

Executive Summary

Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding is an annual report analyzing the state of the world in terms of conflict and peacebuilding based on three main axes: armed conflict, tensions, gender and peace and security. The analysis of the most relevant events in 2020 and the nature, causes, dynamics, actors and consequences of the main scenarios of armed conflict and social and political tension around the world allows for a regional comparative vision and also allows identifying global trends and elements of risk and preventive warnings for the future. Furthermore, the report also identifies peacebuilding opportunities or opportunities to scale down, prevent or resolve conflicts. In both cases, one of the main objectives in this report is to make available all of the information, analyses and identification of warning factors and peace opportunities for decision-makers, those intervening for the peaceful resolution to conflicts, or those giving a greater political, media or academic visibility to the many situations of political and social violence in the world.

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

Some of the most relevant conclusions and information in the *Alert 2021!* report are listed below:

- During 2020 there were 34 armed conflicts, the same number as the previous year. Most of the armed conflicts were concentrated in Africa (15) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (six), Europe (three) and America (one).
- In 2020 there were two new cases: Ethiopia (Tigray) and Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno Karabakh).
- The outlook for armed conflict in 2020 was influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN secretary general's appeal for a global truce received a limited and uneven response from the armed groups involved in conflicts. The ceasefires were short-lived and/or did not become entrenched and most of the actors involved in armed conflict continued to favour military methods.
- In 2020, the impacts of clashes between armed actors and the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against civilians were amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which further aggravated the precariousness and lack of protection of many populations affected by armed conflict. Cases such as Syria and Yemen highlighted the added burden of the pandemic on health systems severely damaged by years of violence.
- The vast majority of armed conflicts were internationalized internal –28 contexts, equivalent to 82%–, 9% were internal and 9% were international.
- 2020 saw a significant increase in high-intensity armed conflicts, which accounted for almost half of the cases, at 47% of the total.
- The 16 cases of serious armed conflict in 2020 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia / North West and South West), Ethiopia (Tigray), Libya, Mali, Mozambique (north), Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Western Sahel Region, DRC (East), DRC (east-ADF), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iraq, Syria and Yemen.
- According to OCHA, a total of 235 million people need humanitarian assistance in 2021, an increase of 40% compared to the estimates for the previous year and mainly attributable to COVID-19.
- Crossfire, the use of light weapons, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the excessive use of force by state agents would have caused more than 10,000 victims among boys and girls, including 4,019 deaths and 6,154 minors affected by mutilations, according to UN figures.
- UNHCR's annual report published in June 2020 confirmed the exponential growth trend of forced displacement in the last decade: at the end of 2019 there were 79.5 million forcibly displaced people, compared to the 70.8 million recorded at the end of the year previous.
- 26 million of the total number of displaced persons were refugees –20.4 million under UNHCR's mandate and 5.6 million Palestinians under UNRWA's mandate– and 45.7 million were in a situation of internal forced displacement.
- The United Nations denounced the use of sexual and gender-based violence in 19 contexts in 2019 and pointed out the responsibility of 54 armed actors, most of them of non-state character, although it also denounced the involvement of state security forces from various countries, including the DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria.
- During 2020, 95 socio-political crises were identified around the world, one more case than in the previous year. This increase is significantly lower than that registered in 2019 compared to 2018, when the number of tensions increased by 11 cases.
- The highest number of socio-political crises was concentrated in Africa, with 38 cases, followed by Asia (25), the Middle East (12 cases) and Europe and Latin America (10 in each region)
- Despite the fact that the increase in the number of socio-political crises in 2020 was almost imperceptible, six new cases of tension were identified.
- Of the 16 socio-political crises of maximum intensity, half were concentrated in Africa –Chad; Mali; Nigeria; Ethiopia; Ethiopia (Oromiya); Kenya; Rwanda-Burundi; and Morocco-Western Sahara–,

four in the Middle East –Iran-USA, Israel; Egypt; Iraq; and Israel-Syria-Lebanon–, two in Asia –China-India and India-Pakistan– and two in Latin America –Mexico and Venezuela.

- 73% of the socio-political crises were linked to opposition to the internal or international policies of certain governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the State as a whole; 39% to demands for self-government and/or identity; and 31% to disputes for control of territories and/or resources.
- 14 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2020 occurred in countries where there were serious gender inequalities, with high or very high levels of discrimination, six in countries with medium levels of discrimination and nine armed conflicts took place in countries for which no data is available.
- The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic was exacerbating the impact of sexual violence in conflict.
- In the decade between 2010 and 2019, at least 100 million people in the world were forcibly displaced from their homes, and most of them did not achieve a solution to their situation.
- 48% of the refugees were women.
- 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the approval of resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council and 25 years of the Beijing Platform for Action. These were two anniversaries of enormous importance in the women, peace and security agenda, which should have led to evaluate the progress and pending challenges in the implementation of the commitments acquired in these two decades.
- 13% of the people who negotiated, 6% of those who carried out mediation tasks and 6% of those who signed peace agreements were women. Seven out of ten peace processes still did not include women mediators or signatories. Seven United Nations-deployed peacekeeping missions still did not have a gender advisor on their staff.
- At the end of 2020, 18 countries in situations of armed conflict had a National Action Plan on resolution 1325, 11 of them in Africa.
- *Alert 2021!* identifies four opportunities for peace in Sudan and South Sudan, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville), on the EU gender, peace and security agenda and in Syria.
- The report highlights four risk scenarios regarding the worsening of violence against women caused

During 2020 there were 34 armed conflicts

by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in Peru, the Middle East and North Africa, and in relation to the dispute between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan.

Structure

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

Armed conflicts

The first chapter (**Armed conflicts**)¹ describes the evolution, type, causes and dynamics in active conflicts during the year; global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2020 are analyzed, as well as the impacts of such conflicts on the civilian population.

2020 offered no changes on the total number of armed conflicts worldwide. Following the trend of previous years, 34 cases were identified in 2020 –the same number as the previous year. In the five preceding years the figures were similar: 34 in 2019 and 2018, 33 in 2017 and 2016 and 35 in 2015. At the end of 2020, all cases remained active, unlike other years where a reduction in the levels of violence in some contexts led to these cases ceasing to be regarded as armed conflicts, i.e. Algeria (AQIM) and DRC (Kasai) in 2019. Nevertheless, there were two new additions to the list of armed conflicts. In

Africa, tensions between the federal government and the government of Ethiopia's Tigray region led to a military confrontation with serious consequences. In Europe, the historical dispute around the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh –majority Armenian and formally part of Azerbaijan– escalated into a situation of open armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with severe impacts in terms of lethality and forced population displacement.

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

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

Armed conflicts in 2020*

AFRICA (15)	ASIA (9)	MIDDLE EAST (6)
Burundi -2015- Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) -2018- CAR -2006- DRC (east) -1998- DRC (east-ADF) -2014- Ethiopia (Tigray) -2020- Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) - 2011- Libya -2011- Mali -2012- Mozambique (north) -2019- Somalia -1988- South Sudan -2009- Sudan (Darfur) -2003- Sudan (South Kordofan & Blue Nile) -2011- Western Sahel Region -2018-	Afghanistan -2001- India (CPI-M) -1967- India (Jammu & Kashmir) -1989- Myanmar -1948- Pakistan -2001- Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005- Philippines (NPA) -1969- Philippines (Mindanao) -1991- Thailand (south) -2004-	Egypt (Sinai) -2014- Iraq -2003- Israel-Palestine -2000- Syria -2011- Yemen (Houthis) -2004- Yemen (AQPA) -2011-
		EUROPE (3)
		Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) -2020- Turkey (south-east) -1984- Ukraine -2014-
		AMERICAS (1)
		Colombia -1964-

Regarding the geographical distribution of the armed conflict, as in previous years, most cases are concentrated in Africa (15) and Asia (9), followed by the Middle East (6), Europe (3) and the Americas (1). In percentage terms, therefore, the African continent accounted for 44% of total global conflicts.

With regard to the relationship between the actors involved in the conflict and its context, we identified internal, international and, for the most part, internationalised internal conflicts. Along similar lines to previous years, in 2020 9% of the contexts were internal in nature, i.e. conflicts in which the armed actors involved in the conflict operated exclusively within the borders of the same state. All three internal armed conflicts were concentrated in Asia: Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (South). Three other cases, also equivalent to 9% of armed conflicts, were international and occurred on three continents: the conflict in the Western Sahel Region in Africa, the Palestinian-Israeli case in the Middle East, and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in Europe. The vast majority of armed conflicts were internationalised internal conflicts (28 cases, or 82%). These cases are characterised by the fact that one of the disputing parties is foreign, the armed actors in the conflict have bases or launch attacks from abroad and/or the dispute spills over into neighbouring countries. In many conflicts this factor of internationalisation took the form of the involvement of third-party actors as disputing parties, including international missions, ad-hoc regional and international military coalitions, states and armed groups operating across borders, among others.

With regard to the **causes of the armed conflicts**, the vast majority were mainly motivated by opposition to the domestic or international policies of the respective

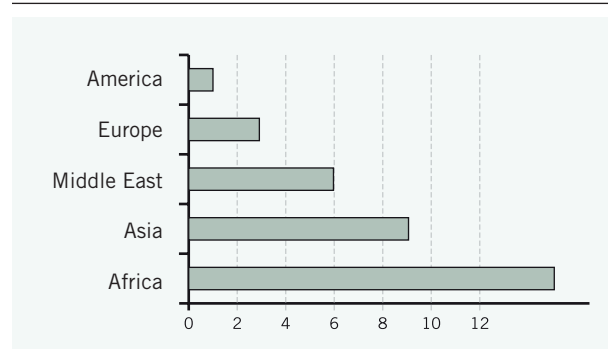
governments or to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a given state, resulting in struggles to gain power or erode it. One or the other element, or both, were present in 71% of cases in 2020 (24 out of 34 cases), in line with previous years (73% in 2019, 71% in 2018 and 73% in 2017). Among these 24 cases, 18 contexts involved armed actors aiming for system

change, mostly organisations claiming a jihadist agenda and seeking to impose their particular interpretation of Islamic laws. These groups include organisations such as the self-styled Islamic State (ISIS) and its affiliates or related entities in different continents –the group was present in countries such as Algeria, Libya, Lake Chad Region, Western Sahel Region, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, among others; the various branches of al-Qaeda –including AQIM (Algeria, Sahel and Libya) and AQAP (Yemen)–; the Taliban operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the al-Shabaab group in Somalia, among others.

Another factor prominent among the main causes of armed conflicts were disputes over identity and self-

Following the trend of previous years, the majority of armed conflicts in 2020 were internationalised internal conflicts

Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2020



governance claims, which were present in 59% of conflicts (20 cases), the same percentage as in the previous two years. In this regard, it is worth noting that the two armed conflicts that were triggered in 2020 were motivated by such claims. On the one hand, underlying the escalation of violence in Ethiopia's Tigray region were grievances and the Tigray community's perception of a loss of power and privilege in the face of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's policies to reform Ethiopia's federal system. The Tigray region's decision to hold elections in the region despite the federal government's decision to postpone the federal and regional elections due to the pandemic and to extend the mandate of the existing authorities, together with other issues that lie at the genesis of this conflict, led to a dispute of legitimacy that ended in armed confrontation at the end of the year. On the other hand, there is the dispute between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-majority enclave formally part of Azerbaijan but *de facto* independent. After several escalations of violence since the war in the 1990s, one of the most serious being in 2016, the hostilities sparked off again in 2020. The fighting subsided at the end of the year following a Russian-brokered agreement, which outlined a significant change in the territory's boundaries and ratified the partition of Nagorno-Karabakh, but left the enclave's status unresolved.

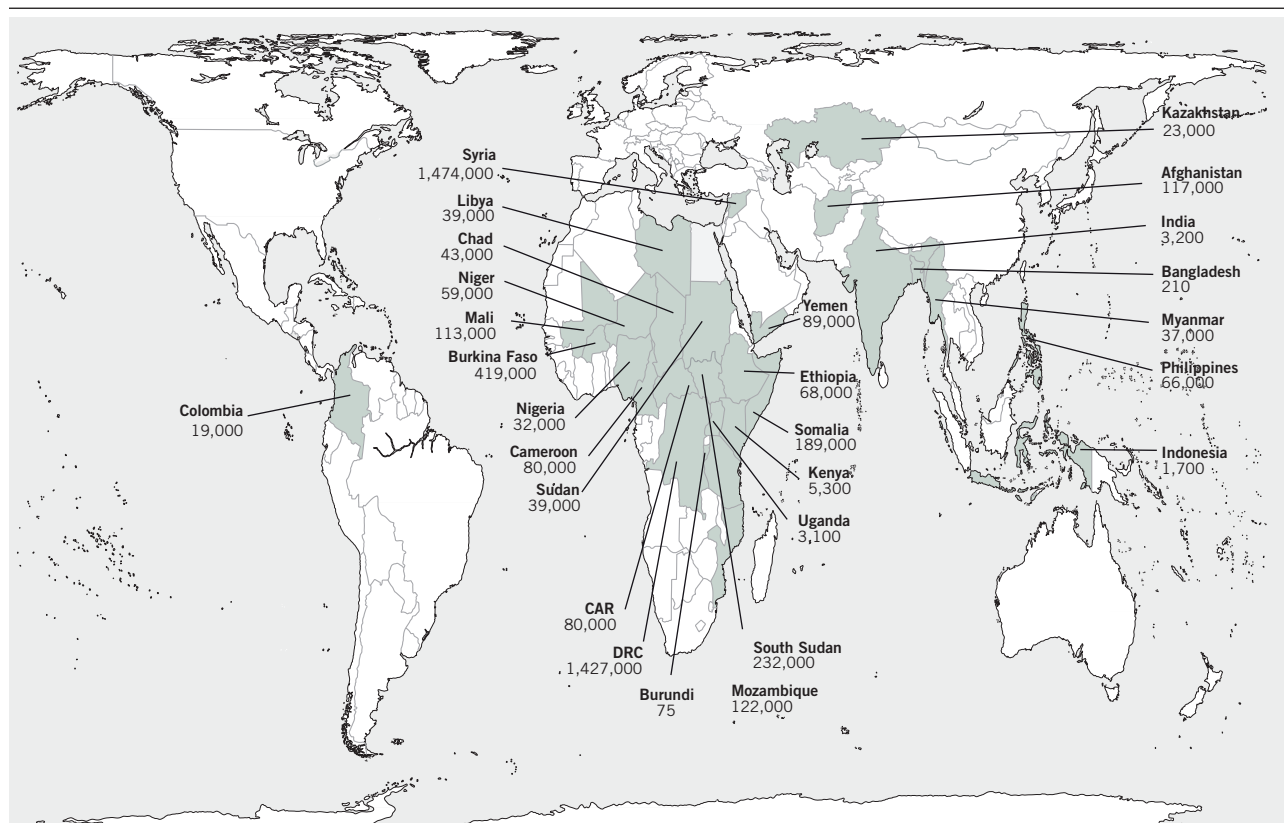
More than a third (35%) of the armed conflicts in 2020 saw a deterioration in the levels of violence and instability compared to the previous year

2020 saw a significant increase in high-intensity armed conflicts, which accounted for almost half of the cases, at 47% of the total

Dispute over control of territory –as also illustrated by the Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) case– and resources was one of the main causes in 35% of conflicts (12 cases) in 2020, continuing the trend of previous years. The issue of resources was a cause that was mostly present in African contexts –in more than half of the armed conflicts in the region (eight out of 15 cases)– although it is a factor that was indirectly present in many contexts in other regions, with violence being perpetuated through war economies.

In terms of the **evolution of armed conflicts** over the course of 2020, just over a third of the cases (12 out of 34, or 35%) saw a deterioration, with higher levels of violence and instability than in the previous year: Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Mozambique (north), Western Sahel Region, CAR, DRC (east-ADF), Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan, Myanmar, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Yemen (Houthis). The remaining cases were evenly split between those that exhibited similar levels of violence and hostilities to those recorded in 2019 and those that showed a reduction in fighting (11 cases in each category). Asia was the region that saw the largest decrease in hostilities. Two thirds of the armed conflicts in this area evolved towards lower levels of violence: Afghanistan, Philippines (Mindanao), India (CPI-M), Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan) and Thailand (south).

New internal forced displacements by conflict and violence – First semester of 2020



Source: IDMC, *GRID 2020: Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2020.

With regard to the **intensity of violence** in the different armed conflicts, it is possible to identify and highlight a particular feature in 2020: a significant prevalence of high-intensity cases, that is, contexts characterised by levels of lethality of over a thousand victims per year, in addition to serious impacts on the population, massive forced displacements and severe consequences in the territory. In contrast to previous years when high-intensity conflicts accounted for around a third of cases –32% in 2019 (11 cases), 27% in 2018 (nine cases)–, in 2020 serious armed conflicts increased and accounted for almost half of the cases, at 47% of the total. So far, the highest figure of the decade had been recorded in 2016 and 2017, but with a lower percentage: 40%. The highest prevalence of severe cases in 2020 was observed in Africa, where 11 of the 15 (73%) armed conflicts on the continent were high intensity. This is much higher than in the previous year in Africa, when less than half of the cases –seven out of 16 cases, or 44%– were high intensity. With regard to other regions, in the Middle East, half of the conflicts –three out of six– were considered serious in 2020, while Asia and Europe recorded one such case, respectively. The Americas, on the other hand, did not have high-intensity armed conflicts. The 16 cases of serious armed conflict in 2020 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Ethiopia (Tigray), Libya, Mali, Mozambique (north), Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Western Sahel Region, DRC (east), DRC (east-ADF), Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

In some of these contexts, fighting and other dynamics of violence resulted in levels of lethality that were well above the threshold of 1,000 fatalities per year. In the Western Sahel region, for example, more than 4,250 deaths were recorded and 2020 was reported as the deadliest year since the start of the violence in 2012, due to the actions of various jihadist groups operating in the area. In Somalia, the violence, mostly al-Shabaab attacks, killed more than 3,000 people. The armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in more than 5,000 deaths. In the case of Syria, estimates suggest that hostilities would have caused at least 8,000 fatalities in 2020, a relative decline from the levels of lethality recorded in previous years (15,000 killed in 2019; 30,000 in 2018). By far the two bloodiest armed conflicts in 2020 were Yemen and Afghanistan. In the Yemeni case, an estimated 20,000 people were killed as a direct result of clashes and explosive attacks. In the case of Afghanistan, the armed conflict is said to have killed more than 21,000 people. Although the figure is high,

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Cases such as Syria and Yemen highlighted the added burden of the pandemic on health systems severely damaged by years of violence

The two armed conflicts with the highest death toll in 2020 were Yemen and Afghanistan

it is significantly lower than the previous year's figure of 40,000 fatalities.

As in previous years, and as regularly denounced by the United Nations, international organisations and local entities, the civilian population continued to suffer very serious consequences as a result of armed conflicts. In 2020, the impacts of clashes between armed actors and the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against civilians were amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which further aggravated the precariousness and lack of protection of many populations affected by armed conflict. The UN Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict published in May, a few months into the pandemic, already warned of the implications of the coronavirus and the exacerbation of vulnerabilities among the most fragile groups. It should be recalled that civilians have been identified by the UN as the main victims of armed conflict.

In this sense, it should be noted that armed conflicts continued to trigger and/or aggravate humanitarian crises.

According to OCHA projections, a total of 235 million people required humanitarian assistance in 2021, an increase of 40% over the previous year's estimates and mostly attributable to COVID-19. The previous forecast –168 million– had already been highlighted as the highest figure in decades. The socio-economic impact of the pandemic exacerbated the vulnerability of populations already severely affected by conflict and violence, as illustrated by the cases of CAR, Ukraine (east), Syria and Yemen. In addition, armed conflict continued to have specific impacts on particular population groups, such as children. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict published in June 2020, analysing the situation between January and December 2019, again painted a picture of highly worrying trends. The UN verified more than 25,000 grave human rights violations against children in 19 contexts, more than half of them perpetrated by non-state actors and one third by government or international forces. Crossfire, the use of small arms, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the excessive use of force by state agents reportedly resulted in more than 10,000 child casualties, including 4,019 deaths and 6,154 children maimed.

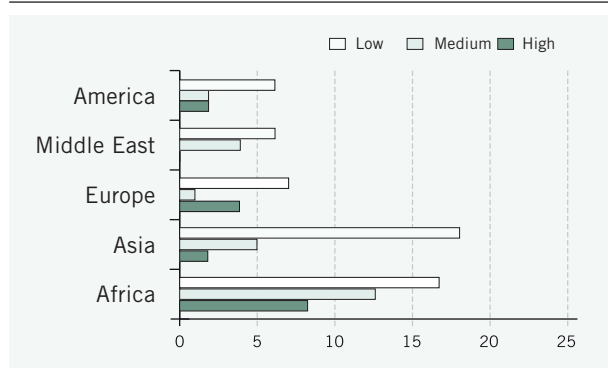
State and non-state armed actors continued to perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence against civilians, especially women and girls, in contexts of armed conflict. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on the subject published in 2020, which analyses events in 2019, confirmed that sexual violence continued to be used as a tactic of war, torture and political repression, as well as

an instrument of dehumanisation and to force population displacement. The report provides verified information on the use of sexual and gender-based violence in 19 contexts and noted the responsibility of 54 armed actors, mostly non-state actors, although it also denounced the involvement of state security forces in several countries, including DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria. The UN Secretary-General's assessment notes that sexual violence remains under-reported and that women and girls –who constitute the largest number of victims of this scourge– continue to face numerous gender-based obstacles to accessing justice and redress. In addition, the report highlights the specific vulnerabilities that affect displaced populations in this area, both at the time of transit and at their destination, and their link to the increase in forced child marriages and the withdrawal of women and girls from labour and educational activities in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Myanmar.

Forced population displacement continued to be one of the most visible and dramatic effects of armed conflict. UNHCR's annual report published in June 2020 confirmed the trend of exponential growth of this phenomenon over the last decade: by the end of 2019 there were 79.5 million forcibly displaced people, up from 70.8 million at the end of the previous year. Of the total number of displaced persons, 26 million were refugees –20.4 million under UNHCR's mandate and 5.6 million Palestinians under UNRWA's mandate– and 45.7 million were in a situation of forced internal displacement. Another 4.2 million were asylum seekers, while 3.6 million were Venezuelans recognised by UNHCR as having special displacement status. The nearly 80 million displaced people represent 1% of the world's population and 40% of them were children. With the exception of Venezuela, the main senders of refugees were all countries affected by armed conflicts of high-intensity –Syria (6.6 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.2 million)– or medium-intensity – Myanmar (1.1 million). Regarding the cases with the highest number of internally displaced people within the borders of their respective countries, most of the cases were high-intensity armed conflicts. According to data from the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) for 2019 –the latest annual data available– on displacement due to conflict and violence, the countries with the highest number of people in this situation were Syria (6.5 million), Colombia (5.6 million), DRC (5.5 million), Yemen (3.6 million), Afghanistan (3 million), Somalia (2.6 million), Nigeria (2.6 million), Sudan (2.1 million), Iraq (1.6 million) and Ethiopia (1.4 million).

High-intensity crises in 2020 took place in Chad, Mali, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Kenya, Morocco-Western Sahara, Rwanda-Burundi, Mexico, Venezuela, India-China, India-Pakistan, Iran-USA, Israel, Egypt, Iraq and Israel-Syria-Lebanon

Intensity of the socio-political crises by region



Socio-political crises

The second chapter (**Socio-political crises**)² looks at the most relevant events regarding social and political tensions recorded during the year and compares global and regional trends. Ninety-five socio-political crisis scenarios were identified around the world in 2020, one more than in the previous year. This increase is significantly lower than the change between 2018 and 2019, when the number of crises rose by 11. As in previous years, the highest number of socio-political crises was concentrated in Africa, with 38 cases, followed by Asia (25), the Middle East (12) and Europe and Latin America (10 in each region). Even though the rise in the number of socio-political crises in 2020 was almost imperceptible, six new cases were identified. Regarding the new cases, four of them took place in Africa –Mali, Tanzania, Algeria (AQMI) and Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan– and two in Asia –China-India and Indonesia (Sulawesi).

The vast majority (57%) of the socio-political crises were of low intensity, 26% were of medium intensity and 17% were of high intensity. Half of the 16 maximum-intensity crises were concentrated in Africa –Chad; Mali; Nigeria; Ethiopia; Ethiopia (Oromia); Kenya; Rwanda-Burundi; and Morocco-Western Sahara–, four in the Middle East –Iran-USA, Israel; Egypt; Iraq; and Israel-Syria-Lebanon, Israel–, two in Asia –China-India and India-Pakistan– and two in Latin America –Mexico and Venezuela.

Regarding the evolution of the crises, 38% of them worsened during 2020, 36% did not substantively change compared to the previous year and 26% enjoyed

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

improvement. Overall, therefore, the number of crises that escalated during the year (36) was clearly higher than the number in which the tension subsided. In 2020, more than half the crises that escalated were located in Africa. Regarding the main causes or motivations for the crises, the outlook in 2020 was very similar to that of the previous year. Seventy-three per cent of the crises analysed were linked to opposition to the internal or international policies of certain governments or to the political, social or ideological system of the state as a whole, 39% to demands for self-government and/or identity and 31% to struggles to control territories and/or resources. In line with previous years, more than half the crises in the world were internal (53%), although this percentage was clearly higher in Africa (61%) and in Latin America, where 100% were internal. Over one quarter of the crises were internationalised internal

20 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place in 2020 were in countries with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination

(26%), although in the Middle East and Europe half were of this type. Finally, just over one fifth (21%) of the crises were international in nature. Despite the fact that there were comparatively less international crises than the other two types, they represent a significant percentage of maximum-intensity cases, such as those of Morocco-Sahara, Rwanda-Burundi, India-China, India-Pakistan, Iran-USA-Israel and Israel-Syria-Lebanon.

Gender, peace and security

Chapter three (Gender, peace and security)³ studies the gender-based impacts in conflicts and tensions, as well as the different initiatives launched by the United

Nations and other local and international organizations and movements with regards to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. This perspective brings to light

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

	Medium levels of discrimination	High levels of discrimination	Very high levels of discrimination	No data
Armed conflict	Burkina Faso DRC (3) India (2) Thailand	CAR Chad ⁵ Mali Myanmar Nigeria ⁶	Afghanistan Cameroon (2) Iraq Philippines (2) Pakistan (2) Yemen (2)	Burundi Egypt Israel Libya Niger Palestine Somalia South Sudan Sudan (2) Syria
Socio-political crises	Chile DRC (4) Haiti India (6) Kenya Senegal Tajikistan Thailand Zimbabwe	CAR Chad Côte d'Ivoire Indonesia (2) Malawi Mali Madagascar Nigeria (2) Sri Lanka Tanzania Togo Tunisia Uganda (4)	Bangladesh Guinea Iran (4) Iraq (2) Lebanon (2) Morocco Pakistan (2)	Algeria (2) Bahrain Brunei Darussalam Burundi China (7) Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Gambia Guinea-Bissau Israel (2) Kosovo Malaysia Palestine Saudi Arabia Somalia South Korea South Sudan (2) Sudan (4) Syria Taiwan Uzbekistan Venezuela Western Sahara

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

Table created based on levels of gender discrimination found in the SIGI (OECD), as indicated in the latest available report (2020), and on Escola de Cultura de Pau's classifications for armed conflicts and socio-political crises. The SIGI establishes five levels of classification based on the degree of discrimination: very high, high, medium, low and very low.

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

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

According to the SIGI, levels of discrimination against women were high or very high in 29 countries, mainly concentrated in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The analysis obtained by comparing the data from this indicator with that of the countries that are affected by situations of armed conflict reveals that 14 of the 34 armed conflicts that took place throughout 2020 occurred in countries where serious gender inequalities exist, with high or very high levels of discrimination; 6 in countries with medium levels of discrimination; and that 9 armed conflicts took place in countries for which there are no available data in this regard –Burundi, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Niger, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan. Similarly, in 4 other countries where there were one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with low levels (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ukraine and Turkey) or very low levels (Colombia) of discrimination, according to the SIGI. As regards socio-political crises, at least 45 of the 96 active cases of socio-political crisis during 2020 took place in countries where there are severe gender inequalities (medium, high or very high levels according to the SIGI). 32 socio-political crises took place in countries for which no data are available (Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Burundi, China, DPR Korea, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Palestine, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Kosovo, Western Sahara, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Taiwan, Uzbekistan and Venezuela).

As in previous years, during 2020 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts. Its use, which in some cases was part of the deliberate war strategies of the armed actors, was documented in different reports, as well as by local and international media. The UN Secretary-General's report analysed the situation of 19 countries in 2019, 15 of them in conflict situations: the CAR, the DRC, Burundi, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Nigeria, Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Twelve of the 19 armed conflicts that were analysed in the

UN Secretary-General's report experienced high levels of intensity in 2020 –Libya, Mali, DRC (east), DRC (east-ADF), the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram), Western Sahel region, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (Houthis)–, topping 1,000 fatalities during the year and producing serious impacts on people and the territory, including conflict-related sexual violence. Seven of these also saw an escalation of violence during 2019 compared to the previous year –Mali, South Sudan, Sudan Darfur, DRC (east- ADF), Colombia, Myanmar and Yemen (Houthis). Most of the armed actors identified by the Secretary-General as responsible for sexual violence in armed conflict were non-state actors, some of whom had been included on UN terrorist lists. UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that the COVID-19 pandemic was exacerbating the impact of sexual violence in conflict. As a result of the confinement implemented to combat the coronavirus, it was difficult for victims to access justice systems, increasing the serious structural barriers to reporting sexual violence in conflict situations.

The Secretary-General also warned of the risk that care services for victims of sexual violence such as access to shelters, psychosocial and health services could cease to be prioritised and that impunity could increase. The pandemic not only had an impact on sexual violence in armed conflicts, but also increased the risk for many women of suffering violence in the family and home.

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on UNSC Resolution
1325***

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and crises had other serious gender impacts. Impunity for human rights violations continued to be a recurring theme. The annual report on forced displacement presented by UNHCR collected demographic data on the displaced population in the world during 2019. UNHCR provided some data disaggregated by sex, noting that 48% of refugees were women. This year there was a total of 79.5 million displaced people in the world, including 26 million refugees. According to data from the United Nations agency, in the decade between 2010 and 2019, at least 100 million people in the world were forcibly displaced from their homes, without most of them achieving a solution to their situation. Only 3.9 million people managed to return to their places of origin and 1.1 million were resettled in other countries. Since 2011, the annual number of refugees has continued to grow. Women accounted for 52% of the internally displaced population in all 16 of the 20 operations for which UNHCR had demographic data.

The United Nations independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity presented his report on the situation of LGBTBI people during the coronavirus pandemic. The expert highlighted the disproportionate impact that this situation was having, with consequences such as an increase in violence in nearby environments due to the confinement situation, and noted that the response to the pandemic reproduced and exacerbated

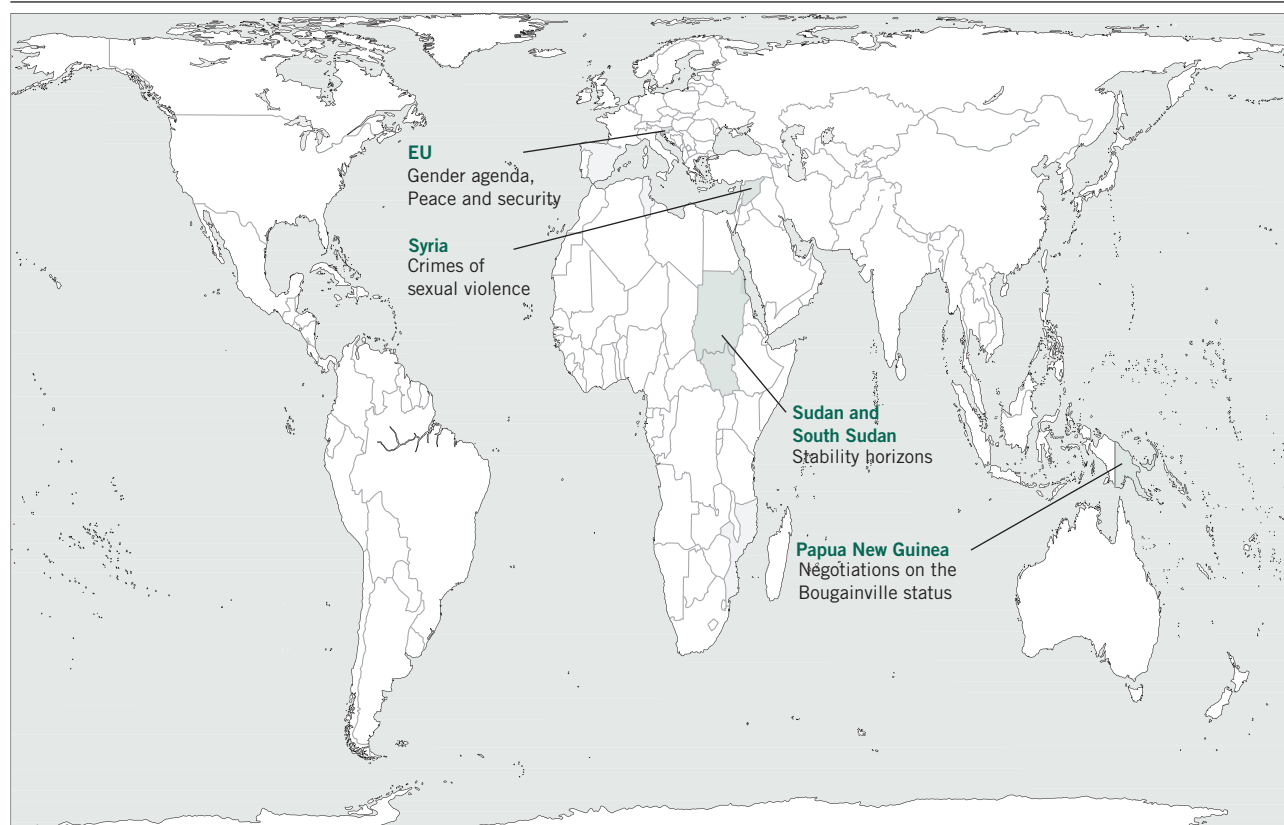
previously identified patterns of social exclusion and violence against LGBTBI people. In addition, the situations of violence and discrimination that LGBTBI people usually face could dissuade them from seeking out healthcare, worsening their situation in the public health emergency caused by the pandemic. The expert also warned of possible regression in the refugee and asylum policy, as well as the intensification of violence against LGBTBI and gender-diverse people in the countries of origin of forcibly displaced people and the spread of COVID-19 in refugee camps due to the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at these locations.

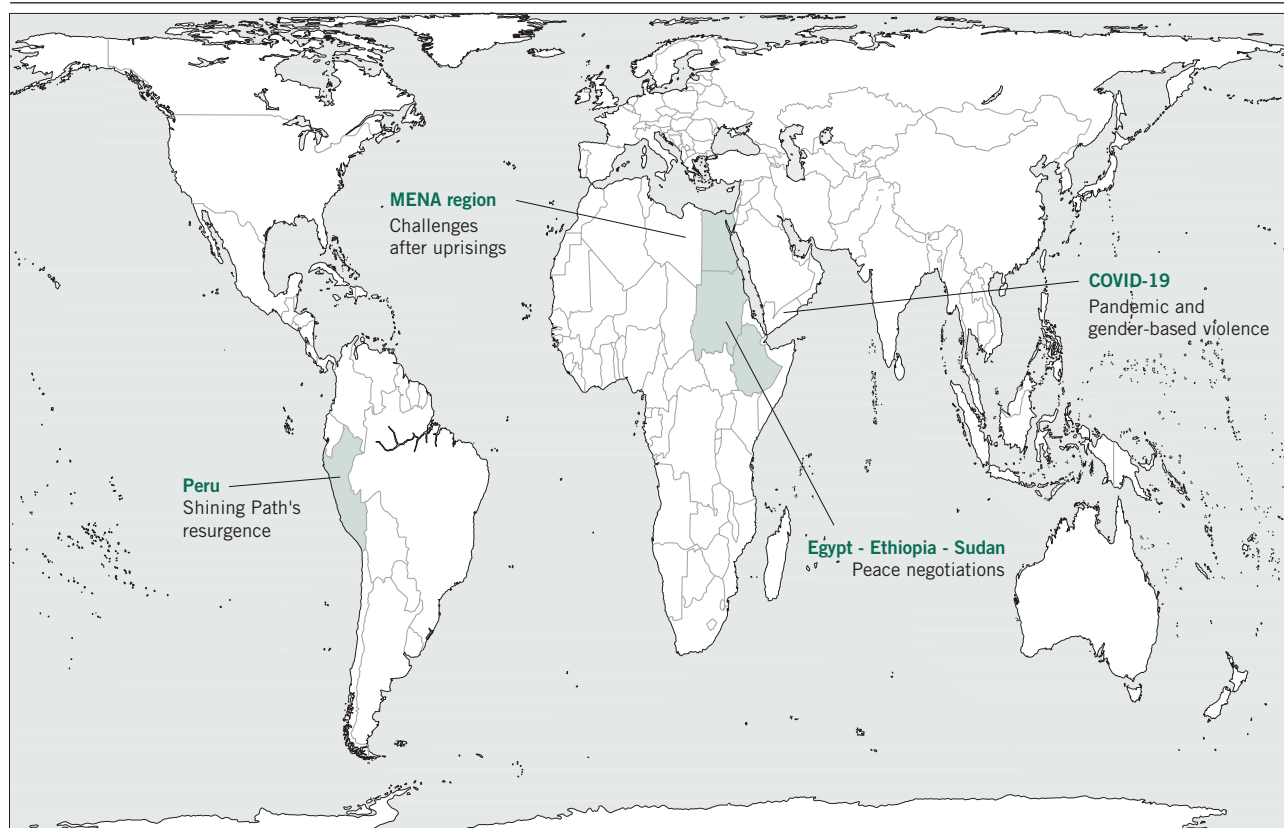
Regarding the impact of armed conflicts on children, the UN Secretary General presented his annual report in which he included some specific gender impacts. The report noted that 735 complaints of sexual violence were made in countries such as the DRC, Somalia, the CAR, Sudan and South Sudan and found that the number of cases attributed to government agents had doubled. Sexual violence particularly affected girls. Other violations of the human rights of girls and boys in armed conflicts were attacks on schools and kidnappings. The report also warned of the risk that children may be detained and deprived of liberty in conflict situations, when they are frequently victims of sexual violence and torture.

The year 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. These two anniversaries were enormously important for the women, peace and security agenda, which should

have been used to evaluate the progress and pending challenges in the implementation of the promises made in the last two decades. The UN Secretary-General presented his annual report, which included an extensive assessment of the implementation of the agenda, identifying the main challenges. With regard to participation in peace processes, the report stated that between 1992 and 2019, 13% of the negotiators, 6% of the mediators and 6% of those who signed peace agreements were women. Seven out of 10 peace processes still did not include female mediators or signatories. Seven United Nations-deployed peacekeeping missions still did not have a gender advisory figure on their staff. Though the progress was limited, between 1995 and 2019 the proportion of peace agreements that included provisions related to gender equality rose from 14 to 22%. In 2019, 30% of the members of the support teams in the peace processes facilitated or co-facilitated, directed or co-directed by the United Nations, were women. The report also addressed other issues on the agenda, such as the situation of female human rights activists, noting that between 2015 and 2019, at least 102 female defenders were murdered in 26 countries where armed conflicts took place. By the end of 2020, 18 countries in armed conflict situations had a national action plan on Resolution 1325, 11 of them in Africa (Burundi, Cameroon, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the CAR, the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan). Asia was the region with the least countries in conflict with approved national action plans, since only Afghanistan and the Philippines had one.

Opportunities for peace in 2021





Meanwhile, the UN Security Council approved UNSC Resolution 2538 on peacekeeping in 2020, which focused on female involvement in these missions. This is the first resolution exclusively focused on women and peacekeeping and was promoted by the Indonesian government. The resolution, which was not approved under the umbrella of the women, peace and security agenda, calls on national governments, the United Nations and regional organisations to promote the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in the security forces and civilians in peacekeeping operations.

Furthermore, it specifically demands that member states formulate strategies and take action to boost the deployment of female members of the security forces. The latest statistics available on female participation in peacekeeping forces indicated that women represented 7%, though if a distinction is made between police and military forces, there are notable differences, since women constitute 17.5% of the police forces deployed in UN peacekeeping missions and 5.7% of the military forces.

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

Peace Opportunities and Risk Scenarios for 2021

Chapter four of the report (Peace Opportunities for 2021) identifies and analyzes four scenarios that are favourable for positive steps to be taken in terms of peacebuilding

for the future. The opportunities identified in 2020 refer to different regions and topics:

- **Sudan and South Sudan:** In the last decade, the region has gone from a significant political and security crisis to two transitional processes that, together with the signing of important peace agreements in each country, open a new path of hope for the consolidation of peace and stability in the region.

- **Papua New Guinea (Bougainville):** During 2020, the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Government of Bougainville laid the foundations for a negotiation process that could lead to a resolution on the political status of the island of Bougainville, implement the 2001 peace agreement and thus culminate a peace process started in the 1990s.

- **European Union and women, peace and security:** The new normative framework of the EU's women, peace and security agenda offers opportunities in conflict situations and peace processes to women's organizations demanding mechanisms for participation and effective dialogue, while there are still gaps in implementation and policy coherence.

- **Syria:** The country has become an emblematic case worldwide for the systematic violations of

human rights and international humanitarian law in a context of impunity, which sets a dangerous precedent. Faced with the blocking of other options to demand accountability, recent initiatives –some of which appeal to the principle of universal jurisdiction– foster an incipient hope for justice and reparation for victims of the conflict, including survivors of sexual violence.

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

Chapter five of the report (Risk Scenarios for 2021), identifies and analyzes four scenarios of armed conflict and tension that, given their condition, may worsen and become sources of more severe instability and violence in 2021.

- **Pandemic and gender violence:** The intersecting dynamics of armed violence in conflict and socioeconomic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic increase the risk for women and girls of exposure to violence and gender inequalities, increasing difficulties of access to resources and the specific impacts of violence on their rights.
- **Peru:** Despite the large military and police

deployment in the last two decades in the region where the Militarized Communist Party of Peru operates, this group increased its activity in 2020 and the Government recognized that it continues to pose a significant threat to national security.

■ **North Africa and the Middle East:**

A decade after the massive popular uprisings that shook the political landscape throughout the region, the area faces a series of challenges and risks linked to the persistence of grievances that motivated the uprisings in the past, to the reinforcement and reconfiguration of authoritarianism and repressive structures, and to the complexities derived from the evolution of serious armed conflicts in this region.

- **Egypt - Ethiopia - Sudan:** Progress in recent years and especially in 2020 in the building of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, started by Ethiopia in 2011 on the Blue Nile riverbed, a tributary of the Nile in Ethiopian territory, has caused an increase in tension between Ethiopia and Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Sudan.

Conflict overview 2020

Continent	Armed conflict			Socio-political crises			TOTAL
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	
Africa	<i>Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West)</i> <i>DR Congo (east)</i> <i>DR Congo (east-ADF)</i> <i>Ethiopia (Tigray)</i> <i>Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)</i> <i>Libya</i> <i>Mali</i> <i>Mozambique (north)</i> <i>Somalia</i> <i>South Sudan</i> <i>West Sahel Region</i>	<i>CAR</i> <i>Sudan (Darfur)</i>	<i>Burundi</i> <i>Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)</i>	<i>Chad</i> <i>Ethiopia</i> <i>Ethiopia (Oromia)</i> <i>Kenya</i> <i>Mali</i> <i>Morocco–Western Sahara</i> <i>Nigeria</i> <i>Rwanda–Burundi</i>	<i>Algeria (AQIM)</i> <i>Côte d'Ivoire</i> <i>DR Congo</i> <i>Eritrea</i> <i>Ethiopia–Egypt–Sudan</i> <i>Guinea</i> <i>Guinea-Bissau</i> <i>Rwanda</i> <i>Rwanda–Uganda</i> <i>Somalia (Somaliland-Puntland)</i> <i>Sudan</i> <i>Tanzania</i> <i>Uganda</i>	<i>Algeria</i> <i>Benin</i> <i>Central Africa (LRA)</i> <i>DR Congo–Rwanda</i> <i>DR Congo–Uganda</i> <i>Equatorial Guinea</i> <i>Eritrea–Ethiopia</i> <i>Gambia</i> <i>Madagascar</i> <i>Malawi</i> <i>Mozambique</i> <i>Nigeria (Delta Niger)</i> <i>Senegal (Casamance)</i> <i>Sudan–South Sudan</i> <i>Togo</i> <i>Tunisia</i> <i>Zimbabwe</i>	
SUBTOTAL	11	2	2	8	13	17	53
America			<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Mexico</i> <i>Venezuela</i>	<i>Haiti</i> <i>Peru</i>	<i>Bolivia</i> <i>Chile</i> <i>El Salvador</i> <i>Guatemala</i> <i>Honduras</i> <i>Nicaragua</i>	
SUBTOTAL			1	2	2	6	11
Asia and Pacific	<i>Afghanistan</i>	<i>India (Jammu and Kashmir)</i> <i>Myanmar</i> <i>Pakistan</i>	<i>India (CPI-M)</i> <i>Pakistan (Baluchistan)</i> <i>Philippines (Mindanao)</i> <i>Philippines (NPA)</i> <i>Thailand (south)</i>	<i>India–China</i> <i>India–Pakistan</i>	<i>India</i> <i>Indonesia (West Papua)</i> <i>Korea, DPR – USA, Japan, Rep. of Korea</i> <i>Korea, DPR – Rep. of Korea</i> <i>Pakistan</i>	<i>Bangladesh</i> <i>China (Hong Kong)</i> <i>China (Tibet)</i> <i>China (Xinjiang)</i> <i>China-Japan</i> <i>China-Taiwan</i> <i>India (Assam)</i> <i>India (Manipur)</i> <i>India (Nagaland)</i> <i>Indonesia (Sulawesi)</i> <i>Kazakhstan</i> <i>Kyrgyzstan</i> <i>Lao, DPR</i> <i>South China Sea</i> <i>Sri Lanka</i> <i>Tajikistan</i> <i>Thailand</i> <i>Uzbekistan</i>	
SUBTOTAL	1	3	5	2	5	18	34
Europe	<i>Armenia–Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)</i>	<i>Turkey (southeast)</i>	<i>Ukraine (east)</i>		<i>Belarus</i> <i>Russia (North Caucasus)</i> <i>Turkey</i> <i>Turkey–Greece, Cyprus</i>	<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i> <i>Georgia (Abkhazia)</i> <i>Georgia (South Ossetia)</i> <i>Moldova, Rep. of (Transnistria)</i> <i>Serbia–Kosovo</i> <i>Spain (Catalonia)</i>	
SUBTOTAL	1	1	1		4	6	13
Middle East	<i>Iraq</i> <i>Syria</i> <i>Yemen (Houthis)</i>	<i>Egypt (Sinai)</i>	<i>Israel – Palestine</i> <i>Yemen (AQAP)</i>	<i>Egypt</i> <i>Iran–USA, Israel</i> <i>Iraq</i> <i>Israel–Syria – Lebanon</i>	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Bahrein</i> <i>Iran</i> <i>Iran (northeast)</i> <i>Iran (Sistan Baluchistan)</i> <i>Iraq (Kurdistan)</i> <i>Palestine</i> <i>Saudi Arabia</i>	
SUBTOTAL	3	1	2	4	1	7	18
TOTAL	16	7	11	16	25	54	129

Armed conflicts and socio-political crises with ongoing peace negotiations, whether exploratory or formal, are identified in italics.

