conflict in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India. After the most serious attack in years against the Indian security forces there, which claimed the lives of 45 troops, the authorities deployed an additional 40,000 security forces and revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomous status and state status, splitting it in half and lowering its administrative rank. The conflict over the status of Cameroon's English-speaking majority regions also faced serious escalation in 2019. As part of

the peace process in the Philippines, a new autonomous region was established in Mindanao and ratified by a referendum in 2019. The region also faced dynamics of violence associated with jihadist groups. Finally, struggles over the control of resources and territory were a main cause of 32% of the conflicts (11 cases), though it was indirectly present in many others, perpetuating the violence through wartime economies.

36% of the conflicts deteriorated compared to the previous year (12 cases). 66% of the conflicts with increasing violence in 2019 raged in Africa (eight of the 12). The conflicts in which violence increased in 2019 included: Burundi, Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West), Libya, Mali, Mozambique (North), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the DRC (east), Colombia, Afghanistan, India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Turkey (southeast). Another 32% (11 cases) did not undergo any significant changes. 32% experienced a decrease in hostilities and levels of violence (11 cases). Of this latter group, two conflicts were considered to have ended at the end of the year: Algeria and the DRC (Kasai).

The intensity of the violence was low in 38% of the conflicts (13 cases), high in 32% (11) and medium in 30% (10). The high-intensity conflicts were characterised by more than 1,000 deaths per year, as well as by serious impacts on the population, including in terms of large-scale forced displacement, and on the territory. In 2019, high-intensity conflicts increased compared to the previous year (27% or nine cases in 2018), due to the rising violence in Cameroon and in the Western Sahel Region. The 11 most serious cases in 2019 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West), Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Some of these conflicts far exceeded 1,000 deaths in a year, such as in the Western Sahel Region, where the fatality rate quintupled compared to 2016, with more than 4,000 lives lost in 2019, according to UN records; in Somalia, where over 4,000 died that

32% of the conflicts in 2019 were high-intensity: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)

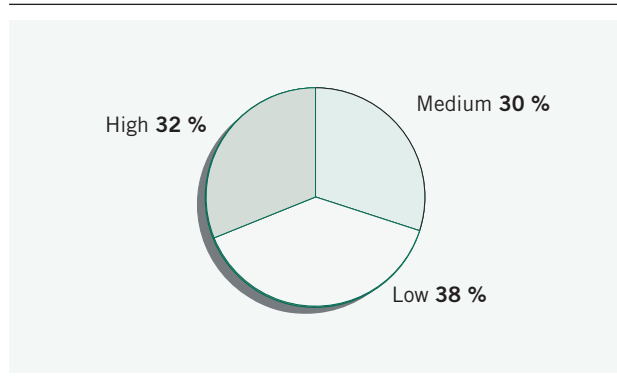
year, according to the ACLED research centre; and, on a much larger scale, in Afghanistan, with 24,000 deaths in the first ten months of 2019, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program; in Yemen (Houthis), with death tolls of 23,000 in 2019, according to ACLED; and in Syria, with different body counts in 2019 that ranged from 11,200 according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights to 15,000 according to ACLED. All were scenes of significant internal or international population movements.

1.2.2. Impacts of the conflicts on civilians

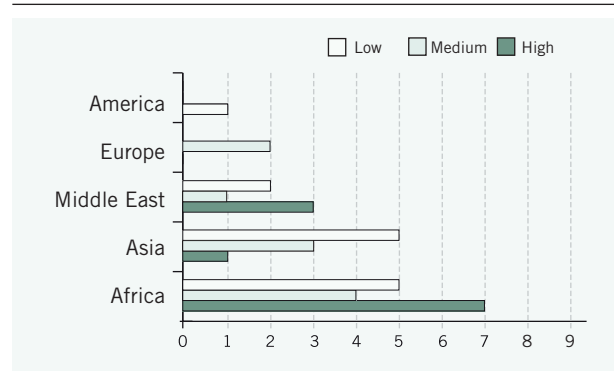
As in previous years, the armed conflicts in 2019 had serious impacts on the civilian population and the territories in which they occurred. In the year marking the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council's first open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as the 70th anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions, the UN Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians stressed that the situation was tragically similar to that of 20 years ago and that civilians continued to constitute the vast majority of casualties in conflict situations. They also continued to face short and long-term impacts due to forced displacement, the use of hunger as a strategy of war, the denial of access to humanitarian aid, attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel, attacks and damage to medical facilities and other civil infrastructure, the use of sexual and gender violence and other forms of abuse. The report also raised the urgency of advancing the protection of civilians in contemporary conflicts, characterised by the proliferation and fragmentation of non-state armed groups in increasingly asymmetric struggles and increasingly urban settings. The report also noted the need to pay more attention to armed conflict and hunger, to the specific impacts of conflicts on people with functional diversity and to the environmental impact of conflicts.

The analysis of the development of the 34 armed conflicts in 2019 that appear in *Alert! 2020* confirms

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"> Africa reported the highest number of cases of armed conflict in the world, with 16 of the 34 (equivalent to 47%). These are the same figures as in 2018, although there were changes regarding the contexts. While in 2018 the armed conflict in Ethiopia (Ogaden) had ended, in 2019 the situation of violence in Mozambique (north) was considered a new armed conflict. The reduction in violence in Algeria and DRC (Kasai) led to them being classified as conflicts that had ended by the end of the year. 44% of the conflicts in Africa were high-intensity (seven of the 16): Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), which rose in intensity compared to 2018, Libya, Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Somalia and South Sudan. Half the armed conflicts in Africa deteriorated in 2019 compared to 2018 (with the situation worsening by one fourth in 2018 compared to 2017). Likewise, 38% of the conflicts (six) witnessed a reduction in hostilities, including two conflicts considered to have ended at the end of the year, and there were no significant changes in 12% (two). African armed conflicts were characterised by their high level of internationalisation. 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 81% of the cases. 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 the world in 2019 took place in America. The sole armed conflict in the Americas (Colombia) worsened in 2019. The peace talks between the government and the ELN were cancelled early in the year after the deadliest attack in the capital in the last 15 years, for which the armed group claimed responsibility. While the Americas were the scene of a single armed conflict, they were more affected by homicide-related violence.
ASIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The continent had the second most armed conflicts after Africa, with 26% (nine cases). More than half of the armed conflicts in Asia were of low intensity (five of the nine). One third (three) were of medium intensity and one was of high intensity: Afghanistan. Forty-four per cent (44%) of the conflicts did not undergo any significant change, one third reported a drop in hostilities and 22% deteriorated, in Afghanistan and India (Jammu and Kashmir). One third of the conflicts in Asia were internal, as were 75% of the armed conflicts around the world. In terms of causes, five conflicts had among its main causes 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"> Europe counted two conflicts, in Turkey (southeast) and Ukraine (east), which accounted for 6% of all armed conflicts worldwide, in line with the previous year. Violence in the conflicts in Europe was of medium intensity, although the armed conflict in Turkey deteriorated during 2019, while conflict-related deaths in Ukraine continued to fall. 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"> The Middle East was the scene of 18% of the conflicts in the world in 2019, with six of the 34 cases, as in 2018. It was the third region with more active armed conflicts. 27% of the high-intensity armed conflicts in the world took place in the Middle East. This was true of Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis). Although all three were somewhat less deadly than in 2018, they continued to generate very serious impacts in terms of lives lost, forced displacement and other consequences for the population and the territory. While 83% of the conflicts (five) maintained levels of violence and hostilities similar to those of the previous year, they fell in one, in Israel-Palestine, which in 2018 had experienced the most serious incidents since 2014, but which saw the fatalities drop by over half over the previous year in 2019. The main motivations for 83% of the conflicts included control of the government or attempts to change the system (in the latter case, mostly by jihadists), while identity-related issues and/or demands for self-government were prominent causes of 67% of them.

that the trends highlighted by the UN Secretary-General are ongoing. The armed conflicts in 2019 continued to kill and wound many civilians. There were many attacks against civilian targets during the year, including homes, places of worship, markets, camps for displaced people, health care staff and centres, teachers and schools, agricultural areas and hotels, some of which were seriously affected. Such attacks were reported in places and conflicts such as Cameroon, Nigeria as part of the conflict in the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Somalia, Pakistan, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), Thailand (south), Ukraine, Iraq and Syria. Kidnappings were carried out and civilians went missing, as in the conflict in the Lake Chad Region, where 22,000 people were still missing in 2019, according to the ICRC, the highest number reported by the organisation around

The UN warned of the need to make progress in protecting the civilian population in a context of conflicts characterised by the fragmentation of armed groups in increasingly urban settings

the world. Regarding other impacts or strategies of war, international humanitarian law continued to be violated in various contexts. In Syria, the use of weapons such as chlorine gas was reported. In Libya, various violations of the arms embargo and the increasing use of airstrikes were reported and in 2019 25% more civilian casualties were reported than in 2018, according to UN data. In Yemen, acts of violence constituting war crimes were reported, including indiscriminate airstrikes, sieges and torture.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or exacerbate humanitarian crises. OCHA warned that many more people than expected were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019 due to conflicts and extreme weather events. According to its prospective data as of December 2019, **almost 168 million people will need**

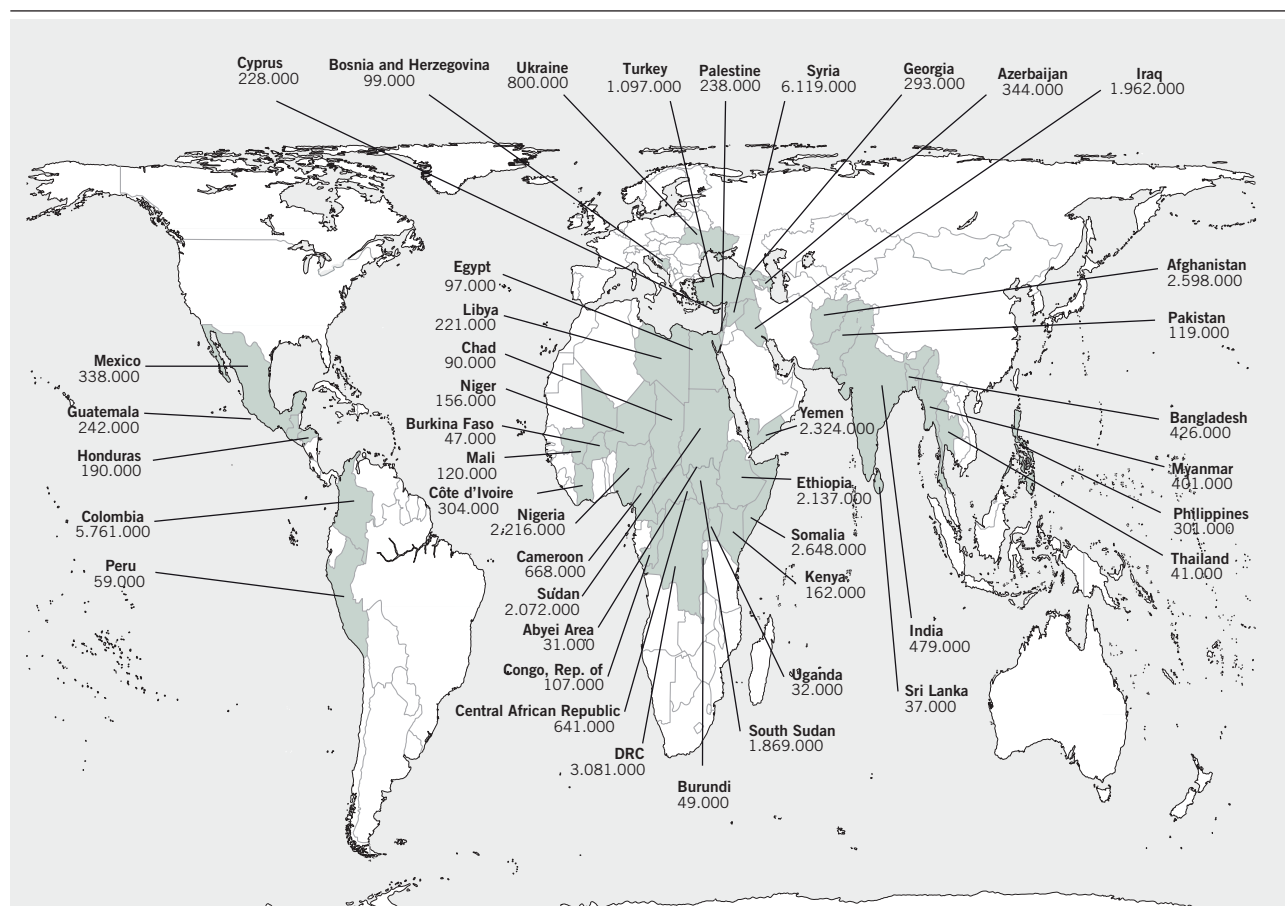
humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, the highest number in decades. Yemen remained the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in 2019, with 24 million of its citizens in need of assistance, representing 80% of its population, according to OCHA. In its report in late 2019, OCHA also warned of the crises in Syria, the DRC, Somalia and South Sudan, as well as rising food insecurity in Sudan due to the economic crisis, an increase in forced displacement in the Sahel Region and the continued humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad region. In addition to the African crises, OCHA warned of growing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan and other countries, the worsening crisis in Venezuela and the entrenchment of the political and socio-economic crisis in Haiti, with serious impacts for the food security of its population. Furthermore, as it is echoed in *Alert! 2020*, 4.3 million people were in need of humanitarian aid in Cameroon in 2019, representing a 30% increase compared to 2018. In the DRC, 15.9 million people faced serious food insecurity in 2019, while the WHO declared the Ebola outbreak in the eastern part of the country a global public health epidemic in July. In some cases, the population in need of humanitarian assistance shrank, such as Burundi, which dropped from 3.6 million in 2018 to 1.8 in 2019.

In late 2019, OCHA warned that almost 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection by 2020

Furthermore, **armed conflicts continued to have specific impacts on certain specific population groups, such as children**. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflicts, published in 2019 and covering the year 2018, identified an alarming increase in serious violations of the human rights of children by state agents and international forces compared to the previous year, while those attributed to non-state actors remained stable. The report also verified an unprecedented threshold for the death and mutilation of children in 2018 since the UN established a monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and conflicts after UN Resolution 1612 (2005).

In Afghanistan, there were 3,062 verified cases of children killed and mutilated in 2018. The death toll (927) was the highest ever reported in the country. In Syria, a total of 1,106 deaths and 748 cases of mutilation of children were verified in 2018. In Yemen, the 576 children were verified as killed and 1,113 were mutilated. The report also corroborated other human rights violations against children, such as the forced recruitment and use of children (Somalia was the country with the highest number of cases, 2,300, followed by Nigeria, with 1,947), attacks on schools and hospitals, sexual violence against children and kidnappings (in which Somalia also stood out, with 2,493 verified cases).

Map 1.2. Number of internally displaced people at the end of 2018



Source: IDMC, *GRID 2019: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2019.

Likewise, state and non-state armed actors continued to perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence against civilians, significantly women and girls. In 2019, **the UN confirmed for yet another year that it was still difficult to determine the exact prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence, but 2018 data showed that its use continued to be part of broader strategies of conflict and that it especially affected women and girls.** The 2019 UN Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence, which covered the year 2018, contained verifiable information for 19 countries, involving more than 50 actors. Most of the perpetrators of sexual violence in these cases were non-state actors, but sexual violence had also been verifiably perpetrated by the national armed forces, police or other security actors in Myanmar, Syria, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The report identified several factors regarding sexual violence and conflict, including the links between sexual violence, human trafficking and terrorism, the interrelation between sexual violence linked to conflicts, murder and exploitation of natural resources as a cause and result of forced displacement and the prevalence of sexual violence in contexts of political and electoral violence. Men and boys were also victims of sexual violence in countries in conflict such as Burundi, Syria, the DRC, the CAR and South Sudan, mainly in villages and detention centres. Furthermore, according to the UN Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security, submitted in October 2019, one fifth of refugee or displaced women suffered sexual violence. The analysis of the dynamics of violence in *Alert! 2020* revealed that these human rights violations continued in 2019. Among other cases, Somali activists reported that sexual and gender-based violence continued to be widespread and silenced in the country. In other countries, such as Burundi, DRC and Yemen, cases of sexual violence were also reported in 2019.

Armed conflict continued to cause forced population displacement. According to figures from the UNHCR annual report published in mid-2019, at the end of 2018 there were 70.8 million people forcibly displaced around the world. Of that total, 41.3 million were internally displaced persons, 25.9 million were refugees (20.4 million under the UN mandate and another 5.5 million under the mandate of the United Nations Agency for the Refugee Population of Palestine in the Middle East, UNRWA) and 3.5 million were asylum seekers. Of the total forcibly displaced people, 13.6 million were newly displaced, broken down by 10.8 million new internally displaced persons and 2.8 million new refugees and asylum-seekers. **Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of the refugee population came from three countries, Syria (6.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and South Sudan (2.3 million), followed by Myanmar (1.1 million) and Somalia (900,000).** Approximately half the refugee population was under 18 years of age. Lebanon was once again the country with the highest percentage of the refugee population compared to the country's total population (one in six inhabitants,

the same as in 2017). In absolute terms, the main host countries were Turkey (3.7 million, compared to 3.5 million in 2017), Pakistan (1.4 million, as in the previous year), Uganda (1.2 million, which fell from 1.4 million in 2017), Sudan (1.1 million, compared to just over 900,000 the previous year) and Germany (1.1 million, up from 970,400 in 2017). Likewise, in its global report published in 2019, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicated that **the 41.3 million internally displaced people at the end of 2018 represented an increase of 1.4 million compared to 2017. This figure was headed by Syria (6.1 million), followed by Colombia (5.8 million), the DRC (3.1 million), Somalia (2.6 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), Yemen (2.3 million), Nigeria (2.2 million), Ethiopia (2.1 million), Sudan (2.1 million) and Iraq (2 million).** Likewise, according to IDMC figures covering January to June 2019 there were 3.8 million new internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and violence (rising to 10.8 million if the causes of conflict and disaster are taken into account). The highest number of the 3.8 million IDPs in the first half of the year were in Syria, with 804,000 new IDPs, followed by the DRC (718,000), Ethiopia (522,000), Yemen (282,000) and Afghanistan (213,000).

The analysis of the development of the conflicts in 2019 revealed the continuation of trends on the impact of armed conflict in terms of both internal and external forced displacement. In Cameroon, for example, more than half a million people had fled their homes due to violence, according to UN figures. The humanitarian NGO Norwegian Refugee Council called it the main forgotten displacement crisis, after the DRC and the CAR. Likewise, in late 2019, more than 200,000 people were internally displaced and over 138,000 had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. Around 900,000 people had also been forcibly displaced by the conflict in the Western Sahel Region. In Somalia, drought and conflict displaced more than 300,000 people between January and November, adding to the 2.6 million internally displaced persons in the country. In the DRC, the cumulative figure for internal displacement was 4.8 million people in 2019. South Sudan had the largest refugee crisis in Africa in 2019, with 2.21 million refugees in neighbouring countries, 62% of them children. It was also the third worst in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan. In Libya, movements of between 120,000 and 200,000 people had been reported since April. In Afghanistan, almost 350,000 people were internally displaced by the conflict in 2019, according to the UN. In Myanmar, around 100,000 people were displaced in Rakhine State between November 2018 and November 2019. Syria continued to lead the countries with the largest displaced population in the world in 2019, both internally and beyond its borders. By the end of the year, the Russian and Syrian offensive against the opposition stronghold in Idlib had forcibly displaced 200,000 people in just two weeks.

1.3. Armed conflicts: annual evolution

1.3.1. Africa

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Burundi	
Start:	2015
Type:	Government Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Imbonerakure youth wing, political party CNDD-FDD, political party CNL, armed groups RED-TABARA, FPB (previously FOREBU), FNL
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

During 2019, the climate of repression towards the political opposition and civil society perpetrated by the government and the youth wing of the ruling CNDD-FDD party, the Imbonerakure, intensified on the eve of the 2020 elections. Preparations for the general elections continued to affect the political evolution of the country. At the same time, clashes continued between state security forces and the armed groups RED-TABARA, FOREBU (currently the Forces Populaires de Burundi, FPB) and the FNL, and between the Imbonerakure and members of the main opposition party, the Congr s National por la Libert  (CNL, formerly the FNL, led by Agathon Rwaswa) throughout the country and especially in the western provinces of Cibitoke, Bubanza, Rumonge and Bujumbura Rural, bordering the DRC. **The ACLED database identified 297**

The climate of harassment and repression and the silencing of political opposition by the government of Burundi and the Imbonerakure intensified prior to the 2020 elections

fatalities as a consequence of political violence in the country. Other provinces were also affected by violence, repression and the prevailing climate of intimidation, tolerated or encouraged by the local authorities and security forces. However, diplomatic sources noted in October that there had been a slight drop in violence. Insecurity was constant on Burundi's borders with Rwanda and with the DRC. The most outstanding actions of the year took place in January, when the Burundian Armed Forces supported by the youth wing Imbonerakure clashed with Burundian insurgent groups in the territory of Uvira, in South Kivu (DRC) causing dozens of fatalities; in April, when the Congolese Armed Forces announced that they had killed 36 members of the FNL and FPB in Uvira; and at the end of October in Musigati, in the province of Bubanza, in which a dozen members of the security forces and another 10 members of the RED-TABARA group were killed. The Burundian Armed Forces began their withdrawal from the DRC in February. The Congolese Armed Forces confronted Burundian armed groups at various times of the year in the Congolese province of South Kivu.

The climate of harassment and repression and the silencing of the political opposition and organised civil society was constant, with continuous reports of torture, dozens of arbitrary arrests, abuses and human rights violations from various sources, such as civil society organisations in exile like the Iteka League and the Observatory to Fight Corruption. In June, the government suspended PARCEM, one of the few remaining independent local human rights organisations in the country, accusing it of providing a distorted image of the country and its leaders. Those same reports noted that most victims of human rights violations were predominantly members of political parties or coalitions opposed to the ruling party, members of civil society and those who opposed the president's third term and voted against the constitutional amendment in the June 2018 referendum. The main culprits were the National Intelligence Service, the police, local administrative officials and Imbonerakure. In January, the government announced that 84 of the 130 international NGOs operating in the country had registered before 31 December, complying with the new conditions imposed (such as including ethnic quotas for their staff), but others rejected the new conditions and left the country. In February, the government closed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and in March it withdrew the BBC's license to operate in the country. In June, HRW⁷ expressed its concern about the serious human rights violations committed in the country, evidenced in a study carried out with exiled human rights organisations and with the UN Commission of Inquiry, to which the government also blocked access. In addition, the government threatened

7. HRW, "Burundi: Rampant Abuses Against Opposition", 12 June 2019.

to sever relations with the UN Secretary-General's special envoy. In August, the CNL denounced that more than 10 party offices had been burned down or damaged in recent months and concluded that these acts were part of the ruling party's strategy to intimidate the opposition. The fighting took place for much of the year, causing nearly 300 fatalities by the end of November, according to ACLED. However, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance fell from 3.6 million in 2018 to 1.8 million in 2019. France resumed sending aid to the country in late 2018 in the defence and education sectors in order to help to create a positive dynamic ahead of the 2020 elections, a decision criticised by the EU for breaking with the consensus on the European sanctions policy.

As highlighted by the UN Secretary-General's annual report on Burundi, the Humura Centre, which serves survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, reported 875 new cases between January 2019 and September 2019. The report noted that estate and inheritance rights were denied to women and remain highly politicised, with women representing only 17% of landowners with property titles.

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups of the former Séléka rebel coalition (FPRC, RPRC, MPC, UPC, MLCJ), anti-balaka militias, 3R militia, Ugandan armed group LRA, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, EUFOR
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓
Summary:	
Since independence in 1960, the situation in the Central African Republic has been characterised by continued political instability, which has resulted in several coups and military dictatorships. The keys to the situation are of an internal and external nature. Internal, because there is a confrontation between political elites from northern and southern ethnic groups who are competing for power and minorities that have been excluded from it. A number of leaders have attempted to establish a system of patronage to ensure their political survival. And external, due to the role played by its neighbours Chad and Libya; due to its natural resources (diamonds, uranium, gold, hardwoods) and the awarding of mining contracts in which these countries compete alongside China and the former colonial power, France, which controls uranium. Conflicts in the region have led to the accumulation of weaponry and combatants who have turned the country into regional sanctuary. This situation has been compounded by a religious dimension due to the fact that the Séléka coalition, which is a Muslim faith organisation formed by a number of historically marginalised groups from the north and which counts foreign fighters amongst its ranks, took power in March 2013 after toppling the former leader, François Bozizé, who for the past 10 years had fought these insurgencies in the north. The	

inability of the Séléka leader, Michel Djotodia, to control the rebel coalition, which has committed gross violations of human rights, looting and extrajudicial executions, has led to the emergence of Christian militias ("anti-balaka"). These militias and sectors of the army, as well as supporters of former President Bozizé, have rebelled against the government and Séléka, creating a climate of chaos and widespread impunity. France, the AU and the UN intervened militarily to reduce the clashes and facilitate the process of dialogue that would lead to a negotiated transition.

There was a general drop in violence and clashes between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces in 2019, as well as against international MINUSCA troops due to the signing and start of the implementation of the February peace agreement, though a climate of insecurity and sporadic acts of violence against the civilian population persisted throughout the year. Violence between armed groups and between self-defence groups and militias and against the civilian population continued in many parts of the country. **On 6 February, the government led by Faustin Touadéra and the 14 main armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in Bangui** after having held peace talks since the end of January in Khartoum (Sudan) with the facilitation of the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR and the United Nations. Various sources highlighted Russia's decisive role in obtaining the commitment of various ex-Séléka groups and its growing influence in the Central African country, which is part of its geopolitical and economic strategy to increase its presence in Africa. The agreement includes integrating the armed groups into the government and the security forces and making progress on decentralisation and the responsible management of natural resources. According to the UN Secretary-General's report on the situation in the country, violations of the agreement decreased from 230 in April to 104 in September. However, the report also indicated that armed groups continued to carry out activities contrary to the peace agreement, such as committing violence against the civilian population, collecting illegal taxes and obstructing the authority of the state, as well as using violence to obtain concessions in the peace process. Despite the announcements of definitive cessations of hostilities, the groups continued to harass civilians and set up roadblocks, while the Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) militia reinforced its position around some mining operations. On 12 September, the UN Security Council partially lifted the arms embargo on the country.

After declining in June and July, violence resumed in August and September, even in areas that had not previously been affected by the conflict. According to ACLED, there were 594 fatalities by the end of 2019, a figure significantly lower than the 1,187 in 2018 and 2,011 in 2017. The 3R militia and the Patriotic Front for the Renaissance of the CAR (FPRC)

were responsible for most of the violations reported against civilians, followed by anti-balaka groups that had signed the agreement and others that had not signed it. The most serious armed activity of the year took place in May, when 3R fighters killed 42 people, mostly civilians, in several villages near Paoua (Ouham Pendé prefecture, northwest). The government and the international community condemned the attacks and demanded that the leader of 3R Sidiki hand over the perpetrators. After local and international pressure, the 3R confirmed that its fighters had participated in the aforementioned attack, three of which were handed over to the government on 23 May to begin legal proceedings. The 3R group publicly condemned the attack and reiterated its commitment to peace and reconciliation. Subsequently, the most important clashes since June took place in the Vakaga prefecture (far north) between the Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ) and the FPRC. On 14 July, the two groups clashed in Am-Dafock and nine fighters died. On 31 August, the FPRC killed the son of the Sultan of Birao, sparking two days of fighting. As a consequence, one civilian and 24 fighters were killed. Subsequently, the FPRC attacked the positions of the MLCJ on 14 September and 39 combatants lost their lives, displacing 24,000 civilians by early October. These clashes were replayed in December in Am-Dafock.

The humanitarian situation improved during the year. In particular, there was an increase in returns and greater access. The number of people needing humanitarian assistance fell from 2.9 million to 2.6 million. One fifth of the population is still displaced, with 581,000 internally displaced persons and more than 605,000 refugees reported as of 31 August, although around 355,000 displaced persons made movements to return and more than 90,000 refugees returned spontaneously. Anti-balaka groups, the FPRC and the MPRC attacked humanitarian organisations on various occasions throughout the year. Conflict-related sexual violence continued, and most rapes of girls and women were allegedly perpetrated by members of the armed groups that signed the peace agreement, although the Central African Armed Forces and security forces were also involved. According to the UN Secretary-General's report in June, most of the rapes were committed by ex-Séléka groups in the Ouham-Pendé and Nana-Gribizi prefectures in the northwestern and north-central parts of the country. Reports of widespread rape were received in the Kaga Bando sub-prefecture (Nana Gribizi) and in the transhumance corridors, where access is difficult.

There was a general reduction in fighting between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces, as well as against international MINUSCA troops due to the signing and start of the implementation of the peace agreement in February

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 continued to be affected by a climate of violence and instability stemming from the electoral process⁸, although it improved over the course of the year due to the evolution of the Ebola epidemic and the many armed groups in the eastern part of the country. These groups continued to fight among themselves for control of the territory, communication channels and access to natural resources, becoming involved in clashes with the FARDC, and committing abuses against the civilian population, including acts of extortion, forced recruitment, sexual violence and many other human rights violations. Although the activities of the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA were reduced in Haut Uélé and Bas Uélé (northeastern part of the country)⁹, the situation in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu (east) continued to be marked by the activities of the different Mai Mai militias, the FDLR and its splinter groups (CNRD), by

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

9. See the chapter on Socio-political crises.

the spread of the armed conflict in Burundi into the DRC due to Burundian armed actors and by the armed conflict stemming from the activities of the Ugandan origin group ADF, which operates especially in the northern part of North Kivu province¹⁰. Violence fell significantly in the region of Kasai¹¹, though the outbreak of intercommunity violence during the presidential election in Yumbi (Mai-Ndombe) in December 2018 claimed 900 lives. The fatalities caused by the various acts of violence connected to the conflict in the eastern part of the country (except the victims caused by the conflict with the ADF) rose to over 2,600 from January to late November, according to ACLED. The WHO declared the Ebola epidemic in the east a global public health epidemic in July. In November, the organisation said that the disease was beginning to retreat due to fewer new cases. To date, a total of 3,298 cases had been reported and 2,197 people had died (67%). Of the total cases, 56% (1,859) were women, 28% (931) were under the age of 18 and 5% (163) were medical workers. As the report of the UN Secretary-General in November 2019 pointed out, an estimated 15.9 million people face severe and acute food insecurity, especially in the eastern provinces. The situation is more critical in Ituri, Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental, South Kivu and Tanganyika, where between 12% and 15% of the population is in the highest phase of emergency. In addition to an estimated internally displaced population of 4.8 million people, as of 31 March, the DRC was accommodating around 540,000 refugees (from Burundi, the CAR, Rwanda and South Sudan). The country is also facing the worst measles outbreak in its history, affecting all 26 provinces. As of November, there were 209,211 cases, including 4,189 deaths. Since the beginning of 2019, there have been over 22,931 cholera cases and 407 deaths. The situation is particularly worrying in South Kivu, Upper Lomami, North Kivu and Tanganyika.

First, the capacity of the Rwandan Hutu armed group FDLR continued to decline following the repatriation of most of its ex-combatants from the camps in eastern DRC in 2018, in addition to sustained joint FARDC and MONUSCO operations against the group. The death of historical FDLR leader Ignace Murwanashyaka in Germany on 16 April had no effect on the group's operational structure and morale, according to the UN. The FDLR remained active and continued to pose a threat to North and South Kivu through local and regional networks. The number of cases of conflict-related

In July, the WHO declared the Ebola epidemic in the eastern DRC a global public health epidemic, as it has already killed 2,197 people

One of the Rwandan FDLR factions, the CNRD-Ubwiyunge, was forced to flee due to harassment by various armed groups, militias and the Congolese Armed Forces

sexual violence allegedly committed by FDLR fighters increased in Nyiragongo, where most victims were attacked while on their way to collect firewood and charcoal in Virunga National Park. Cases of conflict-related sexual violence continued to be reported in Rutshuru amidst clashes between the FDLR and the Nyatura group. In Rutshuru (North Kivu), the FDLR continued to rape and abuse civilians. On 10 November, the FARDC announced that Musabimana Juvenal, the leader of the Rwandan group RUD-Urunana, a splinter group of the FDLR, had been killed in an operation. On 18 September, the FDLR military leader, Sylvestre Mudacumura, who was wanted by the ICC, was killed in North Kivu province. On 30 April, the P5 coalition, an armed group composed of Rwandan opposition political organisations, was weakened after the arrest and extradition from the Comoros of Callixte "Sankara" Nsabimana, the leader of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the military arm of the Rwandan Movement for Democratic Change (RMDC), a political group founded by Paul Rusesabagina.¹² On 23 May, Callixte Nsabimana was charged with 16 crimes, including terrorism, kidnapping, murder and denial of genocide. Nsabimana pleaded guilty to all charges. The FLN is also an ally of the FDLR.

The situation regarding the Rwandan armed group CNRD-Ubwiyunge, a division of the FDLR, also evolved. This group, operating in North and South Kivu, has been the target of various attacks by armed groups (NDC-R, Mai Mai, Nyatura militias) since December 2018, which forced it to leave its headquarters in Faringa, Rutshuru (North Kivu) and move to South Kivu, amid clashes that killed 18 civilians and 15 fighters, according to various sources. At least 4,000 people linked to the CNRD armed group mobilised, including some 400 fighters, and they also left Masisi for South Kivu to regroup with the rest of the armed group.

During the journey, they clashed with the FARDC and other armed groups, causing the death of an undetermined number of people. The UN Group of Experts on the DRC noted that the group had settled in Kalehe (South Kivu) and that its leader, Wilson Irategaka, had fled to South Kivu. There were also reports of meetings between the FDLR and the CNRD. Meanwhile, as a result of the operations against the CNRD and its expulsion from North Kivu, the armed group NDC-R, active in the area around Masisi (North

10. See the summary on the DRC (east-ADF) in this chapter.

11. See the summary on the DRC (Kasai) in this chapter.

12. Paul Rusesabagina is a former Hutu manager of the Hotel Mille Collines in Kigali whose conduct in saving 1,268 Tutsi people there during the genocide in 1994 gave rise to the film *Hotel Rwanda*. In 1996, his criticism of Paul Kagame's government forced him into exile in Belgium, where he also suffered death threats, for which he moved to the United States.

Kivu), expanded its sphere of control during the year, giving rise to a climate of impunity as a consequence of human rights abuses and violations, including sexual violence. The frequent clashes between the NDC-R and the APCLS, the Rwandan armed group FDLR and the Nyatura armed groups further increased insecurity and led to the deaths of dozens of civilians and fighters (over 150 in the first quarter of the year), rapes of women and displacement of civilians. In October, the FARDC launched military operations in Masisi to try to control the situation. Various reports indicated possible collusion between the FARDC and the NDC-R group.

In the areas around Fizi and Uvira in South Kivu province, the incursion of Burundian militias and the operations conducted by the Burundian Armed Forces (which are officially not recognised or permitted), the Imbonerakure youth wing and the FARDC against these groups and their local allies led to clashes involving fatalities, looting, sexual violence and the displacement of the population. In these same areas, ethnic violence against civilians in the highlands and plateaus around Fizi and Uvira continued to be of great concern, particularly in the Minembwe (Uvira) area. Between March and November, Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups killed around 50 civilians and destroyed 89 villages. The UN highlighted that what is worrying is that these attacks against civilians allegedly originated from members of the same community as the victims, with the Banyamulenge, Bafuliro, Babembe and Banyindu being particularly affected. An estimated 125,000 civilians were displaced by the fighting. The situation has deteriorated considerably since October and the risk of violence spreading to neighboring provinces is increasing, according to the UN. With the support of MONUSCO, the Congolese government deployed FARDC contingents and launched political mediation initiatives, but these efforts failed to reduce the climate of violence due to the authorities' politicisation of the conflict and lack of impartiality attributable to the authorities involved, according to the UN Secretary-General's report. In Shabunda (western South Kivu), the redeployment of the FARDC to other areas increased the freedom of action of the Mai-Mai Raya Mutomboki militias, leading to deteriorating security and an increase in abuse against civilians.

Finally, Congolese artisanal gold continued to be smuggled through neighbouring countries with Dubai as the main destination. The lack of a traceability system for artisanal gold continued to hamper efforts to control the sector. The UN Group of Experts on the DRC also investigated and documented several cases of smuggling of minerals containing tin (cassiterite), tantalum (coltan) and tungsten (wolframite). Thus, the Group of Experts documented that some armed groups continued to fund their activities through illegal mining, thereby contaminating the supply chain, demonstrating that illicit markets and smuggling networks persist and that public officials responsible for fighting fraud are involved in the illicit trade, among other issues.

DRC (east - ADF)

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

Summary:

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

Operations conducted by the ADF, an armed group of Ugandan origin based in the North Kivu region, persisted throughout the year, mainly around Beni (Grand Nord), but also in the border area of Irumu (Ituri province, north of Beni). Thus, the ADF carried out many attacks against civilians, the Congolese security forces and MONUSCO, in addition to recurrent kidnappings of civilians, causing several hundred fatalities during the year. According to ACLED, 500 people lost their lives. Led by Seka Musa Baluku, the ADF regrouped and rebuilt its capacity after the operations carried out in 2014, according to the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, which highlighted the group's recruitment capacity in Uganda and in eastern DRC. The Group of Experts also found that the group continued to recruit minors and use them in combat actions and that **the ADF had committed many acts of conflict-related sexual violence**, particularly through forced marriage. The most serious action took place at the end of the year, following an operation by the FARDC against the ADF that started in late October in the area north of Beni. The FARDC concentrated more than 20,000 troops in the town and along key roads during the previous weeks. Although several episodes of intense fighting were observed and the FARDC indicated that they had seized various strategic positions, the ADF deliberately attacked the civilian population in order to undermine the offensive. In response to the FARDC offensive, the ADF killed about 100 civilians in

November, forcibly displacing thousands of people. The military operation carried out by the FARDC in late May killed 26 ADF fighters in Ngite (North Kivu).

As stated in the UN-Secretary General's report, MONUSCO prepared contingency plans to protect civilians amidst the FARDC operations against the ADF, such as by increasing patrols, in order to minimise the risk of retaliatory attacks against civilians. Following the deteriorating situation, MONUSCO and the national authorities renewed their efforts to cooperate more closely on protecting civilians. MONUSCO also continued to provide logistical and medical support to the FARDC to help to sustain the latest operations against the ADF and weaken its ability to harm civilians. However, despite these efforts, **the increase in ADF attacks sparked a series of increasingly violent protests against the security situation on 20 November** that were largely directed against MONUSCO and the failure of the Congolese government, the FARDC and MONUSCO to guarantee the safety of the civilian population. These protests led to the Beni City Council fire and attacks on MONUSCO facilities, which had to relocate its personnel. Clashes between the security forces and protesters in Beni, Butembo and Oicha killed two policemen and at least seven protesters between 23 and 26 November. Consequently, President Tshisekedi decided to increase the FARDC's presence in Beni and agreed to carry out joint FARDC and MONUSCO operations against the ADF.

However, speculation about possible links between the ADF and ISIS raised serious concern in the region. On 18 April, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack suspected of being carried out by the ADF at an FARDC camp in Bovata, North Kivu, two days earlier. The attack claimed the lives of two soldiers and a civilian. Since then, ISIS has claimed responsibility for more attacks that were also blamed on the ADF. However, as the report of the Group of Experts on the DRC indicated, the ADF remained a closed organisation that did not publicly share its targets or claim responsibility for attacks. During a media appearance on 29 June, President Tshisekedi expressed concern about the ADF's adoption of ISIS-related terrorist tactics. However, in its latest report, the Group of Experts on the DRC did not confirm any direct link between the ADF and ISIS, although its radical interpretation of Islam and its recent propaganda indicated a desire to ally with other Islamist groups.

DRC (Kasai)	
Start:	2017
Type:	Government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	DRC, various ethnic militias (Bana Mura, Kamwina Nsapu)
Intensity:	1
Trend:	End

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 Kasai region (affecting the provinces of Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental, Sankuru and Lomami) improved significantly during the year after the spontaneous large-scale surrenders that took place in early 2019, mainly by the Kamwina Nsapu group, thereby ending the armed conflict that has affected the region. Sporadic acts of violence caused around 50 fatalities, according to ACLED. The most significant event took place on 24 February, when a clash between the FARDC and Kamwina Nsapu in Kamako (Kasai) caused 19 fatalities during an attempt to free a kidnapped Tetela community leader held in the home of a Kamwina Nsapu leader. One of the main perpetrators of violence in recent years, his group remained practically inactive after the surrender of its militias, and in many cases its members demobilised and returned to their areas and communities of origin. Thousands of civilians also returned to their places of origin. However, the demobilisation of the Tshokwe community's Bana Mura militia is still pending. Following increased tensions during the governor's election, the political and security situation in Sankuru province also improved, in part thanks to MONUSCO's efforts to promote reconciliation between communities and the local disarmament of youth groups, according to the UN. However, the risk of local conflicts persists, as several thousand people, including members of the displaced Lulúa and Luba

communities, crossed the border into Angola to return to their places of origin, mainly in Kasai-Central, where the Pende and Tshokwe militias had not yet been disarmed. MONUSCO supported the provincial authorities' inter-community dialogue and reconciliation efforts, as well as the reintegration of the former members of Kamwina Nsapu into their communities.

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:	1
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.

The armed conflict in the Darfur region, Sudan, was once again characterised by a lower intensity of violence throughout 2019, in the logic of the dynamics of recent years. According to data provided by ACLED, by mid-November, there were 268 deaths caused by violence in the Darfur region (almost half of them, 132, reported in the Central Darfur region) in 2019. This is significantly less than the 859 violent deaths reported during 2018, the 996 in 2017 and the 2,286 in 2016. Much of the decline in violence was marked by the peace negotiations and the political protests in the country during the year, which led to the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir's government in April. The opening of a new national transition process focused the efforts

of all parties (government, opposition groups, rebel movements and others) to open new initiatives to establish peace, elicit pledges from the parties to cease hostilities and improve security conditions overall. As part of this scenario, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported a total of 14,500 new forced displacements throughout the country in the first three quarters of 2019, mainly in South Darfur, while the number of people who were able to return to their homes reached 111,500, with the highest number of returns in North Darfur (44,500 people). However, at the end of the year, inter-community disputes broke out in El Geneina between members of the Masalit and Maaliya groups, which killed more than 80 people, wounded 190 and displaced around 47,000. The crisis was related to the murder of a Maaliya pastor by a young Masalit, which triggered a wave of retaliatory attacks between families and groups. Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and the Vice President of the Sovereignty Council, Lieutenant General Mohamed "Hemeti" Hamdan, led the delegation that arrived in El Geneina on 1 January to assess and contain the violence.

In 2018, the UN Security Council began to reconfigure and reduce the **hybrid AU-UN mission in Darfur (UNAMID)**, as stipulated by UN Resolution 2363 (2017) and UN Resolution 2429 (2018), which foresee the handover of its facilities to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), among other aspects. However, human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch questioned the decision to curtail the mission due to ongoing violence perpetrated by Janjaweed militias in Darfur, but also in other parts of the country. As part of the exit roadmap, which plans for the mission to end by 2020, the Security Council had extended UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019. In early June, the Security Council extended it again until 31 October 2019. As part of the negotiations for the peace agreements between the new transitional government of Sudan and the rebel movements, in October Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok asked the UN to extend the mission by one year. This was due to Darfuri armed rebel groups' concerns about the lack of protection for the civilian population if UNAMID withdrew before the peace agreement is signed due to the violence carried out by the Janjaweed militias. The UN Security Council renewed UNAMID's mandate for one year on 31 October, stating that it would focus on specific areas: support for the peace process, support for peacebuilding activities, the protection of civilians, monitoring of and reporting on human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence and serious violations against children, the provision of humanitarian assistance and support for the voluntary return of people forcibly displaced by violence.

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 (SPLA-IO), unleashing a new round of violence that continues to this day. In 2015, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the SPLA-IO, which was ratified in 2018. However, the signatory parties' reluctance to implement it, as well as the emergence of other armed groups and community militias, have kept the war raging in the country.

Although violence continued to drop sharply across the country throughout the year, armed activity continued due to inter-community disputes, as well as clashes between government troops and the rebel group that had not signed the peace agreement, the National Salvation Front (NAS) led by Thomas Cirillo in the Central Equatoria region, particularly around the city of Yei. According to ACLED, 1,499 people lost their lives in armed political

With 2.21 million refugees, South Sudan had the worst refugee crisis in Africa and the third worst in the world, after Syria and Afghanistan

violence in the country in 2019. This is the lowest figure since the last phase of the armed conflict began in December 2013, which according to data from the UN mission in the country (UNMISS) has claimed around 400,000 lives since the beginning of war. However, although violence fell comparatively, a humanitarian emergency continued to grip the country. According to data provided by UNHCR, around 4.3 million people had been forcibly displaced by violence at the end of 2019. Around 2.21 million of these were refugees in neighbouring countries (mainly in Uganda and Sudan), of which 63% were children. According to the agency, these figures rank South Sudan as having the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the third largest in the world, behind Syria and Afghanistan.¹³

During 2019, the ratification of the 2015 peace agreement after the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018 significantly reduced the violence in the country between the South Sudanese Armed Forces and the main rebel group, the SPLA-IO, led by Riek Machar. The agreement ratified the parties' commitment to cease violence, achieving in late 2019 the longest ceasefire between the two main groups that started the armed conflict in December 2013. Although progress on the road map policy described in the R-ARCSS were lower during the year,¹⁴ significant progress was made in containing violence in the country that helped to reduce military hostilities, improve the security situation and ensure the free movement of people. It also favoured the provision of humanitarian aid, reducing incidents against humanitarian workers by 30% compared to the previous year.

Even so, violence continued in the country, mainly due to the armed actions of the NAS rebellion and inter-community disputes. Indeed, the refusal of the group led by Thomas Cirillo to recognize the peace agreement made the insurgency one of the greatest obstacles in the country to secure peace. Throughout the year, different armed actions by the NAS and clashes with the South Sudanese Army (now renamed the South Sudan People's Defence Force – SSPDF), as well as with the SPLA-IO rebel forces in the states of Central Equatoria and Western Equatoria, forcibly displaced around 13,000 people during the first month of the year alone. The escalation of violence generated a joint statement by the Troika (USA, Norway and UK) on 21 February, urging the parties to respect the cessation of hostilities agreement of December 2017 and the R-ARCSS of September 2018. Later, on 15 March, the UN Security Council renewed the mandate of UNMISS, empowering the peacekeeping forces to protect and guarantee the return of displaced persons.

13. UNHCR, "South Sudan Refugee Crisis", viewed on 14 January 2020.

14. See the summary on the peace process in South Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

On 30 May, the UN Security Council extended the arms embargo for one year, as well as sanctions against different government officials and members of different rebel groups identified as obstacles to peace. The United Nations also accused the parties to the peace agreement of continuing to recruit fighters. Meanwhile, hostilities continued in the Equatoria region. On 3 July, UNMISS reported that at least 104 people had lost their lives, mainly due to the escalating violence in the Equatoria region in the period between the ratification of the peace agreement in September 2018 and April 2019. In October, fighting between government troops and NAS members in Isebi, Yei River state, claimed the lives of three humanitarian workers and an unknown number of soldiers and rebels. UNHCR denounced the attacks carried out against humanitarian workers in the country, requesting respect for international humanitarian law. According to data provided by the agency, at least 115 humanitarian workers have been killed since the armed conflict began in late 2013.

Various violent inter-community disputes between different types of militias also took place during the year due to different causes, especially related to the theft of livestock and disputes over land boundaries. There were incidents in various states across the country (Bieh, Tonj, Jonglei, Akobo, Western Lakes and others). In the two most violent episodes, in mid-January, 105 people died in Tonj state from cattle theft raids, while at the end of November at least 80 people were killed and 1,000 others injured in clashes between members from the Manuer and Gak groups in Western Lakes state. This episode led to the dispatch of 75 Nepalese UNMISS troops to try to end the outbreak of violence.

Horn of Africa

Somalia	
Start:	1988
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Federal government, regional pro-government forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan and warlord militias, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Operation Ocean Shield, al-Shabaab
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Summary:	The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a coalition of opposing groups rebelled against the dictatorial power of Siad Barre and three years later managed to overthrow him. This situation led to a new fight within this coalition to occupy the power vacuum, which had led to the destruction of the country and the death of more than 300,000 people since 1991, despite the failed international

intervention at the beginning of the 1990s. The diverse peace processes to try and establish a central authority came across numerous difficulties, including the affronts between the different clans and sub clans of which the Somalia and social structure was made up, the interference of Ethiopia and Eritrea and the power of the various warlords. The last peace initiative was in 2004 by the GFT, which found support in Ethiopia to try to recover control of the country, partially in the hands of the ICU (Islamic Courts Union). The moderate faction of the ICU has joined the GFT and together they confront the militias of the radical faction of the ICU which control part of the southern area of the country. In 2012 the transition that began in 2004 was completed and a new Parliament was formed which elected its first president since 1967. The AU mission, AMISOM (which included the Ethiopian and Kenyan troops present in the country) and government troops are combating al-Shabaab, a group that has suffered internal divisions.

The activity of the armed group al-Shabaab persisted during the year, as did tensions between the federal government and the federal states, especially Jubaland and Galmudug, regarding regional autonomy from the the federal government in decision-making. This interference by the federal government in the internal affairs of the developing federal states escalated to the point that in November the federal security forces took control of the towns of Guriel and Mataban (Galmudug) from the Sufi militia Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ), a group that accused the government of trying to manipulate the presidential election. The federal government deployed additional troops in the state capital Dhusamareb and on 25 November it revealed the dates of the presidential election for 17-23 December.

Al-Shabaab remained primarily responsible for the attacks on government facilities, officials, security forces, restaurants and hotels. ACLED noted that the overall number of fatalities as a result of political violence in Somalia rose to 4,038 in 2019. In March and April, there was a significant increase in attacks in Mogadishu, with incidents almost every day with improvised explosive devices, as well as mortar attacks and targeted killings. In March alone, there were 77 such attacks throughout the country. It was the highest number reported in a month since 2016. Regarding the increasing use of these bombs, according to the UN Secretary-General's report on the country in November, between 1 May and 12 October, 99 attacks of this kind against the Somali National Army were reported in the country, compared to 83 in the same period in 2018. Those attacks left 66 dead and 110 wounded. In the same period, AMISOM was the target of 73 attacks, which killed 21 people and wounded 34. Mortar attacks increased throughout the year, highlighting al-Shabaab's increased ability to attack strategic targets with precision and accuracy. The activities of al-Shabaab splinter groups linked to ISIS decreased and there were practically no incidents throughout the year, as ISIS was hit by many of the US airstrikes. In May, the UN

Security Council decided to reduce AMISOM by 1,000 soldiers, following the plan outlined in 2017 for the Somali Army to gradually assume its responsibilities, but the AU warned of a foreseeable worsening of the situation in 2020 due to the election.

The increase in the number of US airstrikes against al-Shabaab targets in 2019, particularly in the Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba regions, led to their dispersal, with their members moving from the most remote areas to urban centres. Amnesty International stated that there was credible evidence of at least 20 civilian fatalities as a result of the airstrikes conducted by the United States in the past two years, and that the Pentagon had not carried out a proper investigation into these cases. AFRICOM questioned the credibility of the evidence. The security force operations in Lower Shabelle allowed them to recapture cities that had previously been in the hands of al-Shabaab. Although al-Shabaab has moved to other locations, it has continued to maintain a considerable ability to attack areas recaptured by the government. While Mogadishu remained the centre of insurgent activity, al-Shabaab continued to carry out operations in the Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions. Between 5 May and 3 June, there were a total of 228 incidents during Ramadan, more than during Ramadan in 2017 and 2018. Ramadan is a period in which recurring violence has escalated in recent years, which fell in the months after June and July, as it happened in 2019. Thirty-five per cent (35%) of violent incidents occurred in the Banaadir region, and 34% in southern Somalia, illustrating the geographical presence of al-Shabaab.

On 30 September, a patrol of the EU Training Mission for Somalia was the target of a car bomb attack in Mogadishu that caused an unconfirmed number of civilian casualties. On 4 September, in Middle Shabelle, several AMISOM Burundian troops lost their lives in clashes with al-Shabaab. In attacks launched by al-Shabaab on 8 September and 14 October, two deputy governors were killed. On 14 August, al-Shabaab launched a large-scale ground attack on the Awdheegle forward operating base, which lasted several hours and included the use of mortars and two car bombs. Somali and AMISOM forces suffered heavy casualties but maintained their positions and pushed back the al-Shabaab fighters. In Mogadishu, there were two suicide car bomb attacks in May, the first in the Warta Nabada district, in which four people died and 10 were injured, and the second in the Boondheere district, where a militant used a vehicle to attack a checkpoint at a prison run by the National Intelligence and Security Agency. At least 17 people died in the explosion, while another 20 were injured. On 15 June, another incident occurred with an improvised explosive device placed in a vehicle at a checkpoint near the federal Parliament, in which nine people were killed and 20 were injured. In

ACLED raised the number of fatalities in Somalia to 4,038 in 2019

There was an increase in al-Shabaab's use of improvised explosive devices that caused dozens of fatalities during the year

August, the UN report on the situation in Somalia noted that the rise in large-scale attacks inside and outside Mogadishu highlighted the group's resilience and robust operational capacity despite the intensified security measures under way, including airstrikes against the group and operations conducted jointly by the Somali National Army and AMISOM in Lower Shabelle that are specifically designed to counter threats to Mogadishu. In Lower Shabelle, the Somali National Army continued offensive operations to capture territory with the support of AMISOM troops and other international actors. After the loss of the cities of Bariira and Sabiid, al-Shabaab made efforts to recover them, but the Somali National Army held its position and continues to control those strategic locations. On 12 July, al-Shabaab carried out an attack on the Medina Hotel in Kismaayo that claimed 33 lives, including a state presidential candidate and an IOM contractor, and injured 56 others. One of the most serious attacks of the year took place on 30 December, when a bomb exploded at a checkpoint in Mogadishu, killing 81 people.

According to the UN, the consequences of the drought of 2016 and 2017, aggravated by the prolonged armed conflict and obstacles to humanitarian access, accentuated protection problems, particularly for women and children. Between January and November 2019, drought and conflict had displaced more than 300,000 people, in addition to the 2.6 million internally displaced persons who continue to suffer serious risks of eviction, marginalisation and exclusion across the country. In August 2019, activist and peacemaker Amina Arale, the executive director of the Somali Women Development Centre (SWDC), was invited to provide civil society perspectives and recommendations at the UN Security Council meeting to discuss the situation in Somalia. Regarding the gender impacts of the conflict in Somalia, Arale highlighted that sexual and gender violence continued to be widespread and silenced, and that there were minorities who concealed how sexual and gender violence affects their communities to avoid stigmatisation and social exclusion. In this regard, she welcomed some concrete measures taken by the government to address sexual and gender-based violence, including the drafting of the Sexual Offences Bill, as well as efforts to hold those responsible to account. The consultation process around the drafting of the bill, which included contributions from civil society, was a positive example of inclusiveness. However, she regretted that Somalia had not yet signed, adopted or implemented CEDAW, and although it had committed itself, it had not yet developed a national action plan on Resolution 1325. She asked for faster efforts to establish the National Commission for Human Rights. Finally, the preparation of the national action plan to promote the effective application of Resolution 1325 began in September.

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:	End

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 AQIM, 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.

In line with the trend observed in recent years, in 2019 there was a drop in acts of violence linked to the low-intensity armed conflict led mainly by the security forces and militiamen connected to al-Qaeda. **This trend caused the situation in Algeria to stop being classified as an armed conflict at the end of the year.** According to the annual death toll released by the Algerian Defence Ministry, 15 people accused of terrorism were killed in 2019. The government also reported the arrest of 25 people and the surrender of 44 others allegedly linked to terrorist activities, the seizure of 649 pieces of weaponry and the discovery and destruction of 750 homemade explosive devices. Some media reports also indicated that an ISIS attack killed eight Algerian soldiers in November, although there was no confirmation of the military casualties. The branch that claimed responsibility for the attack, "Algeria Province", had remained practically inactive since its creation in 2014. In general terms, the total body count of the conflict was the lowest in recent years, since in 2018 there were between 40 and 50 deaths, compared to 100 in 2017 and around 150 in 2016. ACLED data

point to a similar trend, with 22 fatalities in 2019 and 66 in 2018, and around 150 people killed annually in the preceding three years.

Recently, different analysts had said that AQIM in Algeria was weakening, citing the killing of around 600 fighters by the security forces between 2013 and 2018, compared to increased activity by the organisation in the Western Sahel region, particularly in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.¹⁵ Nevertheless, AQIM has continued to claim Algeria as its sphere of action and has issued a series of statements in recent years urging its followers and supporters not to abandon the Algerian cause. During 2019, a senior AQIM leader spread a message through al-Qaeda communication channels with the intention of taking advantage of the political instability in the country amidst protests against the Algerian government after President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced that he would run for a fifth term. In his address, Abu Ubaydah Yusuf al-Anabi criticised the country's socio-economic conditions and suggested that the Algerian population should overthrow the regime and ensure that Algeria is governed by a strict interpretation of Sharia law. Later, al-Anabi issued another message celebrating Bouteflika's decision not to run in any new election. Thus, **despite the significant decline in its capabilities to act in Algeria in recent years, some analysts argued that the group may be interested in capitalising on the instability and deteriorating security situation.**

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, mercenaries; USA, France, UK, Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Russia, 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

15. See the summary on Mali and the Western Sahel region in this chapter.

by high levels of violence derived from multiple factors, including the inability of the new authorities to control the country and ensure a secure environment; the high presence of militias unwilling to surrender their weapons; and disputes over resources and trafficking routes. The situation in the country deteriorated from mid-2014 onward, with higher levels of violence and persistent political fragmentation. Efforts to solve the situation have been hampered by this scene of fragmentation and a climate of instability has assisted the expansion of ISIS in the North African country. The dynamics of violence have been accentuated by the involvement of foreign actors in support of the various opposing sides, motivated by geopolitical and economic interests, given Libya's strategic location in the Mediterranean basin and its great oil wealth.

The armed conflict in Libya worsened during 2019 compared to the previous year, largely due to the aftermath of the offensive on Tripoli launched by General Khalifa Haftar and his armed group, the Libyan National Army (LNA), and as a result of a greater involvement of foreign actors in the war, which was reflected by the many violations of the arms embargo on the North African country and by the increasing use of air arsenals. These dynamics blocked the peace initiatives for Libya and led to an increase in the fatalities caused by the conflict.¹⁶ In the middle of the year, media outlets reported that from the start of the campaign on Tripoli in early April until June, more than 700 people had died. By late December, the UN mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had documented the deaths of 287 civilians due to the hostilities, while another 371 people had been injured. This amounts to **25% more civilian victims than in 2018, according to UN data.** ACLED counted 2,064 people killed by violence in 2019, almost double the number reported in 2018, when the total was 1,188. Meanwhile, the International Crisis Group reported that over 3,000 people had died in the fighting. During 2019, clashes between many different types of armed groups in Libya affected various parts of the country. The main scenes of violence were Sebha, Murzuq, Derna, Benghazi, Jufra, Waddan, Misrata and especially Tripoli and its surroundings.

In the first months of the year, violent incidents were concentrated in the southern part of the country, following the decision made by Haftar and the LNA to expand their control there. The clashes pitted the LNA and nearby Arab militias against non-Arab armed groups in towns like Sebha and Murzuq, while clashes continued between the LNA and Islamist organisations in the eastern part of the country. **The hostilities in Libya escalated mainly around 4 April, when Haftar launched an offensive with a view to taking control of the capital, Tripoli, a city that in previous months had been the subject of several violations of the ceasefire** reached in September 2018.

The start of the LNA campaign around Tripoli coincided with the visit of UN Secretary-General António Guterres to the country, who left Libya amid calls for the parties to avoid a bloody confrontation. The internationally recognised government of Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj promoted the creation of the Tripoli Protection Force. In the following months, the GNA managed to stop the Haftar offensive, but did not force a withdrawal, so the fighting continued in and around the city. The parties were not willing to honour a ceasefire: Sarraj submitted a proposal for a political process that excluded Haftar, who suggested that there could be no negotiations until the LNA assumed control of Tripoli and some institutions created by the Skhirat political agreement (2015) were eliminated. As of July, the fighting intensified and spread to other parts of the country. For example, Misrata and Tripoli were two of the main scenes of the fighting by the end of the year. The attacks included targets such as airports, arms depots, and populated areas.

This dynamic was favoured by external technical, logistical and military support to the different Libyan armed actors, particularly from Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Russia in the case of Haftar and the LNA and from Turkey and Qatar in the case of the GNA. In November, for example, Haftar's troops were reportedly reinforced by Russian military aides. In December, the decision of the GNA and Turkey to sign a pact on security and reciprocal maritime jurisdictions fuelled tensions in the Mediterranean, eliciting angry reactions from Egypt and Greece and leading to authorisation from the Turkish Parliament to send troops to Libya in early 2020. The United States maintained an erratic position regarding the conflict between the main Libyan armed actors. The US Secretary of State first condemned Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, but days later, US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with the Libyan general and reportedly appreciated his actions as part of a counterterrorism campaign and an effort to protect Libya's oil wells. Towards the end of the year, following a visit by GNA

representatives to Washington, the US again condemned the LNA offensive and accused Russia of trying to exploit the conflict. Washington also continued to act directly in Libya through attacks on suspected AQIM and ISIS militants, such as those that killed 43 people in late September in the southern Murzuq area. Meanwhile, the EU failed to promote a unitary position on the conflict in Libya. France continued to back Haftar, but even more openly than before. Italy continued to try to maintain international interest in Libya and to prioritise migration control agreements.

In this context, in the last quarter of the year **the UN special envoy for Libya, Ghassan Salame, told the UN**

16. See the summary on the peace process in Libya in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

Security Council that the dangers of foreign interference in the country were evident, with increasing numbers of mercenaries and fighters from private military companies. At the end of the year, the media reported mainly that there were Russian mercenaries supporting Haftar and fighters from Sudan who arrived in Libya to support the GNA. The diplomat also warned of the expansion of artillery fire to populated areas, with an increase in civilian casualties, and provided illustrative data on the increasing use of aerial fire in the conflict. According to UNSMIL data, from April to mid-November there had been around 800 airstrikes with drones in support of the LNA and another 240 in support of the GNA, operations that necessarily require external support. The dynamics of violence were favoured by the large number of Gaddafi-era arsenals circulating in the country, but also by continuous violations of the arms embargo. In December, Salame said that the embargo had been violated at least 45 times since the escalation of violence in April and stressed that divisions in the UN Security Council had prevented the approval of a ceasefire even though the issue had been discussed at least 15 times.

The intensification of violence in Libya in 2019 led to further deterioration of the situation of the population affected by years of armed conflict. **During the year, special warning was given to the forcibly displaced population (between 120,000 and 200,000 people since April, according to estimates).** Fifty-one per cent (51%) of the displaced persons were women and faced disproportionate risks of violence and harassment, including of a sexual nature. More than 60 attacks on hospitals or health personnel and a serious deterioration in health care were also reported, which particularly affected women and girls, according to a study released in October 2019. Likewise, complaints continued about the impacts of the conflict on the migrant and refugee population in Libya throughout the year. **In July, an attack on an immigration and refugee detention centre on the outskirts of Tripoli left 53 people dead in an incident blamed on the LNA.** At the end of 2019, a confidential report from the Council of the EU also emerged, acknowledging that more than 5,000 people were detained in between 17 and 35 official and unofficial centres, 3,700 of them in “conflict zones”. The document admits that the Libyan government continued without improving the situation in these centres, which were crowded, lacked basic services and were the scene of multiple human rights abuses, and without addressing the habitual disappearances of people captured by the Libyan Coast Guard on their failed trip to Europe. The report even states that the government and officials may be involved in these practices as a business model, amid allegations of bribes and blackmail to the families of

Violence rose considerably in northern Mozambique due to the presence of self-proclaimed jihadist armed groups

the detainees. Nevertheless, the document hails the reduction in arrivals to Europe from Libya as “progress”. Despite demands by human rights organisations to revoke it, in November Italy renewed a multi-million dollar agreement with the Sarraj government to stem the flow of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean, which commits Rome and the EU to train the Libyan Coast Guard and fund detention centers.¹⁷

Southern Africa

Mozambique (North)	
Start:	2019
Type:	System, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ), Russian mercenaries (Wagner Group)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

Since late 2017, the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique has suffered an armed conflict led by Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ). The armed jihadist organisation made its first appearance in October 2017 when it attacked three police posts in the Mocímboa da Praia district in Cabo Delgado province. Since that time, Cabo Delgado has been the epicentre of rising violent activity in the country. While some reports claim that ASWJ fighters have received training in Tanzania and Somalia, which has led locals to call them al-Shabaab, alluding to the Somali jihadist group, no significant links to international jihadist networks have been established. The causes of the outbreak of violence refer rather to factors linked to the grievances and marginalisation of the Muslim minority in Mozambique (22% of the population), as well as to the extreme poverty of what is the most underdeveloped province in the country. Poverty rates in Cabo Delgado contrast with its enormous economic potential due to its significant natural gas reserves, which have generated significant investment in the area, but this has not helped to reduce inequality and poverty among its population. Since the end of 2017, the Mozambican security forces have developed a security policy that has increased repression and retaliation in the area, influencing new factors that trigger violence. In 2018, the group intensified its use of violence against civilians and expanded the scope of its operations.

Violence in the northern province of Cabo Delgado rose during the year due to the armed actions of jihadist fighters allegedly linked to the Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo organisation (ASWJ). According to data provided by ACLED, until 6 December 2019, there were 689 deaths caused by violence in the province of Cabo Delgado during the year, far exceeding the 126 reported during 2018 or the 119 in 2017, the year that the insurgency became active. Although there had been no attacks directed

17. Daniel Boffey, “Migrants detained in Libya for profit, leaked EU report reveals”, *The Guardian*, 20 November 2019; Ylenia Gostoli, “Anti-migration deal between Italy and Libya renewed”, *al-Jazeera*, 2 November 2019.

against natural gas infrastructure or against extractive companies linked to the sector since the start of the rebellion, the year 2019 began with an ambush on a convoy of the US gas company Anadarko and various attacks that cost the lives of at least 11 people and injured²⁰. In June, for the first time since violence began in the region, the jihadist group Islamic State (ISIS) publicly announced it was in the area, although analysts and Mozambican security forces denied evidence that the group had any effective presence. Following the announcement, different attacks were directed against military detachments in the region in July for which ISIS claimed responsibility. Mozambican President Felipe Nyusi met with his counterpart Vladimir Putin in Russia, where both countries signed energy and security agreements. Following these agreements, different reports indicated that around 200 Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group had entered the country to join the Mozambican security forces in fighting the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. While Russia denied the presence of the Russian boots on the ground, ISIS claimed that it had killed at least 20 members of the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (FADM) and five Russian mercenaries in an ambush in the Namala region, Cabo Delgado, in October. ISIS later claimed responsibility for a new attack carried out against Mozambican troops and Russian mercenaries in November. The year ended with violence raging in the province of Cabo Delgado, including over a dozen attacks against civilians and the Mozambican security forces in December that claimed the lives of around 50 civilians and combatants. The violence was not only concentrated in northern Mozambique, but there were also episodes in southern Tanzania, such as the one that occurred in mid-November where at least six people were killed and seven others were injured in an attack in the village of Ngongo, allegedly by members of ASWJ. Following this episode, the Mozambican and Tanzanian Defense Ministries began talks to improve security in their border areas.

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, armed groups ADF, SCACUF, SOCADEF and SCDF and dozens of minor militias
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Summary: After Germany's defeat in the First World War, Cameroon came under the mandate of the League of Nations and was	

divided between French Cameroon and British Cameroon. In 1961, the two territories that made up British Cameroon held a referendum limiting their self-determination to union with the already independent Republic of Cameroon (formerly French Cameroon) or union with Nigeria. The southern part of British Cameroon (a region currently corresponding to the provinces of North West and South West) decided to join the Republic of Cameroon, whereas the north preferred to join Nigeria. A poorly conducted re-unification in the 1960s based on centralisation and assimilation has led the English-speaking minority of what was once southern British Cameroon (20% of the country's population) to feel politically and economically marginalised by state institutions, which are controlled by the French-speaking majority. Their frustrations rose in late 2016, when a series of sector-specific grievances were transformed into political demands, which caused strikes, riots and a growing escalation of tension and government repression. This climate has led a majority of the population in the region demanding a new federal political status without ruling out secession and has prompted the resurgence of identity movements dating back to the 1970s. These movements demand a return to the federal model that existed between 1961 and 1972. Trust between English-speaking activists and the government was shaken by the arrest of the main figures of the federalist movement in January 2017, which has given a boost to groups supporting armed struggle as the only way to achieve independence. Since then, both English-speaking regions have experienced general strikes, school boycotts and sporadic violence. Insurgent activity has escalated since the secessionist movement's declaration of independence on 1 October and the subsequent government repression to quell it.

The armed conflict affecting the country's English-speaking majority regions worsened during the year and organisations like the think tank International Crisis Group (ICG) highlighted the deaths of at least 1,850 people since the conflict began in October 2017, although others sources raised that number to over 3,000. The UN noted that at least 530,000 people had fled their places of origin as a result of the violence and that at least 4.3 million people were in need of humanitarian aid, a figure that had increased by 30% compared to 2018. There was an escalation of kidnappings in the English-speaking region targeting local opposition politicians, separatist movement activists, soldiers, police and civilians. The leader of the opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Ni John Fru Ndi, was kidnapped twice during the year. In the presidential election of October 2018, which was boycotted by the opposition and the separatist movement, the incumbent, Paul Biya, won a new term of office. He announced his government in January, promoting "hardliner" groups and appointing the English speaker Dion Ngute to be the new prime minister. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) reported that the crisis in Cameroon was the main forgotten current crisis of displaced people after the DRC and CAR. In a report released in March, Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted¹⁸ that between October 2018 and February 2019, at least 170 civilians died in 220 incidents in the two English-speaking regions as a result of clashes between

18. HRW, "Cameroon: New Attacks on Civilians By Troops, Separatists", 28 March 2019.

separatist groups and the government and another 81 members of the security forces were reportedly killed in the course of the operations. The report detailed abuse committed by the Cameroonian Armed Forces, which were denied by the government. The report also highlighted the increase in violent actions by the security forces around health centres and against medical personnel, drastically reducing the influx of civilians due to the insecurity. Thus, the government accused the insurgents of occupying the schools for purposes of war and the insurgents accused the government of burning more than 120 schools. The insurgents have attacked many schools in the past two years, in some cases even kidnapping students and teachers. In July, HRW and Amnesty International condemned the serious crimes committed by both parties to the conflict, such as the extrajudicial killing and torture of politicians, members of separatist parties and civilians. In addition, in July hundreds of prisoners (separatists and political opponents) rioted in the Yaoundé Central Prison (joined by common prisoners and amounting to over 1,500 rioters), demanding improvements in prison conditions and an end to arbitrary trials, torture and overcrowding. Later, there was also a riot of separatist prisoners in the prison in Buea, the capital of the province of South West. HRW confirmed the arrest and torture of over 100 prisoners on 20 August following the riot in the Yaoundé Central Prison. Analysts have pointed out that prisons have become “political incubators” for the arrest of members of the opposition MRC party and of Boko Haram fighters. Over 350 of its political activists are detained in Cameroonian prisons, the MRC noted in June. Riots have been recurring in recent years. On 20 August, a military court sentenced one of the main leaders of the separatist movement in the country, Julius Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, and nine other people to life imprisonment, a decision that analysts said could further inflame the rebellion. Protests and strikes in regions with an English-speaking majority rejected the sentence. Considered a moderate, Ayuk Tabe proclaimed himself Ambazonia’s first president on 1 October 2017. He was arrested along with 46 other supporters in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria in January 2018 and transferred to Cameroon. In March 2019, a Nigerian court made extradition illegal and ordered the Nigerian federal government to demand the return of the deportees and compensation for them. However, there were no reports that Nigeria complied with the court’s decision.

As the situation has deteriorated in the English-speaking regions, there has been increasing pressure from the international community. The US and the EU called for the release of opposition leader Maurice Kamto (detained in January) and 150 other supporters of the opposition MRC party, calling on the authorities to step

The armed conflict in the English-speaking majority regions of Cameroon has caused between 1,850 and 3,000 fatalities since the start of the conflict in 2017

up efforts to end the violence and promote negotiations in English-speaking separatist regions. The government expressed its outrage at the interference in its internal affairs. Meanwhile, pro-government demonstrations were reported during the visit of US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Tibor Nagy in March. On 18 April, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, called on the parties to start talks as the only way to reach a sustainable solution. The conflict was explicitly discussed for the first time in the UN Security Council on 13 May, although Equatorial Guinea (on behalf of the three African countries present in the Council), Russia and China warned of interference in Cameroonian internal affairs and politicisation of the humanitarian situation. In the second half of the year, President Paul Biya began a series of concessions in order to appease internal and international pressure. In September, he announced his intention to hold a national dialogue to end the conflict, which took place between 30 September and 4 October, but was boycotted by the separatist movements. At the end of the national dialogue, Paul Biya announced the release of 333 prisoners, including Maurice Kamto, nine months after his imprisonment for boycotting and questioning the presidential election of October 2018, in which Paul Biya won another term of office. In December, the Cameroonian Parliament approved some of the recommendations of the national dialogue regarding changes to the political status of the two English-speaking majority regions, though many groups considered them insufficient.

Mali ¹⁹	
Start:	2012
Type:	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, CMA (MNLA, MAA faction, CPA, HCUA), Platform (GATIA, CMPFPR, MAA faction), MSA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQMI, MRRA, al-Mourabitoun, GSIM, MLF, ANSIPRJ, MINUSMA, ECOWAS, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Summary:	
The Tuareg community that inhabits northern Mali has lived in a situation of marginalisation and underdevelopment since colonial times which has fuelled revolts and led to the establishment of armed fronts against the central government. In the nineties, after a brief armed conflict, a peace agreement was reached that promised investment and development for the north. The failure to implement the agreement made it impossible to halt the creation of	

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

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 violence increased and spread across a large part of Mali due to the consistent armed activity of jihadist groups in the north of the country, as well as the increase in fighting between Fulani, Dogon and Bambara community militias in the central region of Mopti and some parts of the south. According to data from the ACLED research centre, 1,702 deaths were reported as a result of armed violence in the country in 2019. Likewise, according to UNHCR data, 138,659 people were refugees in neighbouring countries at the end of the year, while another 201,429 were internally displaced. The year began with different attacks on the UN peacekeeping mission in the country, MINUSMA. The first attack, in Mopti, killed two Sri Lankan troops, while the second attack, on a UN camp in Aguelhok, in northern Mali, killed 10 Chadian soldiers and injured at least 25 others. This latest attack was one of the worst suffered by MINUSMA, and the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), allegedly linked to the al-Qaeda network, claimed responsibility for it, saying it came in response to the resumption of Chad's diplomatic relations with Israel. In Mopti, the central region of the country, there was another attack by alleged members of the Dogon community against members of the Fulani community, whom they accuse of supporting jihadist groups, leaving 37 civilians dead. In February, the GSIM continued to claim responsibility for armed actions against different military targets, killing five French soldiers in an ambush on a French patrol in Timbuktu, five Malian soldiers in another ambush in Mopti and five Azawad rebels (MSA and GATIA) in Menaka. In late February, a joint operation by the Malian Army and the French Operation Barkhane killed 15 alleged members of the jihadist group Katiba Macina near Dialloubé. Violence increased substantially after an attack against members of the Fulani community in the centre of the country that left at least 100 people dead in early March. Weeks later, in response to this attack, the GSIM attacked a Malian Army base in the centre of the country that killed at least 23 soldiers. The increase in insecurity gave rise to major protests in the country that led to the resignation of Malian Prime Minister

Mali suffered an increase in violence due to the actions of jihadist groups in the north of the country and to inter-community clashes in the central region of Mopti

Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, as well as the entire national executive branch, forcing the government led by Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta to appoint a new executive under new Prime Minister Boubou Cissé, formerly the Minister of Economy and Finance. Later, on 23 March, a community of Fulani herders in the Mopti region suffered an attack by members of the Dogon group that killed around 160 people. By that date, around 600 Fulani people had been murdered in inter-community fighting with Dogon communities since the outbreak of violence in the country began in 2012, according to MINUSMA data. At least 488 of these Fulani deaths had occurred since January 2018, with 63 deaths caused by members of the Fulani community in the same period. According to data from the Norwegian Council for Refugees, the increase in instability and violence in the central part of the country in the first few months of 2019 forcibly displaced 133,000 people internally at the end of April.

The intensity of violence in the country was maintained in the second quarter of the year, where some episodes stood out. **On 11 April, a group linked to Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) made its first formal appearance in the country,** claiming responsibility for an attack against the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) in northeastern Mali. On 16 April, President Keita announced an increase in Malian troops, as well as MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane forces in the centre of the country. Later, due to the increase in instability in the central region of Mopti, which resulted in another massacre in a village on 10 June that claimed the lives of between 35 and 95 people, many of them boys and girls, the Malian government announced the removal of the governor of the region. Days later, on 17 June, another massacre against Dogon people in the region claimed 41 lives. In addition, 23 other people lost their lives in different attacks in the communities of Bidi, Sankoro and Saran in central Mali on 30 June. Meanwhile, the government began to disarm community-based self-defence militias and activated inter-community talks between members of the Dogon and Fulani communities to halt the escalation of violence. As a result, on 1 July both groups signed an agreement to end the violence and work for peace. In turn, the UN announced the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate in the country, which will expand its presence in the central region.

Although the opening of different peace negotiation spaces and initiatives in the centre of the country reduced the incidence of inter-community clashes in the third quarter of the year, some continued to be reported. At the same time, jihadist groups continued to launch attacks in the country and in different parts of Burkina Faso and Niger. In two attacks on military bases of the G5 Sahel joint military force in Boulkessy and Mondoro in central Mali between 30 September and 11 October, a total of 40 Malian soldiers were killed according to

government data, though the GSIM raised this figure to at least 85. Subsequently, the Malian Army announced the death of 50 jihadist fighters in different airstrikes. In various attacks attributed to the GSIM in November, around 100 Malian soldiers and 17 jihadist fighters lost their lives. Once again, the increase in violence sparked large protests in the country denouncing the Malian Armed Forces' inability to contain the violence and demanding the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country, in particular the Operation Barkhane mission and MINUSMA forces. On 4 November, President Keita announced a change in the security forces' strategy, ensuring that they would shift from a defensive to an offensive one. The year ended with the continuation of inter-community clashes in the Mopti region, as well as French intervention in the area on 21 December that left an official body count of 40 alleged members of the jihadist group Katiba Macina.

In October, ISIS claimed responsibility for its first lethal attack in northwestern Nigeria, committed by militiamen coming from Niger

forcibly displaced the population. There was reportedly an increase in activity by the BH faction of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP, created in 2016) and also, although to a lesser extent, by the BH faction of Abubakar Shekau, both of them allies of ISIS. **Based on ISIS propaganda in March, various analysts suggested that the group may be seeking greater prominence and looking to expand its activities in Nigeria after the losses of Syria and Iraq, so it may be making a global call to support and join West Africa Province.** Journalistic sources indicated that ISIS had also replaced its leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi, though

without giving details of the succession, stemming from a crisis within ISWAP in which ISWAP commanders allegedly accused him of having links with moderate groups in Mali. It was unlikely that he would be executed, however, since al-Barnawi is the son of BH founder Muhammad Yusuf, who is revered by all BH factions, including that of his former lieutenant, Abubakar Shekau. The ICG noted an increase in violence carried out through suicide attacks and landmines placed by the Shekau faction. Counterinsurgency operations carried out by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), including aerial bombardments of alleged BH bases, also killed hundreds of fighters. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, BH's attacks and clashes with the security forces have claimed 36,222 lives, according to the Nigerian Security Tracker (NST) database. The number of fatalities in the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa stood at 2,607 in 2019, after climbing from 2,243 in 2018 and 1,907 in 2017. In September, the ICRC stated that 22,000 people, mostly minors, are missing as a result of the conflict, the highest number that the ICRC has ever recorded globally. In October, ISIS claimed responsibility for its first lethal attack in northwestern Nigeria when ISIS militiamen from Niger penetrated the northwestern state of Sokoto and attacked members of the Nigerian Army, causing an undetermined number of fatalities and injuries.

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
Start:	2011
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Boko Haram-ISWAP, Boko Haram-Abubakar Shekau, civilian militias, MNJTF(Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The conflict in northeastern Nigeria and the neighbouring areas of the Lake Chad region persisted bitterly despite ongoing military operations, with some sources even highlighting an **increase in activity by Boko Haram (BH)**. Violence during 2019 continued to mainly affect Nigeria and specifically Borno State, along with the states of Yobe and Adamawa to a lesser extent, with incidents that included attacks by BH factions against civilian targets, such as markets and displaced person camps, attacks on military bases and clashes that caused fatalities and

Cameroon continued to be the second most affected country by the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, after Nigeria, as 1.9 million people or one half of the people living in the Extreme Nord region were in need of humanitarian assistance, accounting for over one third of the country's total cases in 2019. According to the UN, violence has displaced more than 270,850 people since the beginning of the crisis. There were also more than 108,600 Nigerian refugees in the region. In Chad, there was a resurgence of armed attacks and insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin that led thousands of civilians to flee and seek refuge. Since early 2019, over 47,000 people are believed to have been displaced in Chad's Lac region. That figure includes refugees who came from Nigeria, returnees from Niger and Chadians who had been displaced and were seeking security and assistance. In Lac province, 49 schools were temporarily closed due to insecurity in 2019, affecting more than 12,000 children. The humanitarian and security

situation worsened in the Nigerien region of Diffa, according to OCHA, where rising attacks on civilians may reveal a change in tactics by the armed groups, since their main target would be the most vulnerable population. In Niger, 88 civilians died as a result of Boko Haram's actions and over 18,000 people were forced to flee in March alone.

Furthermore, as part of peacebuilding initiatives to reverse the situation, in June the governor of Borno State urged the federal government to support the military campaign against BH with non-military strategies. On 20 June, it secured the release of civilians that had been kidnapped by BH in January, stating that the release was in line with efforts to maintain open communication channels with the insurgency. In this regard, on 5 November the governors of the six northeastern states met on Maiduguri for the first time and urged the federal government to engage in dialogue with the insurgency to facilitate its surrender.²⁰ Members of the National Assembly, state parliaments and high-ranking officers of the Nigerian Army and of other security forces also participated in the meeting. They also asked the government to increase resources to combat the insurgency, asked the North East Development Commission to assist the governors and the security forces of the states in the area with more logistics and support and asked the authorities to dredge the Lake Chad canal to allow maritime security forces to act quickly.

OCHA indicated that Boko Haram in Niger is specifically attacking the most vulnerable population as part of its military strategy

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:	3
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 2011.²¹ Meanwhile, the armed groups of Mali have expanded their activities to the Liptako-Gourma region. This expansion is related to the instability stemming from the spread of the jihadist insurgency of Algerian origin AQIM, its fragmentation and configuration into other similar types of armed groups, some aligned with al-Qaeda and others with ISIS, which currently operate and have expanded throughout the region. This expansion has contributed to further destabilisation in the area and to the creation of different regional and international cross-border military initiatives to try to control the situation, which have also helped to internationalise it. There are also links of the conflict affecting the Lake Chad region as a consequence of the expansion of Boko Haram's activity as a result of the cross-border military intervention.

Violence in the Western Sahel area spread in 2019 due to the armed activity of different jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS and different community militias that especially affected the border regions of eastern Mali, northeastern Burkina Faso and western Niger, known as the Liptako-Gourma region. According to Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the UN Special Representative

and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the violence and instability experienced an unprecedented surge in the region in 2019, **claiming over 4,000 lives** mainly due to the activity of the armed groups Macina Liberation Front (FML), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansaroul Islam and the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM). **This indicates that the violence multiplied fivefold since 2016, when 770 deaths related to the conflict in the area were reported.**²² The violence had **forcibly displaced around 900,000 people by the end of the year**, half a million of which were reported in Burkina Faso in 2019 alone (quintupling the figures from January 2019). At the beginning of the year, OCHA further warned that **1.2 million people in Burkina Faso were in need of humanitarian aid**. The deterioration of the security situation in the region prompted the Burkinabe government to decree a state of emergency in several northern provinces of the country in 2018, which was later extended throughout 2019. A similar situation took place in Niger, where 10 departments bordering Mali and Burkina Faso were in a state of emergency.

The most significant episodes of violence during the year included clashes in northern Burkina Faso in early February that the Burkinabe Army claimed led to the

20. Sahara Reporters, "Boko Haram: North-East Governors Urge Buhari Regime To Dialogue With Terrorists", 6 November 2019.

21. See the summary on Mali in this chapter.

22. UN News, "'Unprecedented terrorist violence' in West Africa, Sahel region". 8 January 2020.

deaths of 146 jihadists, although Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Burkinabe Movement for the Rights of Man and Peoples (MBDHP) reported that many of the casualties were civilians from the area. In May, the ISGS claimed that it had killed 28 Nigerian soldiers in an ambush in the western Tillaberi region, near the border with Mali. In early July, ISWAP claimed responsibility for an attack on a Nigerian Army camp in Inates that killed 18 Nigerian soldiers. On 20 August, **24 soldiers were killed in another attack on a Burkinabe military base in Koutougou, near the Malian border, in what was the deadliest assault on the Burkina Faso Armed Forces.** In October, multiple episodes of violence were reported in Burkina Faso, leaving at least 151 people dead. On 6 November, an attack in the Burkinabe province of Gourma against a convoy escorting five buses of local employees of the Canadian gold mining company Semafo claimed 39 lives. On 3 November, four people, including Oumarou Dicko, a member of Burkina Faso's Parliament, were killed in an ambush in the Gaskinde area, making it the **first time that an MP was killed in the conflict.** In November, JNIM, a group linked to al-Qaeda, announced the capture of a military barracks in Kaya and another in Kelbo, in Burkina Faso. And in December, ISGS militants attacked a military complex in Ates, Niger, where at least 128 people lost their lives, including **71 Nigerien soldiers, making it the greatest loss suffered by the Nigerien Army in its history.** In another attack in northern Burkina Faso carried out by jihadist groups, at least 42 people lost their lives, prompting the government to declare three days of national mourning.

During the year, the Burkinabe and Nigerien Armed Forces suffered the deadliest attacks against them yet in the conflict, resulting in 24 and 71 deaths, respectively

In response to the increase in violence, the governments of the **G5 countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger)** held various meetings throughout the year in order to cope with the insecurity. On 5 February, at a meeting in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, the G5 Sahel called for closer security cooperation between the G5 Sahel and the UN under the auspices of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. At the end of the Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held in Burkina Faso in September, which enjoyed the extraordinary participation of Mauritania and Chad, West African regional leaders announced a billion-dollar plan to combat jihadist violence in the region. Scheduled to be financed between 2020 and 2024, the plan includes measures to strengthen the military operations of the nations involved and joint military operations in the region, contain the sources of financing for jihadist groups and establish a development investment programme in fragile regions. ECOWAS requested financial support from the international community, which it blamed for the crisis in the region due to its military intervention in Libya that it argued ended up destabilising the entire Sahel region. On 4 November, the French government announced the deployment of ground troops in the "three borders" area under

Operation Bourgou IV, which would be led by Operation Barkhane and would also include G5 Sahel troops. By late 2019, the French government had deployed 4,500 soldiers in the region, while the UN, through MINUSMA, had 13,000 peacekeepers in Mali and the regional G5 Sahel alliance had approval to deploy around 5,000 troops from Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Niger. The German government also announced the possibility of boosting its troops in the region, which consisted of 1,100 soldiers deployed as part of the UN and EU mission in Mali at the time. However, the different international military coalitions (as well as the presence of the United States through AFRICOM) did not yield many results in terms of reducing violence and the increases were questioned by local populations. The year ended with the announcement that the meeting between the French government headed by Emmanuel Macron and the leaders of the G5 Sahel to assess French involvement in supporting the fight against terrorism in the region, initially planned to be held in Paris on 16 December 2019, had been rescheduled for 13 January 2020.

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 remained active and there were armed clashes and different acts of violence throughout the year. **The year began with the definitive cancellation of the peace talks between the government and the ELN after an attack against a police academy**

in Bogotá on January 17 killed 21 policemen and wounded over 60. The ELN claimed responsibility for the attack, the deadliest in the country's capital in the last 15 years. The attack was condemned by the FARC political party. Episodes of violence in the months that followed included clashes between insurgent groups and the security forces, and also with armed paramilitary groups and drug traffickers such as the Self-Defence Forces of Colombia. The Colombian government accused Venezuela of supporting and encouraging the Colombian armed insurgency. According to data collected by the Ideas for Peace Foundation, the ELN was the most active armed group during 2019.

The ELN was the most active armed group in Colombia in 2019

Alongside the ELN's armed activity, prominent FARC leaders announced that they were resuming the armed struggle in August and abandoned the peace agreement signed in Havana in 2016. Those who renounced the implementation of the peace agreement included Iván Márquez, the former FARC negotiator in Havana, Jesús Santrich, El Paisa and Romaña. Several of these leaders were unaccounted for and had abandoned the different institutional processes stipulated by the peace agreement, such as appearing before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), and they were officially expelled from the JEP as a result of their return to armed struggle. They also indicated that they would seek military alliances with the ELN. In the months following the announcement of the resumption of the armed struggle, nine FARC dissidents died in the San Vicente del Caguán area in the department of Caquetá as a result of a military operation. In October, the Attorney General blamed these same dissidents for a massacre of indigenous people in the municipality of Toribio, in Cauca (south), in which five people died and six others were injured. Local elections were also held in October, which were preceded by several episodes of violence in which different candidates lost their lives. The International Crisis Group noted that 22 mayoral candidates had been killed throughout the year. The Colombian Ombudsman reported that 15,000 people were displaced in eight departments as a result of the violence related to the conflict between January and October. The department most affected by these forced displacements was Nariño, where over 5,000 people had to flee their homes. In addition, many social leaders, human rights defenders and indigenous people were murdered throughout the year, with paramilitary groups and criminals responsible for many of the killings. Thus, the Institute of Legal Medicine indicated that at least 83 indigenous people had been killed between January and November 2019, 42 of them in the department of Cauca. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia indicated that it had documented the deaths of 89 people in 2019, of which 20 had demobilised from the FARC.

While the conflict continued, massive protests began in November, with a call for a national strike supported by unions, student organisations and organisations for indigenous people and people of African descent.

The strike was called to demand the withdrawal of fiscal measures proposed by the government, to show opposition to changes to the pension system, to demand the implementation of different agreements reached with student organisations and to demand the protection of social leaders and former FARC combatants and the implementation of the peace agreement. The strike lasted throughout November and into December and although most of the protests were peaceful, there was a tough crackdown by the police and some episodes of violence in which several people died, including a young man shot by the riot police.

1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

South Asia

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

Summary:

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

The armed conflict in Afghanistan maintained high levels of violence throughout the year, with constant clashes pitting internationally-supported Afghan security forces against armed groups, especially the Taliban militias and ISIS, which operates in the country under the name IS-KP (Islamic State in Khorasan Province). Thousands died as a result of the violence. Regarding the impact

on civilians, the records of the United Nations mission in the country (UNAMA) show that 3,403 civilians died and 6,989 were injured during 2019. These are the lowest figures since 2013. Nevertheless UNAMA highlighted that 2019 was a record year in terms of civilians' deaths because of aerial bombardments and search operations. The research centre ACLED indicated that nearly 42,000 people were killed in 2019.²³ A body count maintained by the BBC revealed that an average of 74 people died in Afghanistan each day in August as a result of the violence. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program reported that more people lost their lives in Afghanistan as a result of the conflict in the first 10 months of 2019 than in all of 2018. With 24,000 fatalities, it was the deadliest conflict of the year, which was confirmed by the death toll provided by ACLED.²⁴ In addition, the United Nations reported that nearly 350,000 people were internally displaced as a consequence of the armed conflict in 2019. The peace negotiations between the Taliban insurgency and the US government that took place during the first half of the year did not significantly reduce the violence, and in fact UNAMA data showed that July was the month in which the highest number of civilian casualties has been reported since the United Nations monitored it. In addition, many of the armed attacks took place during the different rounds of negotiations, including attacks against humanitarian organisations funded by the United States.

In March, the Taliban managed to take control of a military base in Badghis province, killing 21 soldiers and taking 40 prisoners as part of a strong Taliban armed offensive in the Bala Murghab district that lasted throughout April, when hundreds of Taliban attacked the heart of the district, killing at least 30 soldiers. Another serious attack took place in May, killing 20 policemen in Baghlan province. Also in May, a US attack against alleged Taliban narcotic laboratories killed 30 civilians according to United Nations investigations, though the United States denied it. When the round of negotiations started in late June, a series of attacks and clashes over two days killed 300 people, including Taliban insurgents and members of the security forces. Especially serious was the attack in Baghlan province in which 25 members of a government militia were killed. There were several extremely serious attacks in September during the presidential election. Two attacks on 17 September killed 48 people, one of them in an election campaign event by President Ashraf Ghani and the other near the US embassy in Kabul. Days later, a US drone attack, allegedly targeting ISIS, killed 30 civilians in Nangarhar province, while a Taliban attack on a hospital in Zabul province killed 22 people and wounded 90. In addition, the Afghan government admitted that a US-supported counterinsurgency operation in Helmand province had killed 40 civilians. On 22 December, the Independent Election Commission announced that the preliminary

results of the 28 September election handed victory to President Ghani. His main opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, declared that he would dispute the results.

BBC reports indicated that Afghanistan was the country in which ISIS was the most active in 2018 and 2019, with the exception of Iraq and Syria. The group mainly operated in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces. The most serious attack since ISIS began operating in the country took place in August, coinciding with announcements of an imminent peace agreement between the Taliban and the United States. The suicide attack killed 63 people attending a wedding, most of whom were Shia. Another more serious attack took place in October, killing 73 people in a population of a few hundred in Nangarhar province, coinciding with Friday prayers at the mosque.

India (Jammu and Kashmir)	
Start:	1989
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, JKLF, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, All Parties Hurriyat Conference, United Jihad Council
Intensity:	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 situation deteriorated markedly in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which had a negative impact on the relationship between India and Pakistan. On 14 February, the most serious attack against the Indian security forces took place in Jammu and Kashmir when a car driven by a suicide bomber exploded in the Pulwama district as a convoy of Indian security forces passed, killing 45 of them. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Pakistan-based armed group Jaish-e-Muhammad and led the government to deploy thousands of additional members of the security forces, impose

23. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), *Number of reported fatalities by country-year*. acleddata.com

24. Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Bulletin. "Afghanistan: The deadliest conflict in the world", 2019.

a curfew and arrest over 200 opposition leaders in the days that followed, although they continued to arrest almost 4,000 people in the following months, of whom more than 2,000 were subsequently released. India accused Pakistan of orchestrating the attack, though the Pakistani government denied it. The fact that the bomber was from a town near the scene of the attack revealed the increasingly internal nature of the Kashmiri armed groups and Pakistan's weakening control over them. The Indian security forces announced that they had killed five Jaish-e-Muhammad leaders in the days that followed. Five days after the bombing, a new insurgent attack killed one commander of the Indian Armed Forces, three other soldiers and one civilian. In the following months, clashes were repeated between the Indian security forces and Kashmiri insurgent groups, causing the deaths of hundreds of people. According to figures from the Indian research centre South Asia Terrorism Portal, 283 people died in 2019, significantly less than in previous years (452 in 2018 and 357 in 2017). Forty-two of the deceased were civilians, 78 were members of the security forces and 163 were members of insurgent groups. The Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society reported a significantly higher death toll resulting from the armed conflict, claiming that 368 people died in 2019, of which 80 were civilians, 159 were insurgents and 129 were members of the Indian Armed Forces.

In August, the tension in the state increased markedly when the Indian government decided to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy status, alleging that the situation was insecure and suggesting the possibility of new attacks from Pakistan. **Its state status was also withdrawn, as it was divided in two (Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh) and downgraded to a union territory**, while it also lost its constitution and own flags. Alongside the suspension of autonomy, 40,000 additional soldiers and members of the security forces were deployed. Usually around 250,000 troops are deployed, making Kashmir one of the most militarised areas in the world. Internet and telecommunications services were cut and the right of assembly was restricted. Despite the bans, protests were staged that led to arrests, including that of the former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, detained under the Public Security Law that allows for detentions without charge and trial during two years. Many social and political leaders were also arrested. The revocation of autonomy had a serious impact on relations with Pakistan, since Jammu and Kashmir is the central issue in the dispute between both countries. In October, five civilians from the state of West Bengal were shot by insurgents amidst reprisals against people who went to work or opened their businesses during calls to strike in protest of the revocation of the state's autonomy. New murders followed this pattern in subsequent weeks. In late November, two people died when a grenade exploded in the Anantnag district.

In August, the tension in the state increased markedly when the Indian government decided to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy status

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

Summary:

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

The armed conflict pitting the Indian security forces against the Naxalite insurgency continued throughout the year, with an intensity similar to that of 2018 and with mortality figures associated with violence slightly lower than in previous years. A total of 302 people died as a result of the armed conflict in 2019, of which 99 were civilians, 154 were members of the CPI-M armed group and 49 were members of the Indian security forces, according to figures collected by the South Asia Terrorism Portal. The states mainly affected by the armed conflict were Chhattisgarh, in which 122 people died, Jharkhand (64 deaths), Maharashtra (51 deaths), Bihar (21 deaths), Odisha (19 deaths), Andra Pradesh (14 deaths), Kerala (five deaths) and Telengana (two deaths). Throughout the year, clashes between the security forces and insurgents were repeated, with different military operations as well as ambushes and attacks by the Naxalites. The most serious attack of the year took place during the general elections in the country, in May, when an antipersonnel mine exploded in Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra state, killing 15 police officers and a civilian. According to some analysts, the attack was a response to the 2018 clashes in which about 40 insurgents died in the same district. Various people were later arrested in relation to the attack. During the electoral campaign, different incidents of violence had occurred in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand, such as the attack in Kander district (Chhattisgarh) on 4 April, in which four members of the security forces died. In July, the Indian government announced that it would carry out more police operations to combat the insurgency, which it considered weakened. In addition, an amnesty plan was announced in Kerala for Maoist

insurgents in exchange for information and reports about collaborators. In July, the police claimed to have executed seven insurgents in Bastar district in Chhattisgarh. There was an uptick of violence in November, with several incidents in Jharkhand state, when the insurgency killed four policemen and two civilians, including a member of the BJP party, prompting Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to threaten to increase action against the Naxalites. In December, a report was released by a judicial investigation commission that revealed that 17 people who were shot dead by the security forces in Chhattisgarh in 2012 were not Naxalite insurgents, but rather Adivasi civilians, including several children. “Adivasi” is a term designating the different indigenous tribes that inhabit various states of India. This led different human rights organisations to demand actions against those responsible for the murders, stressing that there are many similar cases pending resolution by the courts. The security forces have repeatedly been accused of serious violations of civilians’ human rights in the states affected by the armed conflict, especially the Adivasi population.

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

Summary:

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

The armed conflict in Pakistan remained active throughout the year, though it was less intense than in 2018. According to data from the Center for Research

and Security Studies of Pakistan, 679 people died across the country during the year as a result of the armed violence and clashes between Pakistani security forces and insurgent groups. Other sources, such as the South Asia Terrorism Portal, reported that 369 people died as a result of the armed violence, notably less than the previous year. **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which comprises territories formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), remained the scene of a significant part of the security forces’ battles with the Taliban insurgency and security operations, which led to a serious level of fatalities, including 265 deaths.** However, the Taliban insurgency was also operational in other areas of the country, carrying out attacks in the provinces of Punjab and Balochistan in addition to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Taliban insurgency carried out attacks against the security forces, but also against civilians, mosques and markets. Killings of health workers, especially those involved in polio vaccination campaigns, were also repeated. In May, a bomb exploded at a Sufi shrine in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, killing 10 people, including five police officers. In July, another serious suicide attack occurred in Dera Ismail Khan district in the northwestern part of the country, in which nine people died and 30 were injured. The double attack, which the Taliban claimed to have committed, took place first at a security checkpoint and later at the hospital to which the wounded people had been transferred. In addition, six soldiers patrolling in the immediate vicinity of the Afghanistan border in North Waziristan died after an attack by the Taliban group TTP. In November, a new bomb attack in North Waziristan killed three soldiers. Alongside the clashes between the insurgency and the security forces, crackdowns on social protests staged in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, mainly in the former FATA, claimed at least 13 lives when protestors were shot by security forces during a demonstration to defend the rights of the Pashtun population. After the integration of the FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, protests were staged again, accusing the Pakistani Armed Forces of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances and forced population displacement as part of military operations. The protesters included at least two MPs.

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.

In the province of Balochistan, armed clashes and attacks were repeated throughout the year, both by the Balochi nationalist insurgent groups and by Taliban insurgents, which were very active in the province.

According to figures compiled by the Pakistani Center for Research and Security Studies, 226 people died in the province as part of the armed conflict in 2019. The South Asia Terrorism Portal noted that 180 people died as a result of violence in Balochistan in 2019, a figure significantly lower than in previous years. In April, a bomb attack on a market in Quetta killed at least 16 people and injured many others. The attack took place in an area inhabited mainly by the Shia population. Also in April, 14 people were killed on a motorway in Gwadar district when several armed men dressed as soldiers stopped six buses, separating those carrying ID cards from the security forces, and later shot them. The armed group Baloch Raji Aojoi Sangar claimed responsibility for the attack. Formed in late 2018, this group is made up of the BLF, the BLG and a dissident faction of the BLA. The armed group BLA claimed responsibility for an attack in May in which five people died when armed men shot at a luxury hotel where representatives of the Chinese government and Chinese workers employed in a port project in the city of Gwadar usually stay. The Balochi nationalist insurgency is opposed to economic investment and infrastructure projects developed by the Chinese government and businessmen in the province. There were several episodes of violence in July, including an operation against the Balochi insurgency in the Turbat area that killed four soldiers and an attack against a police station in Quetta. This latest attack, which the Taliban armed group TTP claimed to have committed, killed five people and wounded about 30. In August, four people died in Quetta when a bomb exploded in a mosque during Friday prayers. It was a mosque frequented by Taliban insurgents, whose shura (council of leaders) is based in Quetta. Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack, which came just after the eighth round of peace negotiations between the Taliban in Afghanistan and the US government in Qatar. In October, a bomb blast in Quetta killed one police officer and wounded five others. In November, at least seven members of the security forces died in different

episodes of violence, including clashes with the Balochi insurgency in Rajanpur district in the province of Punjab and the explosion of a bomb on 15 November.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups (Ceasefire signatories: ABSDF, ALP, CNF, DKBA, KNU, KNU/KNLA-PC, PNLO, RCSS, NMSP, LDU; Non-signatories: KIA, NDAA, MNDAA, SSPP/SSA, TNLA, AA, UWSA, ARSA, KNPP)
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.

The armed conflict in the country remained active throughout the year and mainly affected Rakhine State, which was the scene of most of the fighting between the security forces and the insurgency, especially the armed opposition group Arakan Army (AA). Periodic clashes, attacks and bombings throughout the year had a significant impact and forcibly displaced the population. The unilateral ceasefire decreed in December 2018 by the Burmese Armed Forces in the Shan State and Kachin State remained in effect until October, which helped to reduce violence overall in the country, but had no impact on the situation of the Rakhine State, which was the scene of constant violent clashes. However, despite the ceasefire agreement, sporadic fighting occurred in the states of Shan, Kachin and Chin. Around 100,000 people were displaced by fighting with the AA in Rakhine State between November 2018 and November 2019, which killed dozens of soldiers and insurgents. In August, an attack on a military base in the northern part of the state killed 30 soldiers and two AA members. In addition to the armed clashes, the AA

kidnapped civilians and soldiers at different times of the year. Notable in this regard was the abduction of 50 police officers, soldiers and government officials in October, which led to a military rescue operation in which several people lost their lives. Also in October, the AA reported that the security forces were using helicopters in their military operations and that at least 60 soldiers had died as a result of the fighting between 11 and 16 October. Since its formation in 2009, the AA has grown and currently has around 10,000 members. The armed group ARSA was also involved in armed violence, carrying out an ambush against a police convoy in January and resuming clashes with the Burmese Armed Forces in December. After the attacks in 2016 and 2017 that led to an unprecedented military response and the serious human rights and humanitarian crisis suffered by the Rohingya population, ARSA had not been active since January 2018.

Shan State was the scene of clashes between the Burmese Armed Forces and the armed groups TNLA and MNDAA. In August, several coordinated attacks in the northern part of the state and the Mandalay region by the TNLA killed 15 soldiers. The fighting increased after the unilateral cease-fire of the Armed Forces expired on 21 September. In September, the coalition of the armed groups AA, TNLA and MNDAA, known as the Brotherhood Alliance, which in turn is part of the Northern Alliance, which groups together insurgencies that have not signed the ceasefire agreement (NCA), also decreed a one-year ceasefire that it broke a few hours after announcing it. This prompted the Burmese Armed Forces to assert that the armed groups had no interest in participating in the NCA, adding that they would end the ceasefire that started in 2018. In October, Amnesty International reported that the Burmese Armed Forces and insurgent groups were committing war crimes, most of them during the ceasefire.

Alongside the development of the armed conflict, international investigations continued into the serious human rights violations that took place in Rakhine State in 2017 as part of Burmese military operations against the insurgent group ARSA and the local Rohingya civilian population. The United Nations fact-finding mission presented its report, stating that there had been a pattern of attacks aimed at erasing Rohingya identity and expelling the Rohingya from Myanmar, adding that the Independent Commission of Enquiry established by the government lacked credibility. The United Nations mission also called for selective sanctions. By early November, a total of 397 people out of the 750,000 who took refuge in Bangladesh in 2017 had returned to Myanmar under the voluntary return programme agreed by the two governments. In December, State Councilor Aung San Suu Kyi appeared before the International Court of Justice on behalf of Myanmar to respond to charges of genocide submitted by The Gambia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. The Burmese leader denied the charges.

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.

Although the government did not offer figures on the mortality associated with the conflict, several analysts suggest that overall the intensity of the warlike hostilities between the state and the NPA was similar to that of the previous year. According to data from the Political Violence in the Southern Philippines Dataset, 168 soldiers, police and civilians were reportedly killed in the armed conflict between January 2017 and July 2018, while another 266 were reportedly wounded. The conflict killed 185 NPA fighters and injured 109 others. In mid-2019, however, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPF) declared that 318 members of the state security forces had been killed during 2018 in clashes with the NPA. In early 2019, both the Philippine Armed Forces and President Rodrigo Duterte announced their objective to militarily defeat the NPA by 2022. To this end, the government expressed its satisfaction with the results that the new counterinsurgency strategy was producing stemming from Executive Order 70 (issued in December 2018), popularly known as the Whole-of-Nation Approach to Achieve Inclusive and Lasting Peace. The National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) was created to implement it, which was replicated at the provincial level during the year. According to the government, this new strategy aims to go beyond counterinsurgency operations and affect the well-being and development of the communities in which the communist movement has historically been most deeply rooted. **Manila especially highlighted the impact that this new approach was having on the mass surrenders and defections of regular and auxiliary NPA members.**

Thus, the Philippine Armed Forces declared that between January 2018 and February 2019, over 11,500 people linked to the insurgent movement (918 regular members of the NPA, 1,217 support militias, known as Militia ng Bayan, 434 members of local support groups and 8,932 members of clandestine support organisations) had benefited from government-sponsored reintegration and reintegration programmes in Eastern Mindanao alone. In the province of Agusan del Norte, for example, the Provincial Task Force to End the Conflict stated that 898 active members of the NPA or of groups supporting the insurgency had decided to take advantage of such reintegration programmes between January and October 2019. At various times during the year, the government reported mass defections from the NPA. According to Manila, between 15 and 22 July alone, over 200 NPA members reportedly surrendered to the authorities in the provinces of North Cotabato, Bukidnon and Davao del Sur, all of them in Mindanao. Another notable development was the surrender of weapons and start of the reintegration of 727 former fighters from the Rebolusyonaryong Party ng Manggagawa-Pilipinas/ Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade-Tabara-Paduan Group (RPM-P/RPA/ABB-TPG), also known as KAPATIRAN. This group split off from the CPF and the NPA in the mid-1990s and signed an agreement with the government in 2000. Since then, the group's fighters remained in their bases but were still armed. In July 2019, a five-point Implementation Clarification Document was signed that, if fulfilled, should lead to the signing of a Closing or Termination Agreement by 2022. In November 2019, 266 of the 727 people who turned in their weapons completed a training programme for their integration into the Philippine Armed Forces. There had been several incidents of violence between members of the NPA and the RPM-P/RPA-ABB TPG in recent years, so Duterte personally pledged to guarantee the security of the group's ex-combatants during the arms delivery ceremony in September. A few days after the ceremony, a prominent leader of the RPM-P/RPA-ABB TPG was assassinated in Negros Occidental. In this region, the government suggested the possibility of imposing martial law after spikes in political violence occurred at various times of the year (21 people were killed in a single week in late July, for example). The government noted that the NPA was behind several of these incidents and accused it of profiting from land conflicts in the region and of building a quasi-state in the province.

Despite Manila's statements about the mass defections from the NPA and about the impacts of its new counterinsurgency strategy, it also acknowledged that the communist movement continued to pose one of the main threats to security. **The Philippine Armed Forces acknowledged that while they estimate the active members of the NPA at around 5,000, they also think that it has another 50,000 non-armed members across the country.** The founder of the NPA, Jose Maria Sison,

The Philippine government maintains that its new approach to managing the conflict is leading to defections and mass surrenders within the NPA

said that the group currently has 120 active fronts in 74 of the country's 81 provinces and that the CPF has over 100,000 members throughout the country. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NPA in 1969, the CPF ordered the NPA to step up attacks across the country and said that the communist movement was making significant progress on all fronts. Regarding the dynamics of the conflict, there were regular clashes throughout the year, mainly in Mindanao and in some Visayas provinces. Some of the NPA's actions prompted political reactions, such as the one that killed six soldiers (and wounded another 20) in November in the city of Borongan and the offensive in Samar in April, in which six others soldiers perished. On 30 March, the day after the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the group's founding, 14 of its combatants died and as many were detained in a Philippine Army operation in the province of Negros Occidental. At the end of the year, amidst declarations by both parties that they were willing to resume peace negotiations in early 2020, the NDF announced a cessation of hostilities between 23 December and 7 January for the Christmas holidays. The government immediately responded in kind, as has been customary in recent years. Also in late December, Manila announced that it was reshuffling its negotiating panel to include Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, who according to various media outlets is very close to Duterte. Finally, the government accused the NPA of committing war crimes by recruiting minors. According to data from the Philippines Armed Forces made public in August, between 1999 and 2019 the state neutralised 513 minors recruited by the NPA, of which 362 surrendered, 134 were captured and 17 were killed.

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

Although the death toll of the armed conflict between the Philippine government and various groups such as the BIFF, Abu Sayyaf, the Maute Group and Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao was not made public, the levels of violence were similar to or even lower than those of the previous year. In 2018, 173 BIFF fighters and 21 soldiers were killed in 83 clashes in Mindanao (especially Maguindanao, the BIFF's main stronghold). In addition, 36 other clashes between the state and other jihadist groups forced more than 91,000 people to leave their homes. Also in 2018, in Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, 161 people died and more than 5,000 were forcibly displaced by fighting (63) involving Abu Sayyaf. In addition to the conflict between the state and the aforementioned groups, in 2019 there were also clashes between the MILF and the BIFF, a MILF splinter group. For example, in October seven MILF and four BIFF fighters were killed in a firefight between the MILF and one of the three main BIFF factions led by Abu Toraife. After the establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), temporarily governed by the historical leader of the MILF, the group has become more actively involved in preventing radicalism in Mindanao and fighting armed groups linked to ISIS. According to several experts, although coordination between these groups is still precarious and their military capacity only allows them to launch sporadic attacks, the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, where it lost its last strongholds in March, caused the group to modify its global strategy, abandoning the pretense of controlling territory and focusing its efforts on expanding and diversifying its jihadist appeal territorially. Thus, according to the aforementioned analysts, **ISIS is attaching increasing importance to Southeast Asia and particularly to Mindanao.** In 2019, the trend observed in the previous two years continued, including the growth of ISIS in the region and the increase in foreign fighters, videos and propaganda, suicide attacks and military training in Mindanao. In the middle of the year, for example, the Philippine Armed Forces acknowledged having detected over 100

Shortly after the referendum was held on the new autonomous region in Mindanao, 22 people died and 109 others were injured after the simultaneous detonation of two explosive devices in the Jolo cathedral

foreign fighters in Mindanao, several of which were training in explosive devices and suicide bombings. In fact, some of the most serious episodes of violence during the year were committed by people that were not Filipino nationals.

The hostilities increased early in the year, coinciding with the referendum to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which was held in two rounds in late January and early February. On 31 December 2018, there had already been an attack at a shopping centre in Cotabato in which two people died and more than 30 were injured. In its first statement since the end of 2017, ISIS stated that over 30 soldiers had been killed in clashes with various groups, especially with the Maute Group. **Two days after the results of the first round of the referendum were announced, 22 people died and 109 were injured following the simultaneous detonation of two explosive devices in the cathedral of Jolo**, the capital of the province of Sulu. Three days later, two people died and many others were injured after an attack on a Zamboanga mosque. In the days after the attack in Jolo, the government indicated that two people of Indonesian origin were materially responsible for the attack and that they had the support of ISIS and one of the most active Abu Sayyaf factions, called Ajang Ajang. This faction, whose main stronghold is in Sulu (the group's other main faction is led by Furuji Indama and is mainly based in Basilan), is headed by Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who several analysts have indicated has become the top ISIS leader in the southern Philippines, identified by the US State Department as the emir of the region. In late January and throughout February, the Philippine Armed Forces intensified their counterinsurgency campaign in Sulu, including several airstrikes. Thus, the government declared its intention to defeat Abu Sayyaf by the end of 2019, deploying additional troops in the Sulu archipelago for this purpose. Some analysts anticipated an increase in hostilities between both sides, considering that the Philippine Armed Forces had

already neutralised some of the groups operating in other parts of Mindanao, allowing them to focus efforts on the fight against Abu Sayyaf. Analysts also said that the fact that the group has drastically reduced its number of kidnappings makes it easier for the state to launch large-scale military operations without putting the lives of the hostages at risk. Furthermore, after eight people died in a dual bomb attack blamed on Abu Sayyaf in June, the government warned that it may be increasing its use of suicide bombings, perhaps due to its growing connection with ISIS. Finally, the fact that Sulu province, a stronghold of Abu Sayyaf, voted against joining the new BARMM at the beginning of the year makes it difficult for the MILF to participate in neutralising the group. Several times during the year the government asked Nur Misuari for help in

its fight against Abu Sayyaf. Misuari is the founder of the MNLF, a group with a significant presence in Abu Sayyaf's main bastions. In March, Misuari threatened to resume the war in Mindanao if the government did not comply with his demands and did not make headway on Duterte's objective of transforming the Philippines into a federal state, but the government said that the MNLF can currently carry out armed operations of a certain size but cannot resume a high-intensity war against it.

As part of the martial law imposed in Mindanao in late 2017 and renewed until the end of 2019, the Philippine Armed Forces frequently clashed with the BIFF and, to a lesser extent, with other groups such as Ansar Khilafa and the Maute Group. Hostilities increased markedly in March and April in Maguindanao (bastion of the BIFF) and in Lanao del Sur (bastion of the Maute Group), displacing around 50,000 people in Maguindanao and another 9,000 in Lanao del Sur. The number of fatalities linked to both military campaigns, which included aerial bombardments, is unknown, but in mid-March the government declared that over 20 BIFF fighters had died. Clashes with the BIFF were very frequent throughout the year. In late July, for example, 10 BIFF fighters were reportedly killed after several days of fighting in Maguindanao. **The Maute Group's leader, Abu Dar, died in mid-March. Many had considered him the top ISIS leader in the region after the deaths of Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers during the siege of Marawi in 2017.** The government acknowledged that over two years after the siege, the longest and most intense episode of violence in the recent armed conflict in Mindanao, there were still over 100,000 people who had been unable to return home, causing enormous frustration and resentment and facilitating the recruitment of new members by Islamist groups. Finally, other episodes of violence were also reported in Mindanao, often with some type of relationship to the armed conflict in the south of the country, such as rido (blood feuds between clans or families for reasons of honour or land), the war on drugs waged by the government and violence linked to the elections. In late May, the organisation International Alert indicated that 144 incidents of violence related to the general elections that took place on 13 May had been reported in Mindanao, but it also clarified that the figures were significantly lower than in previous elections. Police indicated that 33 people had died nationwide from violence related to the elections, confirming a downward trend in this type of incident. Regarding the war on drugs, the government acknowledged in July that 5,526 people had died in the more than 134,500 anti-drug operations carried out since July 2016, shortly after Duterte took office. However, human rights groups maintain that the number of fatalities caused by the anti-drug campaign could exceed 27,000, thousands of them in Mindanao.

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.

In keeping with the trend of recent years, violence decreased slightly compared to previous years. Thus, according to the Deep South Watch research centre, 180 people were killed and another 243 were wounded in the four southern Muslim-majority provinces between January and November 2019, while a total of 218 people had died in 2018. There had also been a gradual decrease in the number of fatalities in previous years (235 people in 2017, 307 in 2016, 246 in 2015 and 341 in 2014, while in the previous four years the fatalities were always higher than 450). According to Deep South Watch, **since 2004 there have been 20,485 violent incidents** that killed 7,074 people and wounded 13,221. Despite this decrease in the intensity of the violence, the government repeatedly expressed its concern about the security situation in the south of the country and refused to withdraw both the emergency decree and the Internal Security Law, which grant special powers to the state security forces and bodies, which have been repeatedly criticised by MPs and national and international human rights organisations on the grounds that they encourage impunity for the Thai Armed Forces in containing the insurgency. This criticism intensified in 2019 after an alleged insurgent, Abdulloh Isomuso Abdulloh, died in military custody in late August after falling into a coma the day after he was detained. However, the government defended the suitability and proportionality of the special measures in the southern part of the country at all times. In mid-November, both Bangkok and various media outlets were even considering the possibility of imposing a curfew in the south, though it ultimately did not come to pass.

Four aspects should be highlighted regarding the dynamics of violence during the year. First, the most serious episode of violence in recent years took place in 2019. In early November, **15 people died and four were injured after an alleged insurgent attack on a military checkpoint in Yala province.** Though no particular group claimed responsibility for the attack, the Thai authorities blamed it on the BRN, a group with 8,000 estimated members that rarely claims to have carried out any armed action. This attack gave enormous media visibility to the conflict and opened a debate on the security model and its legislative framework in the southern part of the country. Furthermore, insofar as most of the victims were civilians, the incident cast doubt on the government's strategy of transferring certain security and protection powers to armed civilian groups, which in most cases have little training. According to several analysts, the insurgent movement was trying to demonstrate its operational capacity in the south. Attacks at other times of the year suggested a high level of coordination, such as the simultaneous explosion of several devices in four districts in Yala in late August and in various locations in the province of Pattani at the beginning of the same month. Furthermore, despite the fact that the government often reinforces security measures during Ramadan, there was a high number of violent incidents in the Muslim-majority southern provinces.

The second aspect of concern for the government was that, contrary to what happened in previous years, in 2019 there were no active peace negotiations between the government and MARA Patani, an umbrella organisation that brings together the main insurgent groups in the southern part of the country, since it formally withdrew from the talks in February 2019. According to some analysts, this circumstance not only hinders permanent dialogue between both parties to the conflict, but also impedes the government's ability to pressure MARA Patani to reduce the levels of violence in the operational cells on the ground to demonstrate their commitment to the peace negotiations. The third new aspect were the attacks that the insurgent movement carried out in the provinces of Satun and Phatthalung in 2019, further north of their usual area of activity (the provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and part of Songkhla). In early August, coinciding with a summit of ASEAN foreign ministers, four people were injured when six explosive devices detonated simultaneously in various parts of the city. The police blamed the attacks on the BRN, which denied it. Two weeks after the attacks, it emerged that the government and the BRN had met in secret. Finally, the insurgent movement carried out attacks against Buddhist monks and temples in 2019 after several years in which it seemed to have stopped doing so.

1.3.4. Europe

Eastern Europe

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

Summary:

Considered in transition since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and a country of great geostrategic importance, Ukraine is undergoing a major socio-political crisis and armed conflict in its eastern regions as the scenario of the most serious crisis between the West and Russia since the Cold War. Preceded by a cluster of hotspots across the country (mass pro-European and anti-government demonstrations, the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich and his regime, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, anti-Maidan protests and the emergence of armed groups in the east), the situation in eastern Ukraine degenerated into armed conflict in the second quarter of 2014, pitting pro-Russian separatist militias, supported by Moscow, against state forces under the new pro-European authorities. Over time, issues such as the status of the eastern provinces were added to the international geostrategic dimension (political, economic and military rivalry between Russia and the West in Eastern Europe and Russia's demonstration of force for the benefit of its own public opinion, among other issues). Affecting the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, the war has had great impact on the civilian population, especially in terms of forced displacement. The war runs parallel to a peace process with negotiations at various levels and formats.

The violence associated with the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine fell significantly, with notable headway made in the peace process while a new president took office in the country, although the conflict continued to have impacts on human security. According to the ACLED research centre database, 391 people lost their lives in 2019, compared to 848 in 2018. The OSCE observation mission identified many violations of the ceasefire during the year, causing victims and damage to civil infrastructure such as homes, schools and electrical installations due to bombardment and the use of light weapons in numerous locations along the line of contact and heavy weapons in areas not authorised under the Minsk peace agreements. In its 2019 report, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed similar concern regarding the new civilian casualties and the military personnel, military positions and weapons that it observed in or near residential areas. It also warned about the lack of access to basic services and other impacts. Around 3.4 million civilians were in need of humanitarian aid (1.5 million in government-controlled areas and 1.9 million in areas controlled by the self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk). The precarious situation of

the few checkpoints for crossing the line of contact, which are in poor condition and subjected to temporary closings, also affected the civilian population, as several people with health complications died while crossing the line during the year.

The civilian death toll rose in certain months in 2019, such as in February and May. Areas affected by the violence included Zolote, in the Luhansk region, and the area between Popasna, Pervomaisk and Zolote, in Luhansk, as well as areas in the centre of the Donetsk region and others. In addition, drones from the OSCE's non-armed civilian oversight mission were attacked on several occasions in 2019. As in previous periods, the mission had restricted access to areas under rebel control. Despite the continuation of hostilities, on the whole **the year was marked by a decrease in civilian fatalities and injuries**. Between January and late November, 18 civilians died and 126 were wounded (in 2018, 55 civilians died and 224 were wounded). Despite continued ceasefire violations, the truces were more robust. The parties pledged to uphold a new ceasefire on 8 March, following an increase in hostilities in February, and another, unlimited ceasefire on 17 July, although the Ukrainian authorities specified that their forces could return fire if attacked. Even so, this was considered significant progress, due to its greater coverage compared to previous truces, which had the practical effect of decreasing hostilities. In December, the parties committed to the full and comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire and to reinforce it with supporting measures. Other specific local truces allowed civil infrastructure repair work to be carried out. During the year, **progress was also made in the withdrawal of forces from Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske**. Some groups in Ukraine protested the withdrawal agreements, deriding them as a form of surrender.

Regarding the regional context of the conflict, tensions continued between Ukraine and Russia in the Sea of Azov, where in late 2018 Russia captured three Ukrainian ships and detained its 24 crew members, wounding three of them, in an incident preceded by other similar ones in previous months. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea issued an opinion in May demanding the release of the crew as a provisional measure, but Russia rejected it. Ukraine detained a Russian oil tanker in July, alleging that it had been used in the dispute in late 2018. In September, the 24 sailors were released along with other people as part of an exchange of prisoners involved the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, **tension remained over Russia's control of Crimea. In 2019, OHCHR warned of intensified house searches and raids by Russian security services** under Russian anti-extremist legislation, with a disproportionate effect on the Tatar minority. OHCHR also documented and denounced other human rights violations in the peninsula. Domestically, Ukraine held the first and second round of the presidential election on 31 March and 21 April, respectively. Comedian Volodimir Zelenski

won with 73% of the votes and 62% turnout, unseating his rival, the outgoing President Petro Poroshenko. Early parliamentary elections were also held on 21 July, which were won by Zelenski's party Sluga Narodu ("Servant of the People") with 42% of the vote and close to 50% turnout, followed by the Opposition Platform – For Life (13%) of Victor Medvedchuk, who is close to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Both elections took place calmly, competitively and inclusively, according to international organisations.

Southeast Europe

Turkey (southeast)	
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 conflict between Turkey and the PKK escalated, mainly due to Turkey's military campaign against the group in northern Iraq and against Kurdish forces linked to the PKK in northern Syria, while also remaining active within Turkey. In 2019, Ankara's massive repression against unarmed actors of the Kurdish nationalist movement also continued. The death toll inside Turkey differed. According to the think tank ICG, 468 people died due to the conflict in 2019, 355 of them PKK fighters. The ACLED research centre put this figure at 979 (1,966 in 2018, 2,940 in 2017 and 5,237 in 2016). In addition, the Turkish Army and the PKK have

historically tended to offer very disparate body counts of their own. In Turkey, the armed conflict mainly took place in rural southeastern areas. The Turkish Army conducted many bombings, including with drones, and other operations against the PKK that killed many insurgents. The security forces announced the destruction of large amounts of the group's hideout infrastructure and seized weapons. They also imposed exceptional measures such as "safe zones" in areas of counterinsurgency operations, prohibiting unauthorised entry, and many indefinite curfews simultaneous with military operations. The PKK carried out many military actions, including bomb attacks, improvised explosive devices and explosive-laden drones. The group attacked targets such as Turkish Army and gendarmerie forces, "village guard" paramilitaries, civilians accused of being informants, military posts, police stations, military vehicles and others. A significant part of the PKK attacks were carried out by its women's branch, the YJA Star.

Among recurring incidents of violence in Turkey, 12 soldiers were reportedly killed in a PKK attack on the Turkish Army alongside a military post in Igdir province in January; the PKK claimed responsibility for an attack against security forces in the Dargecit district (Mardin) on 18 March, during which two combatants blew themselves up, causing around 20 fatalities; air operations by the security forces in the Yuksekova district (Hakkari) on 26 July killed eight PKK members; and the group claimed responsibility for an attack in September that killed seven workers and wounded seven others in Diyarbakir province, alleging that they were informants. A PKK attack on a Turkish Army armoured vehicle in a district in Mardin on 20 October killed 14 soldiers and three PKK militiamen in subsequent clashes. Ten soldiers died and 10 others were wounded in a PKK attack on Turkish Army units alongside a military post in a district in Van on 9 November. In August, the Ministry of Defence said that there had been 80,570 operations against the PKK in the first eight months of the year and 635 PKK members had been "neutralised" (the Turkish Army's term for insurgents that have been killed, detained or surrendered). In any case, the death tolls on each side were questioned. The conflict took place mainly in rural areas, but **there were also many small-scale urban guerrilla attacks against civilian targets by groups linked to the YPS**, an armed group connected to the PKK made up mainly of young people involved in urban violence in 2015, with attacks on private homes, vehicles and companies by civilians linked to the ruling party (AKP) and against police targets. The attacks caused various injuries and material damage in different places.

The conflict also raged in northern Iraq, where Turkey launched air and ground operations against the PKK throughout the year. Shortly after Turkish Army caused

civilian casualties in January, a group of Kurdish civilians from Iraq attacked a Turkish military base. Two protesters died and around 15 were wounded by shots fired by the soldiers. **In May and July, the Turkish Army launched Operation Claw 1 and Operation Claw 2 in the Hakurk region of northern Iraq, next to the Qandil Mountains, where the PKK has its main bases, in order to increase pressure against the PKK** in the area. In August, Ankara launched Operation Claw 3. In addition, Turkey killed a senior PKK official in Qandil in June, identified as Diyar Gharib Muhammed, who is considered to be responsible for the PKK in Iraq and a member of the PKK central committee. Some analysts said that it was the first death of a leader of the group due to an offensive action in Qandil since 1984. In turn, Osman Kose, a Turkish diplomat on a special mission in the region, was assassinated in Erbil, the Kurdish capital of northern Iraq. His death was blamed on the PKK. The group denied involvement, while one of its leaders publicly congratulated the perpetrators.

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK became less deadly inside Turkey, while Ankara stepped up pressure against the PKK in the region

Another theatre of the conflict in 2019 was northern Syria, where Turkey stepped up its pressure against Kurdish YPG militias²⁵ linked to the PKK, which Turkey and some analysts consider an integral part of the armed group. Turkey launched a military operation with its Syrian National Army militia allies in October, with the acquiescence of the United States, which withdrew its troops, in order to establish a zone free of the YPG along part of the border. As a result of the agreement between Turkey, Russia and Syria, as well as the pact between Turkey and the US, the operation forced the withdrawal of the YPG and their weapons 30 kilometers into Syria. Amnesty International and other organisations denounced war crimes and serious human rights violations committed by Turkey and its allied forces in the operation, which initially displaced around 200,000 civilians. The YPG, the Syrian regime and Russia agreed to allow Syrian forces to return to areas under Kurdish control. Some analysts stated that the dynamics in 2019 spelled the end of self-proclaimed Kurdish-majority autonomy under YPG control. The YPG's political autonomy and territorial control in an area that extended east of the Euphrates had been blasted by Turkey as a red line for its state security, given its conflict with the PKK. The media reported that the YPG launched mortar shells and rockets from the Syrian border against Turkish targets, killing several people and wounding and several dozen civilians in places in Turkey.

As in previous years, the Turkish authorities threatened to destroy the PKK at various times during 2019, while some analysts pointed to the difficulties of imposing a military solution on a regional force able to adapt to new methods of warfare such as the PKK. Furthermore, **Turkey authorised several people to visit imprisoned**

25. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.

PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan during the year, including a relative, his lawyers (for the first time in eight years) and an academic. This was interpreted in various ways by analysts and the media, including the possibility that it was aimed at encouraging new attempts at peace negotiations, at responding to electoral interests to capitalise on the Kurdish vote in the context of the local elections in Turkey on 31 March and at partially attempting to appease the mass hunger strike of Kurdish prisoners that began in late 2018. The pro-Kurdish party did not run candidates in several large cities to support the victory of candidates opposed to the AKP, such as in Istanbul, where CHP candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu won the repeat election in June after the results of the vote in March were annulled. The HDP retained several mayorships in the southeast, although the government maintained its policy of previous years and **forced the resignation of many elected mayors of the HDP and their replacement by state officials, blocking the pro-Kurdish party's legal political activity**. This was denounced by local and international human rights organisations, the Presidency of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and other bodies. It was also accompanied by mass arrests on charges of supporting the PKK, such as 418 arrests on 19 August, mostly of members of the HDP. The Kurdish movement called these steps a political coup and many protests staged in multiple locations were repressed by the security forces.

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:	=

Summary:

The Sinai Peninsula has become a growing source of instability. Since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the area has reported increasing insurgent activity that initially directed its attacks against Israeli interests. This trend raised many questions about maintaining security commitments between Egypt and Israel after the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979, which led to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the peninsula. However, alongside the bumpy evolution of the Egyptian transition, jihadist groups based in the Sinai have shifted the focus of their actions to the Egyptian security forces, especially after the coup d'état

against the Islamist government of Mohamed Mursi (2013). The armed groups, especially Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM), have gradually demonstrated their ability to act beyond the peninsula, displayed the use of more sophisticated weapons and broadened their targets to attack tourists as well. ABM's decision to pledge loyalty to the organisation Islamic State (ISIS) in late 2014 marked a new turning point in the evolution of the conflict. Its complexity is determined by the influence of multiple factors, including the historical political and economic marginalisation that has stoked the grievances of the Bedouins, the majority population in the Sinai; the dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; and regional turmoil, which has facilitated the movement of weapons and fighters to the area.

The armed conflict that mainly pits the Egyptian security forces against the armed ISIS branch in the country remained concentrated in North Sinai governorate, especially in the towns of Arish (capital), Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah (bordering the Gaza Strip) and caused the deaths of hundreds of people in 2019. As in previous years, the death toll of the conflict was difficult to determine due to the ambiguities of official reports, which often omitted casualties among the security forces and did not specify places of the incidents or periods to which the body counts correspond, in addition to the propagandistic tone of the information disseminated by the armed group and restrictions on the media and NGOs to verify the situation on the ground. Nevertheless, **partial counts from media reports indicate that at least 500 people lost their lives as a result of the conflict during 2019. Statistics kept by organisations such as ACLED point to an even greater number of fatalities, totalling up to 1,233 by the end of the year**. In November, the ISIS branch released its own balance sheet of operations in Sinai during the Hijri year 1444 (September 2018 to August 2019), indicating that in that period it had carried out 227 attacks and caused the death or injury of 463 people. During 2019, the ISIS branch announced plans to expand its activities to the southern part of the governorate, including the Red Sea area, which is home to many tourist assets, and pledged allegiance to the organisation's new leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi, after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death in a US attack in Syria.

In line with what was observed in previous years, the violence took the form of attacks by ISIS militiamen and explosives, in many cases against military facilities, on roads and at checkpoints. In February, the Egyptian Army acknowledged that the group carried out an attack near the Arish airport that killed a dozen soldiers and was considered the bloodiest ISIS attack in several months. **The group calling itself Sinai Province also claimed responsibility for attacks against civilians and highlighted several kidnappings and beheadings of people accused of being informants or collaborators of the Egyptian Army in 2019**. Meanwhile, the security forces continued their military offensives as part of their "Sinai 2018" campaign launched at the beginning of the previous

year. Several raids were also reported during the year that ended with the deaths of dozens of suspected militants, repeatedly just days after attacks committed by or blamed on ISIS or other armed groups. Thus, for example, after a bomb attack that wounded 17 people, in the tourist area of the Giza pyramids in May, 12 alleged members of Hasm were reportedly killed, although both events were not officially linked. In August, another attack attributed to Hasm in Cairo killed 22 people, which in the following days led to the deaths of 17 suspected members of the group, who denied responsibility for the attack. The government accuses Hasm of ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, but the organisation denies any connection.

In this context, **human rights organisations accused both the Egyptian security forces and the ISIS branch of systematic abuses against the civilian population, some of them constituting war crimes.** Local and international NGOs warned of deaths in police and military raids or after periods of arbitrary detention, which they denounced as extrajudicial killings. A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report published in May that focused on abuses by official forces since 2014 reported torture and at least 20 documented killings in recent years of people secretly detained in security force facilities at military bases located in North Sinai and in the neighboring governorate of Ismailya.²⁶ The report also warned of the role played by militias consisting of people recruited by the Egyptian Army in North Sinai, who were also involved in arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions. HRW also cited the difficulties in identifying civilian victims of the conflict because the authorities do not provide data on the subject and often include them as militiamen in the death tolls. In terms of forced displacement, it was estimated that around 100,000 people living in North Sinai (one fifth of the area's population) had been expelled from their homes and that the Egyptian Army had demolished thousands of homes. The Washington-based Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) has counted at least 12,000 Sinai residents detained between July 2013, when the conflict escalated, and December 2018, double the figure recognised by the Egyptian authorities. The conflict is taking place amidst a state of emergency in the country, which has periodically been renewed since a double attack on Coptic churches in 2017 and the imposition of a night curfew in Sinai since 2014. To this is added the growing authoritarianism, consolidation of military power and persecution of dissent in Egypt. During 2019 these trends were demonstrated by the approval of a constitutional reform extending presidential term limits, thereby opening the possibility for the general and current President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi to remain in office until 2030, and by the arrest of over 4,000 people for participating in protests against the regime.²⁷

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

Summary:

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

In line with the trend observed during the previous year, the levels of violence in the armed conflict in Iraq decreased with respect to the 2014-2017 period, in which between 10,000 and 20,000 civilian fatalities were reported each year, although the country continued to rank among the most serious conflicts in the world. According to the organisation Iraq Body Count (IBC), at least 2,392 civilians died as a result of the violence of the conflict, compared to 3,319 civilian deaths in 2018. **The situation in the country was marked by the continuation of the government campaign against the armed group ISIS, which, though weakened, continued to carry out multiple attacks in the country, and the impact of the dispute and strategic competition between the US and Iran, both of which are interested and involved in controlling internal Iraqi affairs, with increasing Israeli participation in armed actions in the country.** At the same time, Iraq was the scene of massive popular protests in 2019 that led to a serious escalation of violence that claimed more than 400 lives, triggered a government crisis, and put the entire Iraqi political system in doubt.²⁸

26. Human Rights Watch, "If You Are Afraid for Your Lives, Leave Sinai!" *Egyptian Security Forces and ISIS Affiliate Abuses in North Sinai*, HRW, 31 May 2019.

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

28. See the summary in Iraq in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

Even though the Iraqi government proclaimed the end of the fight against ISIS after inflicting several defeats on it in late 2017, the organisation continued to claim responsibility for armed actions in different parts of Iraq in 2019, including the governorates of Salah-al-Din, Nineveh, Anbar, Suleimaniya, Diyala, Kirkuk and Najaf and in northern Baghdad. Its attacks mainly consisted of car bombs, suicide operations, roadside IEDs, shootings, ambushes and clashes with Iraqi security forces and Shia militias attached to Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs) or Hashd al-Shaabi, in addition to armed attacks against Shia pilgrims, the kidnapping and extortion of civilians and killings of people accused of being “collaborators”. In the middle of the year, the Iraqi military and anti-terrorist forces intensified their campaign against the group as part of Operation New Dawn in Kirkuk governorate and Operation Will of Victory in Diyala. In this context, fighting between the PMUs and ISIS also increased. **Some analysts said that although ISIS has declined significantly compared to 2014 and 2015, particularly in Iraq and Syria, it could still re-emerge by taking advantage of some dynamics in Iraq**, such as instability or the impact of foreign interference that could facilitate its resurgence beyond the mostly mountainous and desert areas in which it has operated. Experts also warned that the Iraqi authorities must prioritise reconstruction in the areas that were under ISIS control, promote the sustainable return of the displaced population and avoid chronic stigmatisation of the families of the group’s fighters.

The armed conflict in Iraq was characterised by ongoing hostilities between the security forces and the armed group ISIS in 2019 and by the growing projection in the country of the struggle between Iran and the United States

Iraq remained another theatre for projecting the strategic struggle between the US and Iran, which intensified in 2019.²⁹ The competition between Washington and Tehran to influence and shape the decisions of the Iraqi government was evident from the beginning of the year, as seen in the high-level visits to Iraq, in the demands and warnings to its leaders and in the attempts by Baghdad to stay neutral. In the final days of 2018, US President Donald Trump made a surprise visit to a US military base in Anbar governorate and reaffirmed his intention to keep troops in Iraq, while in February he noted that the purpose of the US military presence in the country was “to watch Iran”. Given this, Iraqi Shia MPs from different political parties raised the need to end this military presence and the security cooperation agreements with the United States. Throughout the year, Washington also tried to pressure Baghdad to stop importing Iranian gas, and although it issued successive ultimatums to the Iraqi authorities, it still did not impose sanctions. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani made his first visit to Iraq in March and signed various bilateral collaboration agreements. During the trip, he also met with the top Iraqi Shia leader, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who reportedly insisted that the Iraqi authorities should take full control of the PMU militias, bearing in mind

that some of their groups are considered as loyal to Tehran and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Given this context, **the rise in tension between Washington and Tehran and several acts of violence that affected both US and Iranian interests in Iraq aggravated the situation in May.** Various attacks against US targets were reported, including projectile and rocket fire on the US embassy in Baghdad and on US military bases and company facilities. The US withdrew some of its diplomatic personnel and US companies like Exxon Mobil evacuated its non-Iraqi workers. The US Secretary of State underscored Iraq’s responsibility for protecting its citizens and troops against possible attacks by pro-Iranian militias. In July, the Iraqi Prime Minister approved a decree to integrate the Iranian-backed militias under his command and integrate them into the Iraqi security forces. Meanwhile, a drone attack was reported against a military base in the governorate of Salah-al-Din where members of the Revolutionary Guard were located. The US denied any responsibility for this attack, which was followed days later by several Israeli airstrikes on Iraqi military bases allegedly sheltering Iranian weapons and advisors, one of whom died. In August,

new allegedly Israeli attacks against Tehran-backed Shia militia facilities killed three others, prompting the pro-Iranian parliamentary bloc (Fatah Alliance) to blame them on the US and Israel, describing them as a declaration of war on Iraq and urging the withdrawal of US troops from the country. In September, a drone attack for which nobody claimed responsibility killed 21 PMU members in Anbar governorate. The Iraqi prime minister held Israel responsible for the attacks. The biggest escalation occurred in December, as there were several attacks against US military bases and targets throughout the month. One of them, at the end of the year, killed a US contractor in Kirkuk. In response, Washington attacked pro-Iranian Kataib Hezbollah militia bases (part of the PMUs), causing 25 deaths. This attack sparked protests outside the US embassy in Baghdad, which was surrounded by protesters and pro-Iranian militias who ended up entering the complex. **In early January 2020, the United States launched an attack in Baghdad that killed senior Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, the head of the al-Quds Brigades, and other high-ranking pro-Iranian militia officers. The attack significantly increased the tension between Washington and Tehran** and could foreseeably have destabilising effects on the region.

During the last quarter of 2019, the armed conflict in Iraq raged alongside growing popular demonstrations that led to the prime minister’s resignation in December. Although focused on domestic issues, the protests also had an anti-Iranian component, in part

29. See the summary on Iran – USA, Israel in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

because of the role that pro-Tehran militias played in the harsh crackdown on the protests. Tehran underlined the simultaneity of the protests in Iraq, Lebanon (both in its sphere of influence) and Iran and blamed them on a foreign plot. Finally, continuous attacks by Turkey against PKK positions in northern Iraq during the year killed dozens of people.³⁰

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International ³¹
Main parties:	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

The conflict between Israel and the various Palestinian actors started up again in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, favoured by the failure of the peace process promoted at the beginning of the 1990s (the Oslo Accords, 1993-1994). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict started in 1947 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 divided Palestinian territory under British mandate into two states and soon after proclaimed the state of Israel (1948), without the state of Palestine having been able to materialise itself since then. After the 1948-49 war, Israel 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.

After the escalation in 2018, the year of the most serious incidents since 2014, especially due to the Israeli crackdown on Palestinian demonstrations as part of the Great March of Return in Gaza, levels of direct violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fell during 2019. **According to figures provided by OCHA, 144 people died due to acts of violence related to the conflict during the year, less than half the previous year, when 313 deaths were counted.** Of the total number of fatalities in 2019, 134 were Palestinians and 10 were Israelis, while 15,479 Palestinians and 121 Israelis were injured in the same period. As in previous

Levels of violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict fell in 2019 compared to the previous year, marked by the crackdown on the Great March of Return protests in Gaza

years, most of the incidents were concentrated in Gaza and around the border barrier between Gaza and Israel. The violence mainly took the form of Israeli repression of Palestinian protests, Israeli attacks against Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets in Gaza, rockets and projectiles launched by these Palestinian groups towards Israel and incidents with drones. The most serious events occurred in May and November. In May, Israeli forces shot at Palestinian protesters, prompting Palestinian factions to launch more than 700 rockets into Israeli territory, to which Israel responded with more than 300 airstrikes in the Gaza Strip. Twenty-four Palestinians and four Israelis died in this escalation of violence. In November, rockets launched from Gaza struck the town of Sderot, provoking Israeli airstrikes in the days that followed. One of them killed a senior official of Islamic Jihad and his wife, triggering a counterattack by the armed group, which fired about 450 projectiles towards Israel, most of which hit fields or were intercepted by Israeli forces. The Israeli response was an intense air offensive in which 34 Palestinian people were killed, including 16 civilians. After this escalation of violence, the Egyptian authorities and the UN special envoy for the Middle East mediated to restore the ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip during the year.³² As part of these dynamics of violence and truces, Israel decreed successive closings and openings of border crossings, as well as restrictions and expansions of the fishing area in some areas of Gaza during the year. There were also some violent incidents in the West Bank and Jerusalem in 2019, including the Israeli suppression of protests near Ramallah and Hebron and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the area of the Temple Mount. Incidents also occurred between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in areas near settlements.

The dynamics of the conflict were also influenced by the electoral climate in Israel during the year, which held elections in April and September, though the results did not allow the prime minister to form a government. In this context, **policies aimed at further entrenching the occupation of the Palestinian territories continued throughout 2019, through measures such as approval to demolish Palestinian residential buildings in East Jerusalem or permits to build more than 7,000 Israelis homes in Area C of the West Bank.** In September, on the eve of the second Israeli elections in a year, Netanyahu promised that if he was re-elected he would annex Israel to the Jordan Valley and the Israeli settlements of Hebron and stressed that he intended to do so in maximum coordination with US President

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

31. 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.

32. See the summary on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

Donald Trump. **Netanyahu's plan to incorporate up to one third of the occupied Palestinian territories into Israel was condemned by the Palestinian Authority, the Arab countries, the UN and the EU.** However, the positions of the prime minister and the Israeli government were reinforced by Washington's Middle East policy and its explicit bias in favor of Israeli interests. Following the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem and the suspension of aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) in 2018, **the White House decreed in November 2019 that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories were not illegal. Previously, in March, Washington had recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since the 1967 war.**³³

Added to this is the Middle East peace plan promoted by Trump's son-in-law, White House Director of American Innovation Jared Kushner, which had yet to be publicly revealed, and the "Peace to Prosperity" initiative that was unveiled in Bahrain, in June, committed to economic investment and resources for Palestine. The latter initiative was rejected by the Palestinian Authority and criticised via mass protests by the Palestinian population alongside the meetings in Bahrain. Thus, the Palestinian authorities supported resuming negotiations with Israel in 2019, but not with the United States as a supporter due to its loss of credibility as a mediator, and expressed their preference for a process under the auspices of Russia and the international community. In a blow to Israeli interests, **at the end of the year the International Criminal Court announced after years of preliminary investigations that there was sufficient evidence to investigate allegations of war crimes in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza.** Still, the ICC had to confirm its jurisdiction over the occupied Palestinian territories. Finally, in 2019 Israel expelled Human Rights Watch's director for Israel and Palestine, Omar Shakir, a US citizen and the first person to be expelled after the approval in 2017 of a controversial law that allows the Israeli government to deport people who support boycotting Israel or who denounce Israeli settlements.

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.

For yet another year, Syria continued to be the scene of high levels of violence in the context of an armed conflict characterised by the participation of many armed actors, the significant influence of the interests and strategies of regional and international actors in the development of hostilities, clashes affecting different parts of the country, with specific dynamics on the different battle fronts and very serious impacts on the civilian population. **Despite the persistent difficulties in establishing general statistics on the impact of violence, the information available concludes that less people died as a result of the conflict in 2019 than in 2018.** According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), based in the United Kingdom, at least 11,200 people died in the conflict in 2019, including about 3,500 civilians, while in 2018 the SOHR counted 20,000 deaths. According to ACLED data, meanwhile, the death toll from violence in Syria topped 15,000, compared to the 30,000 reported by the centre in 2018.

As in previous years, the armed conflict was fought on various fronts, each with its pre-eminent dynamics and actors. In general terms, however, **by the end of the year the Syrian regime had regained control of 71% of its territory with the help of Russia, according to the SOHR. The most active operational areas in 2019 were concentrated in the northwest and northeast.** On the northwestern front, despite the agreement between Russia and Turkey to establish a demilitarised area in Idlib in September 2018, the area was the scene of bloody clashes in 2019, mainly between Russian-backed government forces supported by Russia and armed groups led by the jihadist organisation Hayat Tahir al-Sham (HTS), which did not cease its attacks on the regime. The government's harsh air and land campaign to defeat and expel HTS and related groups from this region had serious impacts on the population due to the destruction of essential infrastructure, like hospitals, schools, and agricultural resources, and prompted the UN to condemn the deaths of a large number of civilians

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

(more than 300 died in May alone), the use of weapons such as chlorine gas and the forced displacement of the population. As of September, half a million people had fled because of the violence. Hostilities on this front also affected other areas, such as Aleppo, Latakia and Hama. In the middle of the year, HTS and other opposition groups such as NTS launched a Turkish-backed counteroffensive, while Hezbollah became involved in clashes in support of the Syrian regime, despite having announced that it would reduce its presence in Syria. In this context, Ankara denounced an attack on a Turkish military convoy as a violation of the Sochi agreement reached in 2018. Meanwhile, Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that sought to establish a ceasefire in Idlib. Moscow justified the decision arguing that the resolution did not provide an exception for military operations against armed groups designated as terrorists by the UN. **Thus, in late 2019, Moscow and the Syrian regime intensified the offensive in Idlib, forcibly displacing around 235,000 civilians in a two-week period.** The United States also became involved in the area, declaring the al-Qaeda branch active there (Hurras al-Din) to be a terrorist group. A US military operation in the area in October also caused the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the founding leader of ISIS and promoter of the group's caliphate in Iraq and Syria that he had announced in Mosul, Iraq in 2014. ISIS confirmed the death of its top leader and announced the appointment of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi as his successor.

On the northeastern front, the dynamics varied between the first and second halves of the year. The first half of the year was marked by operations conducted by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) coalition, led by Kurdish forces and supported by the US, intent on eradicating the last positions of ISIS in the border area with Iraq. The epicentres of the violence were in Deir al-Zawr and the town of Baghouz, an ISIS stronghold. **Although the SDF announced that ISIS had been totally eliminated from Syria in March, the armed group continued to claim responsibility for attacks in the following months,** especially in the Hasaka and Qamishli areas. There were also episodes of rebellion by Arab populations against the SDF in the northwest. Meanwhile, Turkey continued in its attempts to create a safe zone in northern Syria, claiming precedent in the 1998 Adana agreement between Turkey and Syria.³⁴ Turkey and the US began joint patrols in this area, prompting the al-Assad regime to protest. However, the situation took a turn in October, when the Trump administration decided to withdraw US troops from northeastern Syria. The

decision was interpreted as Washington's betrayal of the Kurdish YPG forces, which until then had been key in the fight against ISIS. Before the US withdrawal, Turkey launched an intense air and ground offensive in the area against Kurdish forces as part of Operation Peace Spring. The intensification of violence in the area had serious impacts on the civilian population. The SDF agreed with the Syrian regime on limited deployment in the area to repel the Turkish offensive. Ankara's forces took control of a 140-kilometre strip between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn and issued an ultimatum to the YPG to withdraw. Talks between the US and Turkey and between Russia and Turkey led to fragile ceasefires and the launch of joint patrols in the "safe zone" now supervised by Turkey and Russia, which expanded its presence in northeastern Syria. Meanwhile, the US announced that it would keep troops in Syria to protect the SDF-controlled oil fields. Until the end of the year, Turkey and the SDF were accused of violating the agreement, while human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch warned of abuse and crimes against the mainly Kurdish local population. At the same time, **Turkey was criticised for its plans to repatriate up to two million Syrian refugees, mostly Arabs, to this "safe zone", thereby altering demographic realities in the area.**³⁵

In addition to the dynamics on these fronts, there were many incidents of violence in Syria throughout the year that involved Israeli forces, which attacked alleged Hezbollah and Iranian positions, mainly in the south, in the Golan Heights, but also in other areas, including Hama and Aleppo. The clashes between these actors, influenced by the regional dynamics of tension, caused the deaths of around 100 people in 2019.³⁶ Additionally, the UN Human Rights Council's Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic warned that arbitrary arrests and torture of civilians occurred in areas controlled by the Syrian government, including people who had recently returned to the country. In the south, the secret police arrested many former opposition leaders. The commission also reported that in areas such as Duma, Deraa and Ghoutah, which were strongholds of the opposition, the ineffective provision of services deprived hundreds of thousands of people of adequate access to water, electricity and education. Moreover, the commission drew attention to the extreme living conditions in the al-Hol camp, where some 70,000 people, mostly women and children under 12 years of age, were living poorly. These people included relatives of ISIS fighters who fled the bombings against Baghouz. Likewise, kidnappings, torture and arrests of dissidents were reported in the

In 2019, Syria continued to be the scene of high levels of violence in a conflict characterised by the participation of many armed actors, strong influence of regional and international actors and very serious impacts on the civilian population

34. See the summary on the peace process in Syria in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

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

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

areas controlled by HTS. **Given the magnitude of the arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, kidnappings, destruction of infrastructure and lack of services in the country, the commission stressed that the conditions for the sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons did not exist.**

The dynamics of violence during 2019 caused new displacements of the civilian population and at the end of the year Syria remained the country with the largest forcibly displaced population in the world, both internally and outside its borders. According to UNHCR data, 90% of the Syrian refugee population lived in neighboring countries and 50% were minors. Along these lines, the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic also highlighted the effects of forced displacement on children, including child labour, child recruitment and child marriage. The commission also analysed the effects from a gender perspective. An example of this are women forced to give birth in inadequate places and without necessary prenatal or postnatal care, given the severe destruction of hospital infrastructure and the problems faced by Syrian women to prove and document the deaths of their relatives, making inheritance or custody procedures difficult, or to register their sons and daughters, given that nationality is transmitted patrilineally in Syria. In a conflict where sexual violence has played a prominent role, the commission reported investigations into the abuse and rape of LGBTI women and men, including returnees, in government-controlled areas. At the end of the year, **the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) claimed that the Syrian population had suffered the most from chemical weapons attacks in the last decade. According to their data, a total of 1,472 people had died and 9,989 had been injured in 222 chemical attacks, 217 of which were carried out by the Syrian regime.**

The Gulf

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

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

The armed conflict featuring AQAP, and more recently ISIS, continued to be partially overshadowed by the dynamics of the conflict between the Houthis on one side and the government of Abdo Rabo Mansour Hadi and southern secessionist groups on the other side.³⁷ Nevertheless, **several acts of violence carried out by al-Qaeda and ISIS branches in the country were reported during the year and various analysts indicated that these organisations continued to try to take advantage of hostilities in the country to reinforce their positions, mainly in the south.** The conflict continued to be of low intensity, although the death toll was difficult to determine. One of the most serious incidents reportedly occurred in August, when AQAP militiamen attacked a military camp in the governorate of Abyan (south), killing 20 people after several hours of fighting. The deceased were part of a group that had received training from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that is part of the Saudi-led international military coalition that has fought the Houthis since 2015. The AQAP offensive was preceded by two bloody attacks in Aden, one of which was a suicide attack for which ISIS claimed responsibility that killed 11 people. Another attack against a military checkpoint was also reported in July. Blamed on AQAP, the attack killed five soldiers.

In a context of instability exacerbated by the growing conflict between Hadi government forces and southern separatist groups linked to the Southern Transitional Council (STC), some operations against al-Qaeda were intensified in order to prevent it from capitalising on the climate of destabilisation, especially in August. Thus, the UAE, an ally of the STC, reportedly launched airstrikes against AQAP positions in response to reports that al-Qaeda fighters had mobilised in the Abyan area. An undetermined number of AQAP militants are reported to

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

have died in other UAE attacks outside Aden, according to Yemeni sources quoted by the media. However, Hadi government representatives condemned some of the UAE attacks, claiming that they had killed Yemeni soldiers. **In September, media reports claimed that AQAP militiamen had taken control of the Wadea district in Abyan, a governorate that has intermittently been partially controlled by al-Qaeda in recent years.** In 2017, STC-linked forces had expelled AQAP from this area. Throughout 2019, some incidents were also reported between alleged AQAP and STC members. Additionally, the United States continued to be a significant actor in the conflict. In May, media reports claimed that US forces carried out a drone attack that killed four alleged al-Qaeda militiamen in Bayda governorate. Two others reportedly died in another attack by a manned US aircraft in Maarib governorate in November. In October, the US president also officially confirmed the death of al-Qaeda explosives manufacturing chief Ibrahim al-Asiri during an operation carried out in Yemen two years before. In November, Washington offered rewards worth 10 million dollars to those who provided information leading to the capture of two high-ranking AQAP officers: Sa'ad bin Atef Al Awlaki and Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud Al Qosi. In addition, the capture of the ISIS leader in Yemen, Abu Sulayman Al Adnani, known as Abu Usama Al Muhajir, was reported in June. The leader was intercepted in an operation by Saudi naval forces in collaboration with Yemeni special forces.

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, separatists under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Summary: The conflict started in 2004, when the followers of the religious leader al-Houthi, belonging to the Shiite minority, started an armed rebellion in the north of Yemen. The government assured that the rebel forces aimed to re-establish a theocratic regime such as the one that governed in the area for one thousand years, until the triumph of the Republican revolution in 1962. The followers of al-Houthi denied it and	

accused the government of corruption and not attending to the northern mountainous regions, and also opposed the Sanaa alliance with the US in the so-called fight against terrorism. The conflict has cost the lives of thousands of victims and has led to massive forced displacements. Various truces signed in recent years have been successively broken with taking up of hostilities again. As part of the rebellion that ended the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011, the Houthis took advantage to expand areas under its control in the north of the country. They have been increasingly involved in clashes with other armed actors, including tribal militias, sectors sympathetic to Salafist groups and to the Islamist party Islah and fighters of AQAP, the affiliate of al-Qaeda in Yemen. The advance of the Houthis to the centre and south of the country exacerbated the institutional crisis and forced the fall of the Yemeni government, leading to an international military intervention led by Saudi Arabia in early 2015. In a context of internationalisation, the conflict has acquired sectarian tones and a regional dimension. The conflict has been acquiring a growing regional and international dimension and has been influenced by tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia and between Washington and Tehran.

The armed conflict in Yemen followed a trend similar to that of the previous year in 2019. Almost all year long, violent episodes took place that called into question attempts to implement the peace agreement reached in 2018 between Houthi forces and those of Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi's government, supported by the international coalition led by Riyadh.³⁸ The dynamics of the conflict were also affected by the rising tensions in the region between the United States and Saudi Arabia on one hand and Iran on the other, which stands accused of supporting the Houthis. At the same time, **tensions and clashes within the anti-Houthi coalition intensified significantly, pitting forces loyal to Hadi against separatist groups in the south.** Like in 2018, despite the complexity of the situation in Yemen, some events occurred in the final months of 2019 that helped to de-escalate the violence and gave rise to limited expectations about setting up a more favourable context for a negotiated end to the conflict. In general terms, however, the levels of violence continued to be very high and the conflict continued to be rated as one of the most intense in the world. **The death toll remained difficult to contrast, but data provided by research centres such as ACLED suggested that around 23,000 people may have died due to the hostilities in 2019.** This figure is relatively lower than the estimated 30,000 fatalities in 2018, also according to ACLED. According to this organisation, the total number of people killed in the Yemeni armed conflict since the violence escalated in 2015 exceeds 100,000. Of this total, some 12,000 were civilians killed in direct attacks, most of them committed by the Riyadh-led coalition. In its September 2019 report, the UN expert committee on Yemen that has analysed the situation in the country since 2014 found a lack of collaboration among various actors to investigate the human rights violations perpetrated in the country. Nevertheless, the evidence gathered

38. See the summary on the peace process in Yemen in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2020: report on trends and scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2020.

confirmed that all parties involved in the conflict have committed abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including acts that constitute war crimes. These abuses include indiscriminate airstrikes, the use of mines, blockades, sieges, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence and child recruitment. Yemen's humanitarian crisis continued to be regarded as the worst in the world by the United Nations.

In the first months of the year, the difficulties in putting the Stockholm Agreement into practice, which was signed in late 2018 under the auspices of the UN, became evident. The stipulations of the agreement included a ceasefire in the port of Al Hudaydah and led to the establishment of a truce supervision mission by the UN (UNMHA). However, Houthi and pro-Hadi forces resisted withdrawing from Al Hudaydah over differences in the composition of the security forces that would take control of the area. **Meanwhile, clashes and other acts of violence continued in the north of the country, in the border area between Yemen and Saudi Arabia and mainly in the governorates of Saada, Hajjah and Al Jawf.** There were also clashes between Houthis and Hajour tribal groups in Al Jawf that claimed dozens of lives. Houthi forces also launched various attacks on targets in Saudi Arabia, including airports and pipelines. Some of them were intercepted by Riyadh, which also attacked targets on Yemeni soil. As ACLED noted, while attacks by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen decreased, offensives continued to be reported that left a high number of civilian casualties. One of the bloodiest incidents occurred in September, when a Saudi attack on a building that the Houthis used as a prison killed more than 100 people. Also in September, **Saudi state company facilities were shelled in Abqaiq and Khurais (eastern Saudi Arabia) in an incident for which the Houthis claimed responsibility, but which the US, Riyadh and European countries blamed on Iran. This reflected the scenario of regional and international tension in the Middle East and its particular projection in Yemen.** There were also armed clashes between Houthis and groups from the south in 2019, especially in the governorates of Dhale, Abyan and Lahj.

Meanwhile, **tensions clearly grew on the anti-Houthi side throughout the year, with periodic and increasingly significant clashes between Hadi's forces and southern secessionist groups linked to the Southern Transitional Council (STC), supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).** The most serious incidents occurred in Taiz

and especially in the town of Aden, which was the scene of the highest levels of violence since 2015. In August, a missile attack on fighters of the southern armed group Security Belt caused dozens of fatalities during a military parade, including one of its most prominent commanders, Munir "Abu al-Yamama" al-Yafei. Although the Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, secessionist groups accused forces loyal to Hadi, and particularly the Islamist Islah party, of being responsible for it. In this context, southern forces attempted to consolidate control over the territory of former southern Yemen, which was independent until 1990. Hadi's government accused the UAE of supporting this campaign by southern secessionists and launched a counter-offensive. The escalation of violence killed and wounded dozens, including civilians, in addition to inflicting serious damage on Aden's infrastructure. Given this scenario, Saudi Arabia called on the parties to hold talks in Jeddah to resolve their differences. **After almost**

three months of fighting, the meetings resulted in the Riyadh Agreement, which was signed by the parties on 5 November and considered a formula to avoid a new war within the armed conflict in Yemen.

The agreement includes the formation of a new government with the same number of representatives from the north as the south, the integration of the forces affiliated to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) into national military and security structures, the withdrawal of fighters and heavy

weapons from urban areas in southern Yemen and the inclusion of the STC in the government delegation in future negotiations with the Houthis to end the armed conflict in the country as part of the peace process sponsored by the UN.

The signing of this agreement coincided with a reduction in hostilities between the Houthis on one side and Hadi's forces and the Saudi coalition on the other side in the last quarter of the year. In November, the UN special envoy for Yemen reported that Saudi airstrikes had fallen by 80%, following the Houthis' decision to declare a unilateral ceasefire in September. According to reports, by the end of the year informal contacts were being held between Riyadh and the Houthis to continue to de-escalate along the border area. Despite the partial truce, humanitarian organisations continued to warn of incidents with civilian victims, including thousands of mostly Somali and Ethiopian migrants and refugees along the border. At the end of the year, the truce in the south was maintained in general terms, but amid outbreaks of violence, sharp tensions between the parties and obstacles to implementing the agreement.

