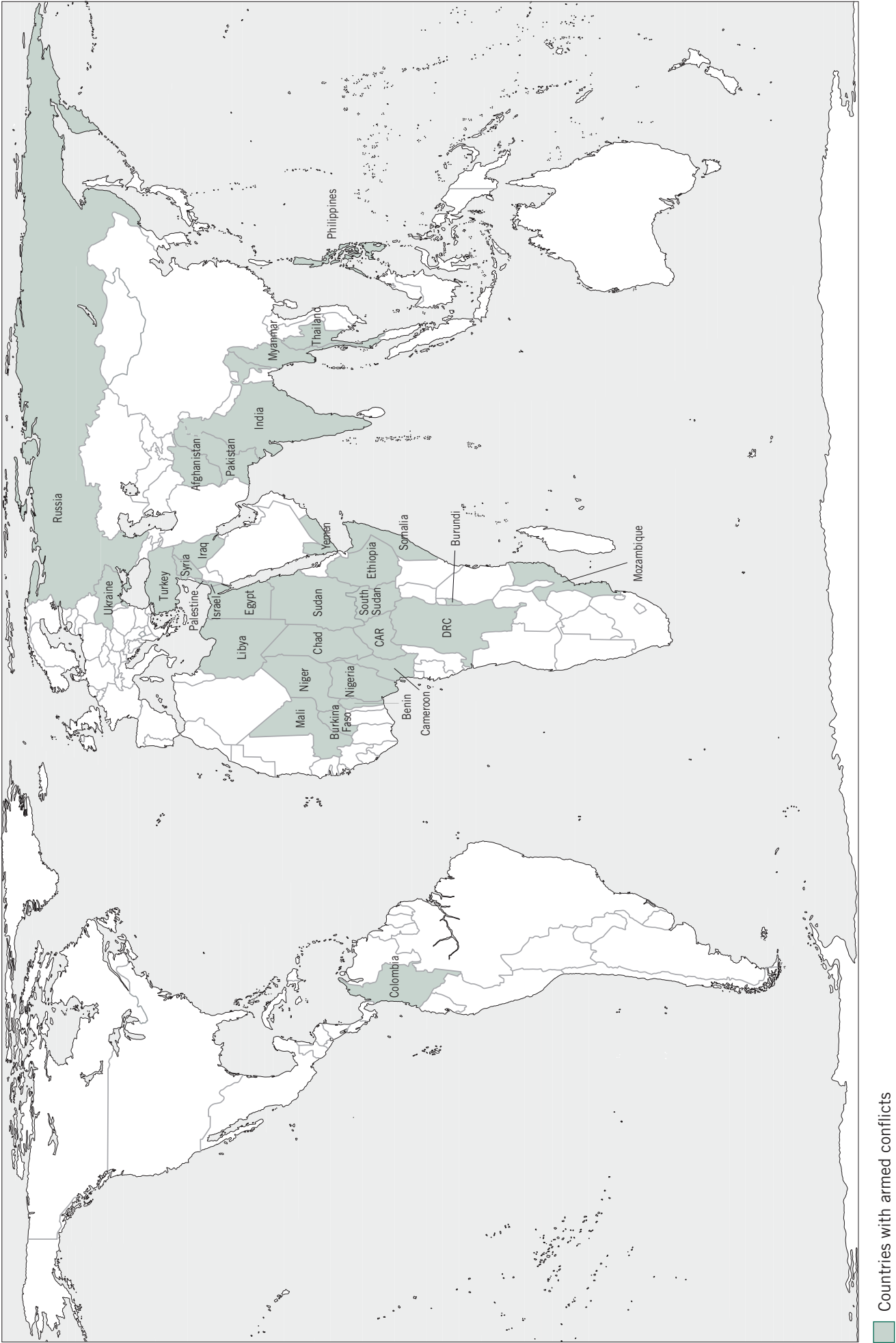


Map 1.1. Armed conflicts



# 1. Armed conflicts

- Thirty-three armed conflicts were reported in 2022, a figure slightly higher than the previous year. Most of the armed conflicts were concentrated in Africa (16) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and the Americas (one).
- High-intensity armed conflicts accounted for over half (52%) of all conflicts worldwide.
- During 2022, there was an escalation in fighting between the Ethiopian security forces supported by the Amharic Fano militia and the armed group OLA with serious consequences for civilians in the Ethiopian region of Oromia. Meanwhile, violence in the neighbouring region of Tigray decreased after the peace agreement was signed in November, which could put an end to one of the most serious armed conflicts in recent years.
- Attacks by al-Shabaab and the offensive launched by the federal government of Somalia and its local and international allies triggered an escalation of violence in 2022 that was unprecedented in recent years.
- In Mali, attacks against civilians carried out by the two main jihadist groups active in the region, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS or ISWAP), increased fourfold.
- The tri-border region in the Western Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) experienced the largest escalation of violent events linked to jihadist groups than any other region in Africa, increasing 36% compared to 2021.
- The offensive in the eastern DRC by the Rwandan-backed armed group March 23 Movement (M23) intensified during the year, straining relations between Kinshasa and Kigali.
- The dynamics of violence in South Sudan persisted due to clashes between the South Sudanese Armed Forces and irregular groups and between dissident Kitgwang factions of the SPLA-IO and to continued episodes of intercommunity violence that affected many different regions in the country.
- The conflict worsened in Pakistan, despite attempts at negotiations amid a serious political crisis and the impact of climate change.
- The armed conflict in Myanmar between the Army of the Military Junta and the ethnic armed groups and the Popular Defence Forces intensified, with serious humanitarian consequences.
- Russia launched a military invasion against Ukraine in February 2022, which led to an international armed conflict, a serious humanitarian crisis and global multidimensional impacts.
- Iraq continued to be the scene of a high-intensity armed conflict in a context characterised by political tensions that made it difficult to form a new government for months.
- After over a decade of armed conflict, the humanitarian crisis in Syria was at its worst since the start of the war.
- In 2022, Yemen saw a significant drop in hostilities and in the number of deaths from violence as a result of the truce that was in effect for six months.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2022. 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 2022, 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 2022.

Table 1.1. Summary of armed conflicts in 2022

Conflict <sup>1</sup> -beginning-	Type <sup>2</sup>	Main parties <sup>3</sup>	Intensity <sup>4</sup>
			Trend <sup>5</sup>
AFRICA			
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, Government of Nigeria, political-military secessionist movement including the opposition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako, to which belong the armed groups Lebialem Red Dragons and SOCADEF) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku, whose armed wing is the Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF), multiple militias and smaller armed groups	3
	Self-government, Identity		=
CAR -2006-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups that are members of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC, made up of anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, 3R, FPRC, MPC and UPC), other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia, Wagner Group	2
	Government, Resources		↓
DRC (east) -1998-	Internationalised internal	Government of DRC, FDLR, splinter factions of the FDLR (CNRD-Ubwiyunge, RUD-Urunana), Mai-Mai militias, Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, LRA, Ituri armed groups, South Kivu community-based militias, Burundian armed groups, Burundi, Rwanda, MONUSCO, EAC Regional Force (EACRF)	3
	Government, Identity, Resources		↑
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO	3
	System, Resources		↑
Ethiopia (Oromia) -2022-	Internal	Government of Ethiopia, Oromia State Regional Government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), pro-government Amharic militia Fano	3
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Ethiopia (Tigray) -2020-	Internationalised internal	Government of Ethiopia, Government of Eritrea, security forces and militias of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), security forces of the Amhara and Afar regions, Amharic militia Fano	3
	Government, Self-government, Identity		↓
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of Nigeria, Civilian Joint Task Force pro-government milita, Boko Haram factions (ISWAP, JAS-Abubakar Shekau, Ansaru, Bakura), civilian militias, Multinational Joint Task Force MNJTF (Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)	3
	System		=

1. This column includes the states in which armed conflicts are taking place, specifying in brackets the region within each state to which the crisis is confined or the name of the armed group involved in the conflict.
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. This column compares the trend of the events of 2022 with those that of 2021. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2021 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.
5. 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.

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Unity Government with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk, armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA, also called Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF), ISIS, AQIM, mercenaries, Wagner Group; Turkey	1
	Government, Resources, System		=
Mali -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 West Africa Province (ISWAP) –also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Katiba Macina, MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Holland, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom), Russia, Wagner Group	3
	System, Self-government, Identity		↑
Mozambique (north) -2019-	Internationalised internal	Government, Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) or Islamic State in Mozambique Province (ISMP) -formerly Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)-, al-Qaeda, South African private security company DAG (Dyck Advisory Group), Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, Mission in Mozambique of the Southern African Development Community (SAMIM), “Naparama” local militias	3
	System, Identity		=
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal Government of Somalia, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama’a, USA, France, Ethiopia, Turkey, AMISOM/ATMIS, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Combined Task Force 151, al-Shabaab, ISIS	3
	Government, System		↑
South Sudan -2009-	Internationalised internal	Government (SPLM/A), SPLM/A-in Opposition armed group (faction of former vice president, Riek Machar), Kitgwang dissident factions of the SPLA-IO led by Peter Gatdet Simon Gatwech Dual and Johnson “Agwalek” Olony, SPLM-FD, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM, REMNASA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSOA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwelek), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG), previously the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA, composed of NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		=
Sudan (Darfur) -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias <i>janjaweed</i> , Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, community militias, UNITAMS	3
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		=
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed group SPLM-N, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) armed coalition, PDF pro-government militias, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, South Sudan	2
	Self-government, Resources, Identity		↑
Western Sahel Region -2018-	International	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, 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), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom), Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in the Province of West Africa (ISWAP) -also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)-, Katiba Macina, Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups and community militias, Russia, Wagner Group	3
	System, Resources, Identity		↑
AMERICA			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, ELN, groups that emerged from the FARC, paramilitary groups	2
	System		↓
ASIA			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Taliban government National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF)	2
	System		↓
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	1
	System		↓
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Governments, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, United Jihad Council, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), The Resistance Front (TRF)	1
	Self-government, Identity		=

Conflict -beginning-	Type	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
ASIA			
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), PDF	3
	Self-government, Identity		↑
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan -TTP-, among them), international insurgents	2
	System		↑
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, Baloch Raji Aojoi Sangar, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura), ISIS	2
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Philippines (NPA) -1969-	Internal	Government, NPA	1
	System		=
Philippines (Mindanao) -1991-	Internationalised internal	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlay Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, Toraike group, factions of MILF and MNLF	1
	Self-government, System, Identity		↓
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, BRN and other separatist armed opposition groups	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
EUROPE			
Turkey (south-east) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	2
	Self-government, Identity		=
Russia – Ukraine -2022-	International	Russia, Wagner Group, Donbas militias, Ukraine	3
	Government, Territory		↑
MIDDLE EAST			
Egypt (Sinai) -2014-	Internationalised internal	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), pro-government militia Union of Sinai Tribes (UST)	1
	System		=
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi military and security forces, Kurdish forces (peshmerga), Shia militias Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) and Saraya Salam, Sunni militias, ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, USA, Iran, Turkey	3
	System, Government, Identity, Resources		=
Israel-Palestine -2000-	International <sup>6</sup>	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, brigades of Jenin, Nablus and Tubas, Lion's Den	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, Israel	3
	System, Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Yemen -2004-	Internationalised internal	Armed forces loyal to the internationally recognised Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), tribal militias linked to al-Alhmar clan, Salafist militias (including Happy Yemen Brigades), armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, separatist groups under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Joint Forces (including the Giants Brigades), AQAP, ISIS, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE)	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

6. Despite the fact that “Palestine” (whose Palestinian National Authority is a political entity linked to a specific population and territory) is not an internationally recognised state, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is considered “international” and not “internal” because it is an illegally occupied territory with Israel's alleged claim to the territory not being recognised by international law or by any United Nations resolution.

## 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.

## 1.2. Armed conflicts: analysis of trends in 2022

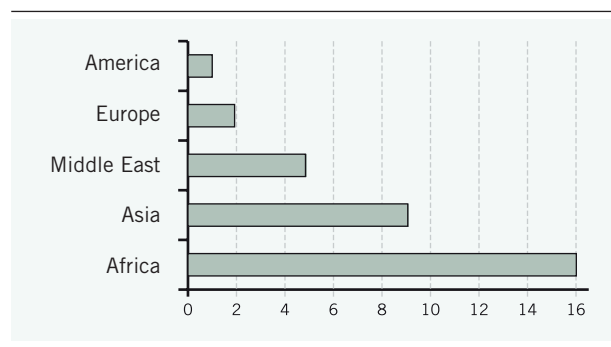
This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2022. This includes an overview of conflicts as compared to that of previous years, the geographical distribution of conflicts and the main trends by region, the relationship between the actors involved and the scenario 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.

***Almost half the armed conflicts in 2022 took place in Africa, with a total of 16 (49%), followed by Asia (nine conflicts), the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and the Americas (one)***

### 1.2.1 Global and regional trends

In 2022, there was a slight increase in the number of armed conflicts compared to the previous year. In total, 33 cases were reported, compared to 32 conflicts in 2021 and 34 in 2020, 2019 and 2018. The escalation of violence in the Oromia region (Ethiopia) led that case to be reclassified as an armed conflict, which pitted the Ethiopian federal security forces supported by the Amharic Fano militia against the Oromo armed group OLA. Another significant change in 2022 was the

Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2022



transformation of the violence in Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022 expanded the previous armed conflict in the eastern part of the country, giving way to an international conflict with serious multidimensional consequences.

The trend of previous periods was upheld in the geographical distribution of the armed conflicts. The vast majority continued to be concentrated in Africa (16) and Asia (nine), followed by the Middle East (five), Europe (two) and the Americas (one). Therefore, almost half the cases (49%) took place in Africa.

Regarding the relationship of the actors involved in the conflicts and the scene of the hostilities, armed conflicts were identified as internal, international and, for the most part, internationalised internal. In keeping with the trend of previous years, four of the 33 cases in 2022 (12%, 9% in 2021) were internal armed conflicts and three of these four cases took place in Asia. These are the conflicts in the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south). The other internal armed conflict was in Ethiopia (Oromia), in Africa. Three other cases, which account for 9% of the total (6% in 2021), were international in nature: the conflict in the western African region of the Sahel, the Palestinian-Israeli dispute in the Middle East and the war between Russia and Ukraine. Thus, Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to an increase in the number of international conflicts. Although interstate wars remained a minority, some analysts said that the invasion had put an end to assumptions about the post-Cold War international order, such as the exceptionality of war between states.<sup>7</sup>

The remaining 26 cases, which account for 79% (85% in 2021), were internationalised internal. 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

7. Haas, Richard, "The Dangerous Decade. A Foreign Policy for a World in Crisis", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2022.



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 – such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram or others.

As in previous years, United Nations international missions were maintained in 2022, especially in the context of armed conflicts in Africa. Throughout the year, the UN continued to operate in countries such as the CAR (MINUSCA), the DRC (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA) and South Sudan (UNMISS). In some of these cases, they participated in hostilities with armed actors. The scope of international missions and their involvement in conflicts was affected by projected international tensions between Russia and Western actors. Thus, the mandate of MINUSCA was extended in 2022, though Russia, China and Gabon abstained in the vote due to disagreements over the Wagner Group being in the CAR. In Mali and the Western Sahel Region, the deterioration of diplomatic relations between the military junta and its traditional allies due to the Malian military government's rapprochement with Russia and the Wagner Group had repercussions for the regional and international military situation, such as Mali's blockade of MINUSMA operations. Several countries also withdrew their troops from this mission (Germany, United Kingdom, Côte d'Ivoire). This diplomatic deterioration also had an impact on the missions and operations of regional organisations and other countries: the EU suspended its EUCAP and EUTM Mali missions, several countries withdrew troops from the European Operation Takouba, France ended Operation Barkhane and Mali withdrew from the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Regional organisations also continued to be involved in numerous armed conflicts in the form of military missions or operations, as in the case of the African Union (AU) –with the AMISOM mission in Somalia, which was transformed into the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in 2022– or the European Union (EU) –EUNAVFOR in Somalia. Countries of the East African Community (EAC) approved the deployment of a military mission in the eastern DRC to combat the armed group M23 in 2022. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Mozambican authorities agreed to extend the mandate of the SAMIM mission and approved its transition to a multidimensional mission. Also in 2022, SAMIM and

Rwandan troops deployed in Mozambique expanded their actions against the insurgency in the Cabo Delgado region.

Hybrid missions, involving regional organisations and states, also continued to operate, such as the maritime military operation in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean –known as the Combined Task Force 151,<sup>8</sup> led by the US in collaboration with EUNAVFOR. The international coalition against the armed group ISIS, formed in September 2014 under the leadership of the US, which has since deployed actions in Iraq and Syria, is another example. In December 2021, in the face of increased activity by ISIS-linked groups on the continent, the coalition established a special task force on Africa. The coalition has 85 members, including states and organisations, including the Arab League and the EU.<sup>9</sup>

Third-country involvement remained important to many internationalised internal conflicts, aggravating their complexity. In 2022, this factor could be found in cases such as the DRC (east), where Rwanda supported the M23, a Congolese insurgency that resumed activity after being dormant for almost a decade. The DRC and Rwanda carried out mutual military raids, which escalated tension. Uganda announced its military participation in Operation Shuja against the ADF jihadist insurgency in the DRC in 2022 and reports indicated that its involvement was linked to economic interests. Different conflicts continued to be characterised by various third countries' military involvement in the dynamics of violence, such as Yemen, Iraq and Syria. In 2022, Turkey intensified its military actions against Kurdish actors in Iraq (PKK) and Syria (YPG), with impacts on civilians. Russian air raids continued in Syria, Israel continued with strikes in different parts of the country and the US also launched attacks against militias with alleged ties to Iran and continued with raids against ISIS, such as the one that killed the group's leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi in February 2022. In many conflicts, non-state armed groups carried out cross-border offensive actions. This was the case of the conflict in Yemen, among many others. In relation to this conflict, in early 2022 the Houthi forces launched attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which responded in an escalation that generated concern about its regional impact. Armed groups from the CAR regularly crossed the border into Cameroon and kidnapped civilians. The al-Shabaab insurgency carried out attacks in Ethiopia and Kenya during the year, going after regional targets. In the Western Sahel Region, armed actions by jihadist groups

***Russia's invasion of Ukraine increased the number of international conflicts (9% of the total) in 2022, although most armed conflicts were internationalised internal ones (79%)***

8. There are four international operations conducted by the Combined Maritime Forces (coalition of 34 countries led by the USA). See [Combined Maritime Forces](#) [online, viewed on 15 January 2023].

9. For further information, see [The Global Coalition Against Daesh](#).

continued to be reported, affecting countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Benin, Togo and Ghana.

Armed conflicts continued to be caused by multiple factors in 2022. Sixty-seven per cent of the armed conflicts were primarily caused by questioning of the political, economic, social or ideological system of the state and/or disputes around the domestic or international policies of the respective governments, among other main factors. Questioning of the system was more significant and was seen together with other causes in 17 conflicts (52% of the cases), largely linked to the high presence of jihadist armed actors with particular interpretations of Islamic precepts. This was the case in conflicts in the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, Mali, the DRC (east-ADF), Somalia, Mozambique (north), Libya, Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), Pakistan, Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Syria and Yemen. In three other cases, Colombia, the Philippines (NPA) and India (CPI-M), disputes about the system were associated with other types of insurgencies, with another type of ideological line.

Other notable motivations behind the armed conflicts were disputes around demands for identity and self-government, as one or both were seen in 20 or the 33 cases (61%). Of these, identity-related demands were more significant (61%). Demands for self-government were behind 42% of the cases. Here the conflict in Ethiopia (Oromia) stood out due to the escalation of fighting that pitted the Ethiopian security forces and Amharic Fano militia against the Oromo armed group OLP. This factor also helped to cause other conflicts, such as the one between the government of Cameroon and the political and military secessionist movements in the English-speaking western regions of the country (Ambazonia/North West and South West). Also, the conflicts in Ethiopia (Tigray), the Philippines (Mindanao), Pakistan (Balochistan), Thailand (south) and Turkey (southeast), to mention just a few, were partly caused by disputes about identity and/or self-government.

Lastly, there were also many armed conflicts mainly caused by struggles to control territory and/or resources, alongside other main causes. These amounted to 39% of the total number of conflicts (13 of 33). Of the two, disputes over resources was more common (present in 33% of all conflicts), whereas control over territory was one of the main causes in fewer cases (6% of all armed conflicts). The armed conflicts that involved disputes over resources were mainly concentrated in Africa,

**Armed conflicts were multi-causal in nature and 61% had disputes about identity as one of their main causes**

**30% of the armed conflicts in 2022 reported higher levels of violence than the previous year**

though they were also indirectly present conflicts in other regions, perpetuating violence through economies of war. The DRC (east) continued to be an emblematic case of armed conflicts with an important background linked to the control of resources, with much fighting related to the extraction of gold, coltan and other minerals. Mining areas were also scenes of acts of violence in Pakistan (Balochistan), another armed conflict partially caused by a dispute over resources and also in India, in the context of the conflict with the Naxalite insurgency. In Sudan and South Sudan, intercommunal disputes over access to resources were intertwined with other dynamics of violence. Issues related to the control of territory were especially significant in the case of Palestine-Israel. In any case, the conflicts were sustained and influenced by the dynamics of war economies. In Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), local sources warned that the dynamics of violence were changing in 2022, hand in hand with the growth of a war economy that involved kidnapping and ways to extort the civilian population and that that war economy reduced incentives to seek negotiated settlements.

In terms of their **trend**, levels of violence rose in 30% of the armed conflicts in 2022 compared to the previous year. This was true of the conflicts in Ethiopia (Oromia), Mali, the Western Sahel Region, the DRC (east), Somalia, Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), Myanmar, Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan) and Russia-Ukraine. Some of these conflicts seriously escalated. In the Western Sahel, rising violence against civilians caused 49% more deaths than was reported in 2021 and in the conflict in Mali, attacks by the two main jihadist groups against civilians increased fourfold. Somalia witnessed an escalation of violence unprecedented in previous years. In the Oromia region, the increase in clashes between security forces and the armed group OLA led to its reclassification as an armed conflict in 2022. Russia's invasion of Ukraine set off a high-intensity interstate international armed conflict that caused a serious humanitarian crisis. Another 15 armed conflicts (accounting for 46% of all cases) observed levels of violence and fighting similar to those reported in 2021. In eight armed conflicts (24% of all worldwide) did the levels of armed violence and its impacts decrease: Ethiopia (Tigray), CAR, Colombia, Afghanistan, Philippines (Mindanao), India (CPI-M), Thailand (south) and Yemen. In some of these cases the reduction in violent incidents was related to ceasefire agreements as part of negotiating processes -Ethiopia (Tigray), Yemen- or to their development or positive prospects, like in Thailand (south) and Colombia.<sup>10</sup> However, in Afghanistan, despite the drop in direct armed violence,

10. For more information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2022. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.



people continued to suffer from serious human rights abuses.

The **intensity of the armed conflicts** in 2022 accentuated the trend of an increase in serious cases over the last 10 years. In other words, 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. If high-intensity conflicts accounted for around a quarter of all cases a decade ago, in recent years this proportion has been growing to represent practically half the conflicts (see Graph 1.4). During the last five years, high-intensity armed conflicts accounted for 40% of all armed conflicts in 2016 and 2017. They fell to between 27% and 32% between 2018 and 2019, respectively, and increased significantly in 2020, when they reached 47%. In 2021, high-intensity conflicts were even more prevalent, reaching 53% and exceeding half of all cases for the first time in the last decade.

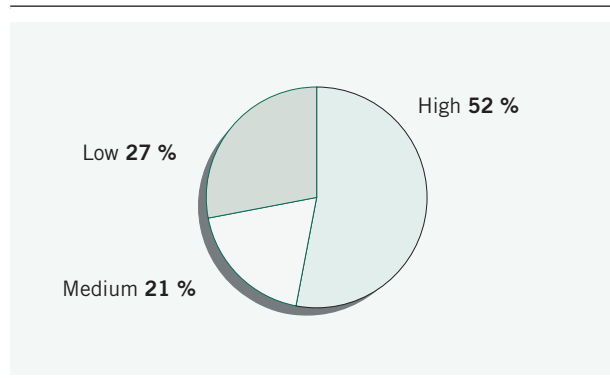
**In 2022, this trend continued and there were 17 high-intensity armed conflicts (52% of all cases).** In line with what was observed in 2021, the largest proportion of high-intensity conflicts in 2022 took place in Africa. The continent registered 12 of the 17 high-intensity armed conflicts identified around the world, or 70% of all high-intensity cases. Twelve of Africa's 16 armed conflicts (75%) were of high intensity, slightly less than in 2021 (80%), a percentage much higher than that observed in recent years (in 2019, only 44% of Africa's armed conflicts were of high intensity). After Africa, the region with the second-highest number of high-intensity cases was the Middle East, with a total of three (6% of the total high-intensity conflicts worldwide, but 60% of the conflicts in the region). High-intensity conflict was identified in Asia and in Europe, respectively, while no conflicts of this type were reported in the Americas. The 17 cases of serious armed conflict in 2022 were: Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Mozambique (north), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan, Myanmar, Russia-Ukraine, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

In some of the high-intensity armed conflicts, the hostilities and multiple dynamics of violence claimed well over 1,000 lives per year. In the Russian invasion of Ukraine alone, the US Department of Defense estimated at the end of 2022 that around 100,000 soldiers had been killed or wounded on each side, though this figure cannot be verified.<sup>11</sup> Regarding civilian victims, the OHCHR estimated at least 6,884 people dead and 10,947 injured between the start of the invasion and late December 2022, though it warned that the real figures could be considerably higher. In

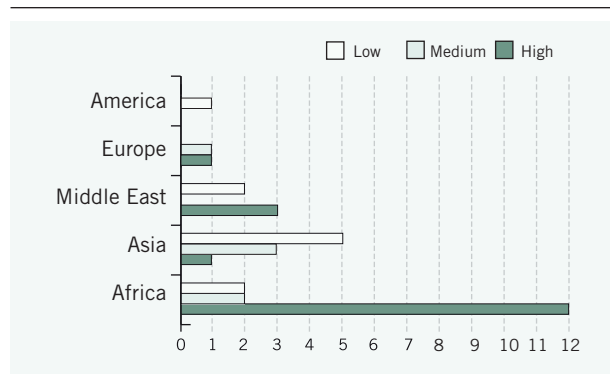
the Western Sahel conflict, the fatality rate increased significantly, with around 9,700 fatalities (compared to around 5,300 in 2021). On the other hand, some conflicts that had had very high levels of fatalities in previous years, such as Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria, had fewer deaths in 2022, though they did still have a serious impact on other dimensions of human security. Thus, in Afghanistan there were 3,970 fatalities according to ACLED data, well below the nearly 42,000 in 2021, the 20,000 in

**52% of the armed conflicts were of high intensity in 2022**

Graph 1.2. Intensity of the armed conflicts in 2022



Graph 1.3. Intensity of the armed conflicts by region



Graph 1.4. Percentage of high intensity armed conflicts in the last decade



\* Percentage of high-intensity armed conflicts compared to the yearly total

11. Lamothe, Dan, Liz Sly and Annabelle Timsit, "‘Well over’ 100,000 Russian troops killed or wounded in Ukraine, U.S. says," *The Washington Post*, 10 November 2022.

### Box 1.1. Regional trends in armed conflict

AFRICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the trend reported in previous periods, Africa was home to the largest number of armed conflicts globally. The continent registered 16 cases, representing 49% of the total.</li> <li>The percentage of high-intensity armed conflicts in Africa fell, from 80% in 2021 (12 of the 15 cases in that region in that year) to 75% (12 of the 16 cases). It remained well above the 44% in 2016 (seven of the 16 conflicts then).</li> <li>Hostilities only fell in two cases, while 50% of the conflicts remained at similar levels and violence escalated in 37.5%. One of those two cases of falling violence was the conflict in Ethiopia (Tigray), a war that was the scene of serious human rights violations in 2021 and 2022.</li> <li>All the armed conflicts in Africa were internationalised internal ones, except for the one taking place in the Western Sahel Region, which is considered to be international in nature, and the conflict in Ethiopia (Oromia), considered internal in nature.</li> <li>The armed conflicts in Africa had different causes, such as disputes over identity, which stood out as a factor in 10 of the 16 conflicts (63%). Competition for resources was also prominently found in nine of the conflicts (56% of all conflicts in the region).</li> </ul>
AMERICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The region registered a single armed conflict, that of Colombia, one of the longest in the world.</li> <li>The start of peace negotiations with the ELN, as well as rapprochements with other armed groups as part of the Gustavo Petro government's Total Peace policy led to a reduction in violence in the country. However, clashes and other acts of violence continued to be reported, such as the killings of social leaders and human rights activists. There were also warnings of a deteriorating humanitarian situation.</li> <li>Although there was only one armed conflict in the Americas, the region continued to report extremely high levels of violence as a result of other dynamics of tension and criminality and stood out for its high homicide rates.</li> </ul>
ASIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After Africa, Asia contained the second-largest number of armed conflicts, with nine, accounting for 27% of the total worldwide.</li> <li>The armed conflict in Myanmar stood out for its intensity. In 2022, clashes intensified between the Burmese Army and various ethnic armed groups as well as between the Burmese Armed Forces and the armed groups that emerged after the 2021 military coup. The number of internally displaced persons also doubled.</li> <li>In continuity with the previous year, the conflicts in Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan) and Myanmar trended towards higher levels of violence and hostility. Armed violence fell in 2022 in Afghanistan, where violence had escalated in 2021, but the Taliban consolidated its power and there were serious violations of human rights, including those of women. With the exception of the Americas, Asia was the region with the highest regional percentage of cases that saw a drop in violence (44% of the conflicts there).</li> <li>Asia continued to be the only region in the world with internal armed conflicts, except the conflict in Ethiopia (Oromia) in Africa. The three armed conflicts of this type, in the Philippines (NPA), India (CPI-M) and Thailand (south) accounted for one third of the cases in the region.</li> <li>The causes of the conflicts related to disputes about the system, government policies, demands for self-government and identity appeared in similar percentages in Asia, some of which were present in 56% of them.</li> </ul>
EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Europe was the scene of two armed conflicts, accounting for 6% of the conflicts worldwide.</li> <li>Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered one of the three international armed conflicts in the world in 2022, setting off high-intensity violence, a serious humanitarian crisis and global repercussions in several different areas, such as the global rise in fuel and food prices and food insecurity.</li> <li>Though only two armed conflicts were reported in Europe, the region witnessed great mobilisation and military spending in 2022, a trend that had started before the Russian invasion but that has stepped up since then.</li> </ul>
MIDDLE EAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five armed conflicts were reported in the region, which accounted for 15% of all cases worldwide. In total figures, the region remained at the same level as in 2021.</li> <li>The Middle East was the part of the world where the second-most high-intensity armed conflicts took place, after Africa. More than half the cases in the region (three out of five, equivalent to 60%) were of high intensity: Iraq, Syria and Yemen. These three conflicts had significantly less fatalities in 2022 than in previous years, but remained affected by serious impacts on human security.</li> <li>The vast majority of the conflicts in the region (80%) were internationalised internal, with external actor involvement, which increased their complexity and the prospects for resolution, as in Syria and Yemen.</li> <li>The conflicts in the region had different causes, with a notable presence of cases where the motivations were linked, together with other factors, to the search for a change to the system (80%) or to identity-related demands (80%). Internal or international political disputes were one of the main causes of three of the conflicts (60%). Control of resources and territories was behind two of them (40%).</li> </ul>

2020 and the 40,000 in 2019. However, there were many human rights violations during the year, including against women, with activists describing the situation in Afghanistan as gender apartheid. In Yemen, the armed conflict claimed at least 6,721 lives, according to ACLED data (compared to 22,000 deaths in 2021, 20,000 in 2020 and 23,000 in 2019), a drop mainly due to a ceasefire agreement that was in force for a

significant part of the year. However, more than 80% of the Yemeni population had problems meeting their basic needs. In Syria, the levels of mortality in 2021 were maintained in 2022, at between 3,800 and 5,700 deaths, significantly fewer than in previous years (30,000 in 2018; more than 50,000 in 2016 and 2015, respectively; over 70,000 in 2014), but the humanitarian crisis in the country was at its worst since

the war began. Other armed conflicts that stood out for their deadliness in 2022 were Somalia, with over 6,400 fatalities (around 3,200 in 2021); Mali, where around 4,842 people were estimated to have been killed that year (1,887 in 2021); Ethiopia (Oromia), with around 4,500 deaths; the DRC (east), with more than 5,600 people killed by violence; and the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), with 3,782 fatalities, according to various accounts.

### 1.2.2. Impact of conflicts on the civilian population

Following the trend of previous years, civilians continued to suffer very serious consequences stemming from armed conflicts in 2022, as the United Nations and international and local organisations have regularly denounced. In addition, the impacts of armed conflicts continued to intertwine with other crises, aggravating the human security situation and violations of rights in conflict areas. The annual report of the UN Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, published in May 2022, which studied the events of 2021 and early 2022, warned of challenges such as the conflict in Ukraine, which caused serious impacts on civilians there, such as fatalities, forced displacement, serious destruction of civilian infrastructure and other effects, and global impacts, with disrupted global supply chains and effects on vulnerable populations in other conflicts.<sup>12</sup> In his report, the UN Secretary-General also pointed out other challenges such as the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and armed conflict, as well as intersections between armed conflict and intercommunal violence, violent protests, organised crime or other forms of violence and growing concerns about human rights violations and abuses in various countries, which made distinctions between armed conflict and other forms of violence difficult. Other threats to civilian security noted in the report included the impacts of the climate crisis on conflicts via intensifying food insecurity and escalating humanitarian crises. The report's analysis of the global state of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts reveals that armed conflicts have continued to be characterised by very high levels of civilian deaths, in addition to many people injured and seriously affected by psychological trauma, torture, disappearances, sexual violence and the destruction of homes, schools, markets, hospitals and other essential civil infrastructure such as drinking water and electricity systems.

***OCHA warned of the development of the largest global food crisis in modern history caused by conflicts, climate shocks, the threat of global recession and escalating global insecurity***

The development of the various armed conflicts in 2022 confirms the persistence of the pattern of systematic abuse against civilians. Cases such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine stood out, which caused thousands of civilian fatalities and in which Russian military forces violated human rights with extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, forced deportations (including of minors), forced disappearances, torture and mistreatment and other impacts. In March 2022, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Prosecutor's Office began to gather evidence for an investigation into past and present allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity and genocide in Ukraine since 2013.<sup>13</sup> In 2022, the Human Rights Council established a commission of inquiry into violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. Local and international human rights organisations denounced and documented serious human rights violations by Russian forces, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Many other armed conflicts in 2022 involved serious attacks against civilians. Among other cases, the Western Sahel experienced a rise in attacks against civilians by the security forces, the Wagner Group and the two main jihadist groups, and several massacres were reported. In the escalating conflict in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Armed Forces, the pro-government Amharic Fano militia and the armed group OLA were all accused of deliberate attacks against civilians, caught in the crossfire and subjected to extrajudicial and mass executions, arbitrary arrests and kidnappings, among other forms of violence based on ethnic identity or political opinions. Massacres and killings of civilians also took place in the DRC (east), Colombia, Myanmar and elsewhere.

The use of explosive weapons had a special impact on the civilian population. Recent studies indicate that civilian victims of this type of weapon in populated areas accounted for 89% of all victims of explosive weapons in 2020.<sup>14</sup> Examples of this were the conflicts in Somalia and the DRC (east-ADF), where armed groups increased the use of explosive devices against the civilian population in urban environments.

As part of the attacks against the civilian population and infrastructure, attacks and threats against medical staff continued in 2022, as well as attacks against hospital infrastructure, practices that are considered to violate international humanitarian law. According to data from the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC), in 2022 there were at least 1,892 attacks in this area worldwide, including 215 deaths of health workers, 287

12. UN Secretary-General, *Protection of civilians in armed conflicts*, S/2022/381, 10 May 2022.

13. In March 2023, a date falling outside the window of analysis of this chapter, the ICC issued an international arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, charged with war crimes for deporting minors.

14. Jennifer Dathan, *Explosive Violence Monitor 2020*, Action on Armed Violence, 2021.

kidnappings and 628 damaged facilities. More than one third of the attacks on the healthcare sector in 2022 occurred in Ukraine as part of the Russian invasion. A joint investigation by various organisations identified 707 attacks against hospitals, healthcare workers and medical infrastructure in Ukraine between the start of the invasion and the end of December.<sup>15</sup> The investigation cites an average of two attacks per day against the healthcare sector in that country and points to deliberate and indiscriminate attacks by Russia against the Ukrainian healthcare system as part of broader attacks against the civilian population and infrastructure.

Armed conflicts continued to cause and/or worsen humanitarian crisis situations, which were aggravated by other conditions such as the pandemic, the effects of the war in Ukraine, the economic crisis and the climate emergency. Global humanitarian needs continued to grow, reaching a record threshold. According to the annual report *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*,<sup>16</sup> issued by the UN humanitarian agency, OCHA, one of every 23 people in the world is in need of humanitarian assistance. A record 339 million people were expected to need humanitarian assistance by 2023, in contrast to the 274 million people in early 2022. As part of the worrying humanitarian outlook, OCHA warned that the biggest global food crisis in modern history was unfolding, caused by conflicts, climate shocks and the threat of global recession. According to the report, global insecurity is escalating, with at least 222 million people in 53 countries facing severe food insecurity by the end of 2022. OCHA warned of different trends, including the impact of climate change on humanitarian crises. Of the 15 countries most vulnerable to the climate crisis, 12 were scenes of humanitarian responses. Many conflicts continued to make humanitarian emergency situations worse in 2022. One conflict that stood out during the year was the one in the Western Sahel Region, with combined instability, violence, forced displacement, loss of livelihood, food insecurity, climate change and disease. The WHO estimated that 37.7 million people will need humanitarian assistance in that region in 2023, and it is considered one of the fastest growing crises and the most forgotten. Ukraine witnessed a rapidly escalating humanitarian crisis, with three million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection at the start of the year and close to 17.7 million people by the end of the year. In Yemen, 17 million people faced food insecurity at the end of the year and over 80% of the population had problems meeting their basic needs, including food, clean water and access to health services. In Syria, 12 million people faced food insecurity at the end of 2022 and

***The DRC, the Western Sahel Region, Somalia, Pakistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Syria and other many places suffered serious humanitarian crises in 2022***

it was estimated that 70% of the country's population would need humanitarian aid in 2023 and that 90% of the population would live below the poverty line. In Pakistan, the impact of severe flooding caused by climate change was compounded by the consequences of armed violence. In the DRC, 26.4 million people, a quarter of the country's population, suffered from a serious food emergency in January 2023.

Armed conflicts also continued to have specific impacts on some population groups. Published in mid-2022, the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict documented almost 23,982 serious violations against children (of which around 22,645 took place in 2021 and another 1,337 had been previously committed, but could only be documented in 2021).<sup>17</sup> The report warned that factors such as the worsening of armed conflicts, the proliferation of armed actors, the use of mines, improvised explosive devices and explosive weapons in populated areas, the intensification of humanitarian crises and violations of IHL and international human rights law had serious impacts on the protection of minors. The report, which covers the events of 2021, particularly discusses the impact on minors of the violence and conflicts in the central Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions, as well as coups d'état and the seizing of power in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Myanmar and Sudan. It also states that the highest levels of serious violations took place in Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Syria, the DRC, Somalia and Yemen. Worrisome indicators include the 20% increase in the number of kidnappings, the 20% rise in sexual violence against minors and the 5% spike in attacks against schools and hospitals. Fifty-five per cent of the documented rights violations were committed by non-state armed groups and 25% by state forces, while the rest were due to crossfire, improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and land mines or were committed by unidentified perpetrators. The data disaggregated by gender showed that most minors affected by serious rights violations were boys (70%) and that was on the decline, while an increase was identified in violations against girls that involved death, mutilation, kidnapping or sexual violence, especially in the Lake Chad Basin.

The data on armed conflicts in 2022 in the *Alert 2023!* report indicate ongoing abuses, with examples in various contexts. In Afghanistan, the Taliban regime was responsible for many different human rights violations against girls in 2022, such as the prohibition of the right to education. Armed violence in Afghanistan continued to affect minors during the year, including an attack against a school in a Hazara-majority neighbourhood

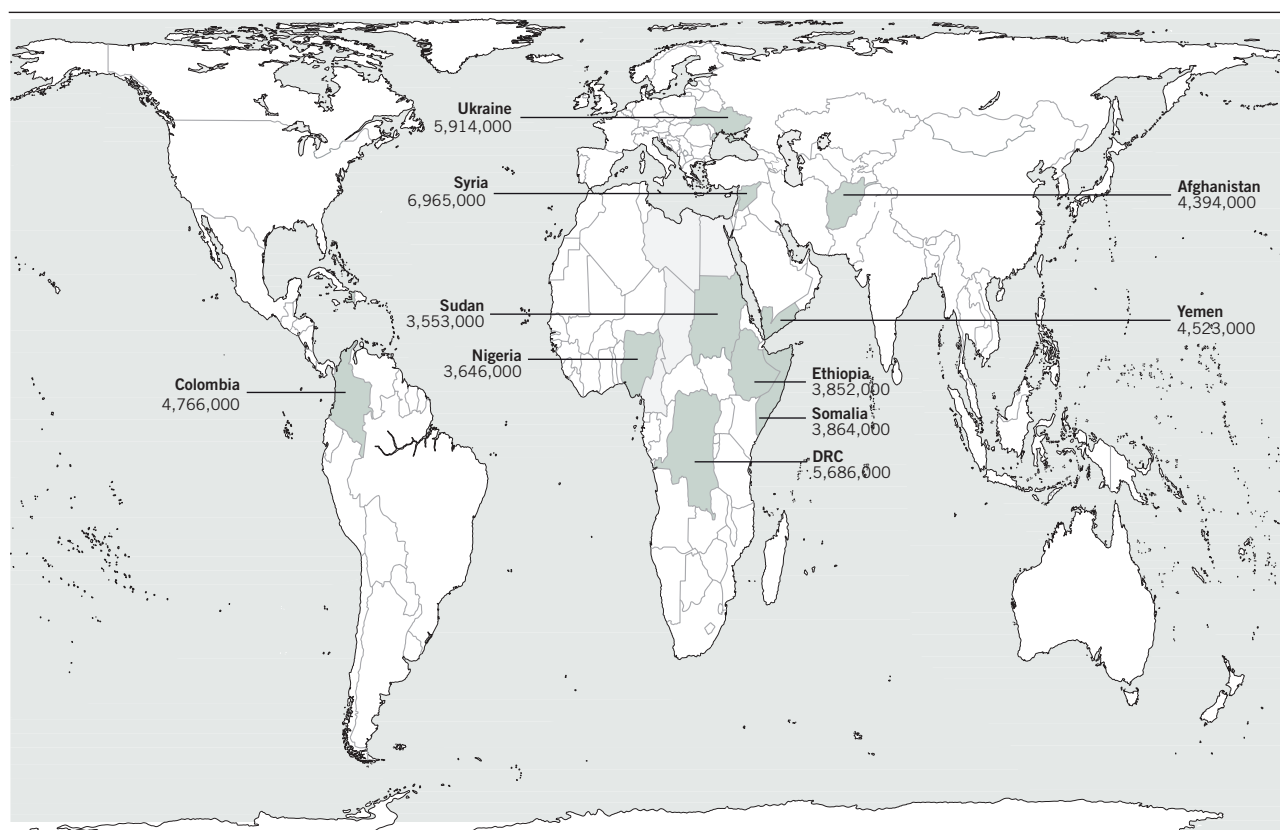
15. De Vos, Christian et al., *Destruction and Devastation One Year of Russia's Assault on Ukraine's Health Care System*, eyeWitness to Atrocities, Insecurity Insight, Media Initiative for Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights and Ukrainian Healthcare Center, February 2023.

16. OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*, December 2022.

17. UN Secretary-General, *Children and armed conflict*, A/76/871-S/2022/493, 23 June 2022.



**Map 1.2. The 10 countries reporting the highest figures of internally displaced people as a result of conflict and violence in 2022**



Source: Map prepared by the authors on the basis of the data provided in Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023. Internal displacement and food security*, IDMC, 2023

that killed 53 people, mostly girls and young women students. In Cameroon, the armed conflict has deprived some 600,000 minors of schooling and secessionist armed actors continued to attack schools, students and teachers in 2022. Meanwhile, Israel's policies of expelling the population from Palestine, demolishing homes and building settlements continued to have an impact on Palestinian minors, including through forced displacement. Palestinian minors were also affected by detention practices. As of mid-December 2022, Israel had detained 452 Palestinian minors. In Syria, although the death toll in 2022 dropped significantly, minors continued to die, with 319 dying in 2022 according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, in addition to many different human rights violations of boys and girls there.

Sexual violence occurred in many armed conflicts. The 2022 annual report of the UN Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence identified 49 armed actors who were reasonably suspected of having committed or of being responsible for rape or other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict situations on

the UN Security Council's agenda.<sup>18</sup> In a total of 10 conflicts (CAR, DRC, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Nigeria), most of the actors indicated by the United Nations in its annex were non-state armed actors (37) and another 12 were government armed actors. According to the United Nations, 70% of identified actors in conflict were persistent perpetrators due to their inclusion in the United Nations' annex for five or more years. Beyond the annex, the annual report also studied how the problem of the use of sexual violence was developing in the conflicts in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, addressed issues related to crimes of sexual violence in the post-war contexts of the Western Balkans, Nepal

and Sri Lanka and discussed other contexts inviting concern about sexual violence (Ethiopia and Nigeria). Taken together, the report noted how the intersection of humanitarian, security, and political crises intensified the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including militarisation, weapons proliferation, impunity, institutional collapse, structural gender inequality and harmful social norms. Sexual violence continued to be

***The use of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians by state and non-state armed actors, and especially against women and girls, continued to be reported in 2022***

18. UN Secretary-General, *Conflict-related sexual violence*, S/2022/272, 29 March 2022.



committed in various conflicts in 2022. Ukraine stood out, where Russian forces committed sexual violence as a weapon of war in areas under military occupation as part of the invasion. Sexual violence had a particularly serious impact on the conflict in the Tigray region. In Cameroon, human rights organisations complained that both security forces and secessionist fighters had committed serious abuses, including extrajudicial killing, rape, kidnapping and torture.

The repercussions of the armed conflicts also include forced displacement. According to UNHCR data, this continued to intensify and break record figures. The UNHCR report for the first half of 2022 estimated the refugee population at 32.5 million and internally displaced persons at 53.1 million (IDMC data on internal displacement referring to the end of 2021). Just over three quarters (76%) of the refugee population and the population in need of international protection came from six countries: Syria (6.8 million people), Venezuela (5.6), Ukraine (5.4), Afghanistan (2.8), South Sudan (2.4) and Myanmar (1.2). Furthermore, 69% lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin, according to UNHCR data. There were 1.1 million new asylum applications in the first half of 2022. In any case, the final calculation of 2022 will show even more internal and external forced displacement. Thus, during the year many conflicts were the scene of serious situations of forced displacement. In the crisis in Ukraine, it was estimated that there were 5.9 million internally displaced people, 7.9 million people registered as refugees in Europe and 4.9 million refugees from Ukraine registered to receive temporary protection in Europe or other similar national protection mechanisms at the end of 2022. Ukraine was therefore the main country of origin of refugee populations in the world, according to UNHCR data, beating out Syria, which had held the title in recent years. In the Western Sahel Region, 2.9 million people were displaced by violence, including internal and external displacement. In Ethiopia, there were an estimated 2.7 million internally displaced people in early 2023, though that did not include the displaced population of the Tigray region or areas of the Afar region due to obstacles to access. In northeastern Nigeria, the country most affected by the Boko Haram factions, an estimated 2.2 million people were internally displaced by the violence, which as a whole for the country amounted to 3.2 million. In Somalia, three million people were internally displaced a result of the conflict, insecurity and the effects of climate change. In the DRC, there were 5.76 million internally displaced people in 2022, slightly more than the 5.6 million in 2021, which included around three million minors. Between March and December, over 510,000 people were displaced within the DRC and another 7,000 sought refuge in Uganda. By mid-2022, it was estimated that there were over three million internally displaced people and 844,260 refugees outside Sudan due to violence, to which should be added the million refugees that the

country is hosting from the crises in South Sudan, the DRC, Ethiopia and elsewhere. In Asia, the case of Myanmar stood out, where at the end of 2022 there were 1.5 million internally displaced people, more than double the number in 2021. In Pakistan, the violence and political and economic crisis was aggravated by serious floods caused by climate change that affected millions of people and displaced almost eight million people.

## 1.3. Armed conflicts: annual evolution

### 1.3.1. Africa

#### Great Lakes and Central Africa

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

#### 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. In 2020, the historic leader Pierre Nkurunziza passed away, although the new leader, Domitien Ndayishimiye, had an approach towards the political and armed opposition similar to that of his predecessor.

**As in previous years, political violence and sporadic attacks by armed actors and government counterinsurgency activity continued in 2022,**

as well as repression, arbitrary arrests and forced disappearances of members of the political opposition by the security forces and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling party, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). The research centre ACLED released a death toll of 245 in the country in 2022 resulting from these activities.<sup>19</sup> These data show a slight improvement compared to 2021, when 285 deaths were reported. The main armed actions of the year included the attack carried out in late September by the security forces against the group FNL in the Kibira forest (Cibitoke province), resulting in the death of 42 rebels and a dozen soldiers, according to reports released in mid-October. The clashes forcibly displaced hundreds of people. As a sign of the climate of repression and silencing of the political opposition, the government banned various opposition candidates from running in local elections and disrupted opposition meetings and electoral rallies. In addition, in the context of local elections, the youth wing of the CNDD-FDD, the Imbonerakure, carried out politically motivated violent attacks. In August, the secretary general of the CNDD-FDD, Révérien Ndikuriyo, confirmed that it was legitimate to kill anyone who threatened national security and urged the Imbonerakure to continue conducting night patrols, which they used to intimidate and repress the opposition with total impunity. At the end of 2022, there were 259,279 Burundian refugees, mainly in the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, according to UNHCR.<sup>20</sup> Over 206,000 Burundian refugees have returned to their country of origin since September 2017, including 20,348 from January to October 2022. Another consequence linked to the armed conflict that created a serious atmosphere of tension and demonstrations was the forced expropriations of land by Imbonerakure groups in October to deliver members of the ruling party and to build a military base (a process begun in August against more than 5,000 families).

*The special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burundi said that the country's human rights record had not improved significantly since 2015*

*The president of Burundi purged the government as the result of an alleged coup attempt*

The government carried out a national training campaign in which groups of Imbonerakure members received military training in September and later joined an offensive against the armed group RED-Tabara in the Congolese province of South Kivu, according to military sources. In mid-September, the special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burundi, Fortuné Gaétan Zongo, said that the country's

human rights record had not improved significantly since 2015. Nevertheless, in late October the EU announced that it was lifting sanctions against three senior officials, including Prime Minister Gervais Ndirakobuca and the top presidential advisor, General Godefroid Bizimana, after an "intensified dialogue" with Bujumbura on the country's human rights record. In February, both Brussels and Washington restored flows of aid to the nation after lifting the sanctions imposed in 2015, citing political progress under Ndayishimiye. In their decision to reinstate aid, authorities in both capitals noted that civil society groups had returned. The BBC also received authorisation to broadcast again from the country. Finally, the EU, Burundi's largest foreign donor, praised its efforts to combat corruption.<sup>21</sup>

Burundi continued to improve relations with neighbouring countries and regional organisations to end its international isolation and boost its image in relation to the violence and security in the country. On 22 July, President Évariste Ndayishimiye was elected chair of the East African Community (EAC) for a one-year term. On 15 August, Burundi announced the deployment of at least 600 soldiers in eastern DRC as part of a bilateral agreement between both countries. On 27 July, the NGO Burundi Human Rights Initiative said that Burundi had secretly sent hundreds of soldiers and Imbonerakure to fight the RED-Tabara group in South Kivu since late 2021. Congolese sources claimed that Burundian military contingents were carrying out their operations as part of the regional force of the EAC, though Burundian military sources claimed there was a bilateral agreement. There were also changes in several key positions in the government amidst the power struggle between President Évariste Ndayishimiye and the secretary general of the CNDD-FDD, Révérien Ndikuriyo. Tension escalated in September as a result of a major purge resulting from the president's announcement of an alleged coup attempt. Prime Minister Alain Guillaume Bunyoni, who had been an important ally of the president, was replaced by Interior Minister Gervais Ndirakobuca and five other ministers were also removed from office. Ndayishimiye also replaced General Gabriel Nizigama, his presidential chief of staff, a position described in the country as a super prime minister, with Colonel Aloys Sindayihebura, who was in charge of internal intelligence in the National Intelligence Service. The president also sacked or transferred 54 provincial police commissioners.

19. ACLED, [Dashboard](#). [Viewed on 31 January 2023]

20. UNHCR, [Operational Data Portal, Burundi](#), 31 January 2023.

21. Kuwait Times, "Burundi president sacks PM after warning of coup plot", *Kuwait Times*, 7 September 2022.

CAR	
<b>Start:</b>	2006
<b>Type:</b>	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government of CAR, armed groups that are members of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC, made up of anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, 3R, FPRC, MPC and UPC), other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia, Wagner Group
<b>Intensity:</b>	2
<b>Trend:</b>	↓

#### 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, forcing a transitional government that led to the 2015-2016 elections. After a brief period of reduced instability and various peace agreements, armed groups continued to control most of the country. Neither the reduced Central African security forces (which barely controlled Bangui) nor MINUSCA were able to reverse the situation, so new contacts were promoted by the AU and ECCAS, which contributed to reaching the peace agreement of February 2019.

**The attacks led by armed groups that withdrew from the 2019 peace agreement in December 2022 continued and the political situation in the country deteriorated due to the polarisation caused by the attempt to reform the Constitution.** According to the research centre ACLED, there were 256 violent events (battles,

violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices) in 2022 that killed 837 people. This figure is significantly lower than that of 2021, which rose to 1,700 fatalities, coinciding with the attempted coup and the rebel offensive that gained momentum in late 2020 and early 2021. According to UNHCR data, by the end of 2022, more than 739,134 people were refugees in neighbouring countries and over 515,665 were displaced within the country.<sup>22</sup>

The security situation throughout the country remained highly unstable, with continued attacks by armed groups that are part of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), as well as actions carried out by mercenaries of the Russian private security group Wagner and Central African security forces, denounced for committing serious human rights violations against civilians. The CPC consolidated its presence in the prefecture of Vakaga, in the northeastern part of the country, making the commune of Ouandja its stronghold. Fuel shortages as a result of restrictions on global supply chains, especially in June, limited the operations of state security forces and MINUSCA forces. Armed groups took advantage of this by attacking areas where the state's authority was weaker or completely absent, according to the UN Secretary-General's report in October. The groups regained control of some mining areas, committed abuses against civilians and imposed illegal taxation. In addition, rebels from the CAR may have regularly crossed the border with Cameroon to kidnap civilians for ransom. On 22 June, Cameroonian and CAR officials met to discuss the security situation on their shared border and curb the activities of criminal gangs, armed groups and highwaymen involved in the trafficking of arms and natural resources.

On 14 November, the UN Security Council extended MINUSCA's mandate for one year, though Russia, China and Gabon abstained due to disagreement over the lifting of the ban on MINUSCA's night flights, an issue included in the resolution. Bangui had ordered this ban years ago to limit interactions with flights operated by Wagner, but on 3 October, three wounded MINUSCA soldiers could not be evacuated at night and died as a result of their injuries, which was mentioned in the UN Secretary-General's report in October as an obstacle to the work of the UN forces. Thus, the two permanent members abstained from voting on the resolution by failing to remove the reference to the government ban, which highlights the tensions between the Western countries of the UN Security Council and Russia, which has Chinese support. Tensions between France and the CAR escalated in late November following an airstrike on a military base in Bossangoa on which a local pro-government organisation blamed France. Russia said that the CAR was under threat from some external actor and accused the international community of supporting the rebellion. On 16 December, the head of the Russian

22. UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal - CAR Situation*. [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

cultural centre in Bangui received a package bomb that injured him. As a result, the owner of the Wagner group blamed France for promoting terrorism, an accusation that France described as propaganda. In mid-December, the last contingent of France's Operation Sangaris withdrew. The last French troops deployed in the CAR left after relations cooled due to the strengthening of ties between Bangui and Moscow. As the nation's former colonial overlord, France had sent up to 1,600 soldiers to the CAR with a mandate to help to stabilise it after a 2013 coup sparked the armed conflict in which the country is still mired today. Operation Sangaris was the seventh French military intervention in the CAR since it gained independence in 1960. It ended in October 2016 after the elections, leaving a residual French presence.

After multiple delays, the national dialogue known as the Republican Dialogue announced after the attempted coup in January 2021 was held between 21 and 27 March 2022, though the political opposition and the armed groups that withdrew from the 2019 peace agreement in December 2022 did not participate. After the Republican Dialogue was concluded, the government created a monitoring committee in 2022, formed by representatives of presidential majority, opposition parties, including Gabriel Jean-Edouard Koyambounou as the coordinator to lead the committee, civil society organisations and religious leaders.<sup>23</sup> Polarisation between the government, pro-government parties and the political and social opposition grew following the Republican Dialogue due to the pro-government attempt to promote a referendum to amend the Constitution to allow the current president to run for a third term. In July, a broad platform against the constitutional reform was created, known as the Civil Society Organisation Action Group for the Defence of the Constitution of 30 March 2016. The Republican Bloc for the Defence of the Constitution was also created, which included key opposition figures that called for protests against the constitutional reform. In August, pro-government organisations and political parties staged demonstrations in support of the reform and the Bureau of the National Assembly called on the government to start the constitutional reform process and establish an inclusive constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. The government responded by creating a drafting committee to submit a draft proposal for a new constitution to the presidency within three months of its establishment and appointed its members. Several political and civil society actors, including the Catholic Church, turned down a seat on the committee. The PATRI party, the Republican Bloc and the Civil Society Organisation Action Group filed appeals against the presidential decree to start the constitutional reform before the Constitutional Court. On 23 September, the Constitutional Court declared the processes undertaken to draft a new constitution unconstitutional, which led to threats from supporters of the reform. The independent

station Ndeke Lukae was also threatened for reporting on the issue. Although the government accepted the constitutional ruling, in December the National Assembly approved a law to regulate referendums in the country, opening the door to holding a referendum to promote the constitutional reform once again.

DRC (east)	
<b>Start:</b>	1998
<b>Type:</b>	Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government of DRC, FDLR, splinter factions of the FDLR (CNRD-Ubwiyunge, RUD-Urunana), Mai-Mai militias, Nyatura, APCLS, NDC-R, LRA, Ituri armed groups, South Kivu community-based militias, Burundian armed groups, Burundi, Rwanda, MONUSCO, EAC Regional Force (EACRF)
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

#### Summary:

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

**The situation in the eastern part of the country worsened during the year because of the offensive of the March 23 Movement (M23) in North Kivu.** Since November 2021, this group had resumed its activities after being inactive for virtually a decade. Beginning in May 2022, it launched a powerful offensive, expanding its presence and control of the territory in the province of North Kivu. **This escalation and the actions of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other groups in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu further contributed to a general deterioration in the security situation.** Added to this situation was the increase in tension between the DRC and Rwanda. According to ACLED data,<sup>24</sup>

23. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

24. ACLED, [online](#). [Viewed on 31 January 2023].



2,660 violent events (battles, violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices) were reported in the five eastern provinces of the country (Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika) in 2022 that cost the lives of 5,681 people. In the country as a whole, there were 6,145 fatalities as a result of violence. These figures are higher than those reported in 2021, when more than 2,300 episodes of violence and 4,723 fatalities were reported in these five provinces alone, and 4,865 people in the country as a whole.

According to UNHCR, there were 5.76 million internally displaced people in 2022, slightly more than the 5.6 million internally displaced people in 2021, which highlights the persistence of insecurity and violence preventing the population from returning to their places of origin. This figure includes around three million minors. There were also 1,016,000 refugees in neighbouring countries in 2022, up from 942,000 in 2021, which continues to make the DRC the site of the largest displacement crisis in Africa in recent years. The DRC also hosted more than half a million refugees and asylum seekers from neighbouring countries. In January 2023, the World Food Programme (WFP) indicated that 26.4 million people, a quarter of the country's population, suffered from a serious food emergency situation.<sup>25</sup>

During the year, the March 23 Movement's (M23) offensive intensified with the seizure of different towns, and especially Rumangabo, the main Congolese military base in North Kivu in May. The Congolese Army pulled back from the offensive, describing it as a strategic withdrawal. The M23 also took the town of Bunagana, on the border with Uganda, in the territory of Rutshuru (North Kivu) on 12 June. Since then, the group has operated the border post with Uganda and has been expanding its command over neighbouring towns in Rutshuru. This escalation of the M23 and the actions of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other armed groups in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu (such as the Nyatura factions, Mai Mai militias, the APCLS group, the Nduma Défense du Congo-Rénové group, the group of Rwandan origin FDLR, from among the 120 armed groups active in the eastern part of the country) further contributed to a general deterioration in the security situation. OCHA estimated that more than 510,000 people may have been displaced between March and the end of the year and another 7,000 may have sought refuge in Uganda as a result of the M23 attacks. The M23 offensive, which began in late 2021, may have had the support of Rwanda, according to the UN in August, and together with the cross-border bombings and incursions by DRC soldiers into Rwanda and Rwandan soldiers into the DRC, escalated tension between the two countries. The crisis led to regional efforts to try to de-escalate the conflict and to promote

contacts leading to peace negotiations between the DRC and the M23 and between the DRC and Rwanda. In August, the UN Group of Experts indicated that it had solid evidence on Rwanda's support for the M23. Rejected by Rwanda, the report claimed that the Rwandan Army had launched military incursions in Congolese territory since November 2021, providing military support for specific M23 actions.

In April, the EAC countries, including the DRC (which joined the organisation in March), approved the deployment of a military mission in the eastern DRC starting in August. This mission would combat the armed group M23 and support the government in putting an end to the atmosphere of violence due to the resumption of hostilities by the M23, a decision ratified in June. However, in addition to the delay in the deployment, which became partially effective in November, some details remained unknown, such as the financing of the mission, the protection of the civilian population and coordination with MONUSCO. In August, Burundi became the first country to send troops to the DRC, which will form part of the EAC's regional force, though experts expressed concern that Burundi has its own interests and security agenda, like other neighbours of the DRC, such as Uganda and Rwanda, which have been accused of supporting the M23. Only Tanzania, South Sudan and Kenya have no conflicts of interest in the DRC. The DRC vetoed Rwanda's participation in the mission.

The Congolese government expelled the Rwandan ambassador due to the escalation of the offensive in October, including new territorial conquests with the seizure of the towns of Kiwanja and Rutshuru and the cutting of the RN2, the main artery that connects the provincial capital, Goma, with the northern part of the province and with Uganda. On 31 October, thousands of people in Goma protested against Rwanda, asking for weapons to fight out of concern that the armed group could occupy the capital, as it did in 2012, rejecting and expressing their frustration at international passivity and demanding that the international community impose sanctions on Rwanda for supporting the M23, as evidenced by UN reports. On 30 October, the AU called for a ceasefire and negotiations during the third round of the inter-Congolese dialogue to be held in Kenya between 4 and 13 November, which was postponed to December and in which the M23 did not participate.<sup>26</sup> On 23 November, the leaders of the DRC, Rwanda (through its foreign minister), Burundi and Angola met in Angola and agreed to establish a ceasefire as of 25 November, demanded that the M23 withdraw to its initial positions and warned that if the M23 refused to stop fighting, the EAC force deployed in Goma would use all the means at its disposal to dismantle the group. However, no representative of the M23 was present at the meeting. Its

25. WFP, *Democratic Republic of the Congo December Situation Report #44*, 17 January 2023.

26. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.



leader, Bertrand Bisimwa, issued a statement that same day thanking the regional leaders for helping to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict, and though he initially announced that he would respect the ceasefire, hours later the group stated that said agreement did not concern it since they were not present at the meeting. The M23 demands a direct dialogue with the Congolese government while the latter rejects any direct talks, by mandate of the National Assembly, considers the M23 a terrorist group and demands its withdrawal from Congolese soil before engaging in any negotiations. Between 29 and 30 November, the M23 committed a massacre in the towns of Kishishe and Bambo, in Rutshuru territory. The group tried to downplay its importance, claiming that 10 people had died, whereas the Congolese government announced the death of about 50 civilians. This massacre was unanimously condemned by the international community and many countries demanded that Rwanda end its support for the armed group. A preliminary investigation by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) determined that 131 people had been killed (102 men, 17 women and 12 minors), in addition to cases of looting, rape and kidnapping in retaliation for previous actions by militias in the area. The UNJHRO later raised the death toll to 171 people. Since then, fighting between the group and Congolese forces has persisted. At the same time, some armed groups and Mai Mai militias and group coalitions, such as CODECO, the Nduma Défense du Congo-Rénové, the APCLS and the Coalition of Movements for Change (CMC) signed agreements with the government to join forces to fight against the M23 as part of the policy of alliances and manipulation of support that characterises the volatile security situation and governance crisis affecting the eastern part of the country.

Meanwhile, the situation remained very volatile during the year in the province of Ituri, in northern North Kivu, with armed actions against civilians by the CODECO and Zaire militias and other Mai Mai militias to control mining resources. The Ugandan and Congolese Armed Forces also led military actions against the ADF and prominent actors. Lastly, in the province of South Kivu, local and foreign armed actors continued to carry out attacks against civilians and the security forces, mainly in the territories of Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira, alongside the Burundian Armed Forces' military operations in the province in pursuit of the armed groups based there.

DRC (east - ADF)	
<b>Start:</b>	2014
<b>Type:</b>	System, Resources Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ADF, MONUSCO
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=

#### 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. Since the start of the offensive by the Congolese Armed Forces in the region in 2019, there has been an escalation of violence with serious consequences for the civilian population.

**One year after the Ugandan Armed Forces (UPDF) began a military offensive on Congolese soil against the armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in retaliation for bomb attacks in the Ugandan capital on 16 November 2021, for which the ADF claimed responsibility, the UPDF's military operations continued, as did the joint offensive between the UPDF and the Congolese Armed Forces against the ADF.** This Ugandan military campaign, known as Operation Shujaa, continued its activities, though different analysts questioned its success. In April, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni revealed that 4,000 UPDF soldiers formed part of Operation Shujaa. The Ugandan troops belonged to the Mountain Division Specialised Force that had been trained by the French Special Forces "in mountain warfare" since 2016. In 2019, the Mountain Division was officially inaugurated.

There were several changes in the management of Operation Shujaa in 2022. In October there were changes to the command structure. Its commander, Lieutenant General Kayanja Muhanga, was transferred to army headquarters as commander of the UPDF ground forces. His predecessor, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the son of Yoweri Museveni, promoted the success of the operation and returned to his predetermined position as the main presidential advisor on special operations. Replacing Kayanja in 2022 was Major General Dick Olum, who had been the defence attaché at the Ugandan embassy in Kinshasa and had also commanded operations against Joseph Kony in the CAR. Like Kayanja, Olum had also served as commander of the UPDF contingent in the fight against al-Shabaab militants in Somalia.

Despite the changes in the management of the operation, the ADF continued to conduct attacks against civilians in North Kivu province and **expanded further into Ituri province, where it carried out many different attacks in the areas of Mambasa and Irumu**, where they clashed with the UPDF and the Congolese Armed Forces. In February, the UPDF announced that they had evicted the ADF from the “Triangle of Death” in Mukakati, Erigeti, Kainama, Tchabi, River Semliki Bridge and Burasi. In June, the Congo Research Group and the Congolese Ebuteli Institute<sup>27</sup> published a report suggesting the possibility that the UPDF was driven by profit instead of their initial mission to dismantle the ADF, responsible for insurgent activity and for recruiting followers in the DRC and in Uganda. This report also questioned the military achievements of the Ugandan Army, noting how the military operation was also likely aimed at promoting Uganda’s economic interests and particularly at protecting its oil deposits and infrastructure around Lake Albert and road construction to expand Uganda’s freight market. Dott Services, a Ugandan construction company, and Total Energies, a French multinational oil company, were directly involved in developing their interests around the lake. Analysts had noted that Rwanda was wary of Uganda’s presence on Congolese soil and had also identified Uganda as a source of support for the revival of the M23. However, the M23’ offensive did push Congolese troops back towards the territory of Rutshuru, in the southern part of North Kivu province, to face this new military front that weakened activity against the ADF.

According to the report of the Panel of Experts on the DRC published in December,<sup>28</sup> the ADF continued its territorial expansion despite Operation Shujaa and conducted attacks against civilians around Beni and Lubero, in North Kivu and in southern Ituri. The ADF continued to operate in small groups, launching simultaneous attacks on several fronts. They also used improvised explosive devices in urban environments, carrying out more visible attacks through well-established networks. Their attacks and movements were mainly aimed at resupplying, searching for suitable locations for setting up new camps, diverting the attention of the ADF as the primary target of military operations and retaliating for those operations, among other actions, all to undermine popular support for Operation Shujaa.

South Sudan	
<b>Start:</b>	2009
<b>Type:</b>	Government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government (SPLM/A), SPLM/A-in Opposition armed group (faction of former vice president, Riek Machar), Kitgwang dissident factions of the SPLA-IO led by Peter Gatdet Simon Gatwech Dual and Johnson “Agwalek” Olony, SPLM-FD, SSLA, SSDM/A, SSDM-CF, SSNLM, REMNASA, NAS, SSUF (Paul Malong), SSOA, communal militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwelek), Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), Non- Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG), previously the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA, composed of NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC), Sudan, Uganda, UNMISS
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=

#### 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.

**As in previous years, the same dynamics of violence persisted due to clashes between the South Sudanese Armed Forces and irregular groups and between the**

27. Congo Research Group and Ebuteli, *Uganda’s Operation Shujaa in the DRC, Fighting the ADF or Securing Economic Interests?*, June 2022.

28. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 16 December 2022 addressed to the President of the Security Council from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations, S/2022/967, 16 December 2022.

**dissident Kitgwang factions of the SPLA-IO. There were also ongoing episodes of intercommunity violence that affected many regions in the country.** According to data collected by ACLED, 597 violent events were reported (battles, violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices) that cost the lives of 1,898 people (figures very similar to those reported in 2021, when there were 699 episodes and 1,936 associated deaths).<sup>29</sup> In the last quarter of the year, according to the UN mission in the South Sudan (UNMISS), there was a significant rise in violence that mainly affected civilians, increasing the number of people injured by 87% compared to the same period in 2021.

**The lingering violence, the effects of the severe flooding that affected the country in 2022, pre-existing community tensions, food insecurity, the interruption of livelihoods and the economic crisis aggravated the humanitarian emergency in the country for yet another year.** The World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that 6.6 million people (over half the population of the country) are affected by acute food insecurity, malnutrition, hunger and violence, warning that this figure could rise to 7.8 million during the first half of 2023.<sup>30</sup> Previously, on 14 June, the WFP had announced that nearly one third of the food aid to the country had been cut despite growing needs due to a shortage of funds and rising costs. Moreover, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that South Sudan continues to be the most violent context for aid workers, followed by Afghanistan and Syria. In 2022, nine aid workers were killed in the country while conducting their aid work. In addition, according to UNHCR data, 2,362,756 people were refugees due to violence by mid-2022.<sup>31</sup>

*Over half the population of South Sudan is affected by acute food insecurity, malnutrition, hunger and violence*

Although progress in implementing the 2018 peace agreement between the South Sudanese government and the SPLA-IO remained slow and the peace talks in Rome with the groups that had not signed the 2018 peace agreement were briefly resumed,<sup>32</sup> these efforts were **insufficient to contain the violence in the country, which was characterised by various different scenarios:** fighting throughout the year between the South Sudanese Army (SSPDF) and the forces of the National Salvation Front (NAS) led by General Thomas Cirillo in the region of Equatoria; episodes of intercommunity violence, primarily concentrated in the states of Jonglei, Upper Nile, Warrap, Lagos, Unity, Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, the Abyei Area and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, caused by tension over access to resources and cattle theft; and clashes that involved the government, SPLA-IO forces loyal to Vice President Riek Machar and the different factions that spun off from

the SPLA-IO. In relation to the latter, which increased throughout the year, in January it was announced that the SPLA-IO Kitgwang faction, led by General Simon Gatwech Dual, which split from the SPLA-IO headed by Vice President Machar in August 2021, would sign the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).<sup>33</sup> This agreement included a permanent ceasefire and prompted Machar to order his SPLA-IO forces to halt hostilities with the Kitgwang forces. However, the ceasefire did not last long, and in February fighting began between SPLA-IO forces loyal to Machar and the Kitgwang faction and government troops in the states of Upper Nile and Unity. These clashes led the SPLA-IO to announce its withdrawal from the peace monitoring mechanism in late March, while the SSPDF declared that it was “officially at war” with the SPLA-IO. Later, in July, the Kitgwang faction split again when its deputy leader, General Johnson Olony, attempted to replace General Simon Gatwech as the faction’s leader. The crisis cleaved the Kitgwang faction into two groups headed by Gatwech and Olony, respectively, and led to an escalation of violence between them in the states of Upper Nile and Jonglei, displacing thousands of people. As on other occasions in the war in the country, the conflicts were manipulated and acquired an ethnic-identity dimension, triggering clashes between members of the Nuer ethnic group, to which Gatwech belongs, and the Shilluk (Agwalek) ethnic group, of which Olony is a member. The UNMISS mission deployed additional troops to deter attacks against civilians and expressed deep concern over the violence, urging the parties to halt the fighting. The South Sudanese government also reinforced the SSPDF soldiers that fought with the Agwalek troops to stop General Gatwech’s offensive. However, the fighting continued at the end of the year.

Sudan (Darfur)	
<b>Start:</b>	2003
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, pro-government militias janjaweed, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary unit, Sudan Revolutionary Front armed coalition (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), several SLA factions, other groups, community militias, UNITAMS
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=

29. ACLED, [Dashboard](#) [Viewed on 31 January 2023].  
 30. OCHA, *Violent clashes in South Sudan intensify the humanitarian situation*, 29 December 2022.  
 31. UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#) [Viewed on 31 January 2023].  
 32. See the summary on South Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.  
 33. See [the agreement](#).

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**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, concluding its deployment at the end of 2020.

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**The Darfur region continued to be the epicentre of armed violence in the country.** According to data from the research centre ACLED, 409 violent events were reported in Darfur 409 (battles, violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices) that cost 951 lives. These figures show a slight decrease compared to the previous year, when 1,027 deaths were reported, but they are still far higher than in previous years, such as the 555 deaths in 2020 and the 268 in 2019.<sup>34</sup> The clashes between members of different Arab and non-Arab communities (mainly due to disputes over land ownership or access to resources), the activity of the pro-government Janjaweed militias integrated into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemedti), and the fighting between the Sudanese security forces and the faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid al Nur (SLM/A-AW) continued to be the main causes of violence in the region, in addition to the lack of protection resulting from the definitive withdrawal of the UNAMID mission.

These dynamics of violence upheld the trend in the previous year in relation to forced displacement in Sudan. According to UNHCR data, **by mid-2022, over 844,260 people had sought refuge outside the country due to the violence, most of them coming from the Darfur region, and 3,036,593 were internally**

**displaced.**<sup>35</sup> These statistics rank Sudan the eighth country in the world and the third in Africa regarding the number of people who have left due to violence, behind South Sudan and the DRC, and ninth in the world in terms of the amount of internally displaced persons. **Sudan also ranked among the top 10 countries in the world hosting refugees, with 1,112,300 people coming mainly from the crises in South Sudan, the CAR, the DRC and Ethiopia,** putting it in second place in Africa, behind Uganda (which hosts 1,489,600 refugees).<sup>36</sup> The UNHCR also criticised the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country, which primarily affects displaced persons due to the combined effects of the violence in Darfur and South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the rise in the cost of living due to the domino effect of the war in Ukraine, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. According to OCHA data, 15.8 million people are in need, which represents a third of the country's population.<sup>37</sup>

The **definitive withdrawal of the African Union and UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID)** in early 2021, whose mandate (to protect the civilian population, facilitate access to humanitarian assistance and guarantee security) was transferred to a joint force for Darfur deployed by the government in September 2021, composed of around 20,000 troops coming from the Sudanese Armed Forces, the General Intelligence Service, the RSF, the police forces and members of armed groups that signed the October 2020 peace agreement, was unable to reduce the dynamics of violence. In January, these forces were accused of looting for former UNAMID headquarters in the capital of North Darfur, El Fasher, stealing vehicles and equipment. Days earlier, gunmen had looted World Food Programme warehouses in the same city, prompting the agency to suspend operations in North Darfur. These incidents resulted in new armed clashes between the military and armed groups around the former UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher in February. Later, in April, armed clashes between Arab herders and non-Arab Massalit tribesmen in the Kreinik area of Western Darfur killed at least 200 people in what was the worst event of the

year. Fighting later spread to the regional capital of El Geneina pitting pro-government Janjaweed militias integrated into the RSF against a local militia known as the coalition of Sudanese forces, led by Khamis Abdullah Abakar, the governor of West Darfur and a former rebel leader. The fighting forced over 37,000 people to flee to the border with Chad. Although the violence subsided in May, there was a new outbreak in June over a land

***Sudan ranked eighth in the world and third in Africa regarding the number of people who have left the country due to violence and eighth in the world in terms of the number of refugees it hosts, coming in second place in Africa behind Uganda***

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34. ACLED, [Dashboard](#) [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

35. UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#) [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

36. UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends. 2022*, October 2022.

37. OCHA, *Sudan Situation Report*, 12 February 2023.



dispute between the non-Arab Gimir and Arab Rizeigat communities that left at least 126 people dead, mostly Gimir, in the Kulbus district, and displaced around 50,000. Amidst the wave of violence, representatives of the Rizeigat and Misseriya groups on the one hand and of Arab and Massalit groups on the other signed various reconciliation agreements in El Geneina between June and July. These agreements managed to contain the violence in West and South Darfur in the following months, helping to stabilise the area. In the Jebel Marra area in Central Darfur, factions of the armed group that did not sign the peace agreement, SLA/AW, battled with the RSF throughout the year.

*The southern Sudanese region of Blue Nile became the epicentre of violence in the region, with the rise in intercommunity violence causing 484 deaths*

Finally, in April a **trial began at the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman**, also known as “Ali Kushayb”, the ICC’s first prosecution at the behest of the UN Security Council. Abd-Al-Rahman is charged with 31 war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict in Darfur that began in 2003, pitting Sudanese government forces, backed by Janjaweed militias, against rebel movements.

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

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

**Violence and instability in the region intensified during the year due to intercommunity clashes, mainly in the Blue Nile region.** In 2022, ACLED reported 562 deaths caused by fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Most of them

took place in the second half of the year, with the Blue Nile region as the epicentre, accounting for 484 deaths, while 78 deaths were reported in South Kordofan. These figures show a significant rise in instability compared to the previous year, when 193 deaths associated with the armed conflict were reported, most of them in the South Kordofan region (182). This rise in violence, which forcibly displaced thousands, owed to an increase in intercommunity disputes, which also spread to West Kordofan. This region reported 214 deaths during the year, most of them in October.

The most notable violent episodes of the year included various incidents in **South Kordofan**, mainly due to intercommunity disputes, though they were less intense than those that occurred in 2021. These included a battle in June between members of the Kenana and Hawazma communities that claimed at least 19 lives in the town of Abu Jubayhah. On 18 August, the SPLM-N announced that the group was splitting into two factions headed by Malik Agar and Yasir Arman. Days later, the creation of the SPLM-Revolutionary Democratic Current was announced, led by Yasir Arman. The national crisis and the open dialogue to restore democracy between the military junta and the opposition parties blocked the negotiating process between the SPLM-N al-Hilu (one of the groups that did not sign the October 2020 peace agreement) and the transitional government, with no progress being made during the year.<sup>38</sup>

Neighbouring **West Kordofan** was affected by the rising dynamics of intercommunity violence in the latter part of the year. On 12 September, fighting broke out over land demarcation in the city of Abu Zabad between members of the Hamar and Misseriya communities. On 19 September, representatives of both groups signed an agreement to cease hostilities. Later, members of the Hamar community put up roadblocks to demand the secession of West Kordofan and the formation of a new state, “Central Kordofan”. In October, there were new clashes between members of the Misseriya and Nuba groups over disputed territories, which left at least 19 people dead and 34 injured and displaced around 65,000 people. In December, clashes between members of the Hamar and Misseriya groups over cattle rustling caused at least 30 deaths in the Abu Koa area. Finally, the **Blue Nile** region became the epicentre of violence in the area when intercommunity fighting broke out in the middle of the year. In July, clashes caused by land disputes between members of the Berti and Hausa communities killed at least 105 people and displaced 30,000, forcing the declaration of a state of emergency, a curfew and the deployment of additional troops. Although a cessation of hostilities agreement was signed between the communities involved on 3 August, major clashes flared up in the area again in

38. See the summary on Sudan in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.



September. Tensions escalated into another major episode of violence on 19 October when members of the Hausa community launched an attack against Hamar, Funj, Berti and Gumuz communities in the town of Wad al-Mahi, killing over 257 people and injuring 570. These events led the governor of Blue Nile to declare a state of emergency in the entire region for 30 days and the Sudanese Army appointed a new commander in the state to contain the violence.

## Horn of Africa

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
<b>Start:</b>	2022
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government of Ethiopia, Oromia State Regional Government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), pro-government Amharic militia Fano
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

### Summary:

Ethiopia has been the scene of secessionist movements since the 1970s. Between 1973 and 1974, a political and military movement called the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) arose in the central and southern Oromia region against the Mengistu dictatorship to establish an independent state for the Oromo community. Despite their differences, Oromo nationalist political and armed movements participated alongside other insurgent groups in the country to overthrow the Mengistu regime in 1991. However, in 1992 the OLF distanced itself from the EPRDF coalition government and launched a rebellion against this and other Oromo nationalist movements, demanding independence for the region. In the meantime, Oromia has experienced a cycle of protests initiated by the student movement in 2014 against the Ethiopian regime due to claims linked to its perceived marginalisation of the Oromo people. These protests provoked a harsh government crackdown that caused thousands of fatalities. The protests led in part to the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in 2018 and the appointment of Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Oromo community, who undertook a series of political reforms aimed at fostering national unity and reconciliation. Abiy Ahmed reached a peace agreement with the OLF and other political and military groups, facilitating their return from exile. Though Oromo nationalists assumed that the coming to power of Abiy Ahmed, a member of their community, would boost the region's autonomy, Abiy supports a more centralised state instead of promoting ethnic federalism. In addition, although the OLF became a political party, its military wing, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), rejected the agreement and started a new rebellion, which led the government to designate it a terrorist group in May 2021. Since then, violence has been on the rise. There have also been recurring clashes between Somali herding communities and Oromo farming communities in the border areas between Oromia and Somali over competition for resources and the demarcation of the territories of both communities, with the climate emergency and the repressive intervention of the Liyu government police force exacerbating the situation.

The situation in the Ethiopian region of Oromia worsened significantly in 2022, with an escalation in the fighting and the counterinsurgency activity of the federal security forces, supported by pro-government militias from the neighbouring Amhara region, the Fano militias, against the armed group OLA. At the same time, security forces and pro-government militias committed many acts of violence against civilians of the Oromo community, which accelerated at the end of the year at the same time as the peace agreement between the federal government and the political-military authorities of the Tigray region was reached. These negotiations had drawn the attention of the international community at the expense of the situation in Oromia, according to various analysts.

According to data collected by ACLED,<sup>39</sup> there were 707 violent events (battles, violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices) in the Oromia region that claimed 4,533 lives in 2022. Thus figure must be taken with a grain of salt since it combines violence directly linked to the armed conflict with crackdowns on protests against government action and the ethnic cleansing of civilians. The figure also includes acts of violence against the Amhara minority community in the Oromia region carried out by members of the Oromia regional government and the OLA, as well as clashes between community-based militias from Somali herding communities and Oromo farming communities that claim hundreds of lives each year. In April, the government launched a military operation to expel the armed group OLA that was operating in the western, central and southern parts of the region. The fighting intensified in October, coinciding with the negotiations that culminated in the peace agreement in November between the federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region.<sup>40</sup>

Human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch condemned the escalation of violence and the counterinsurgency campaigns, which included telecommunications cuts and blackouts and indicated that the clashes had led government security forces to commit serious abuses, including summary execution and arbitrary detention. HRW also reported that the armed groups had kidnapped or killed members of minority communities in the region and government representatives. It also said that the armed conflict and peace negotiations related to the Tigray region may have eclipsed the conflict in the neighbouring region and the need for peace negotiations to de-escalate the tension and tone down the growing violence.<sup>41</sup> A report by the independent government organisation Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published in December said that civilians in the region have been caught in the crossfire and subjected to alarming crimes, such as extrajudicial and mass killings that would constitute

39. ACLED, [online](#). [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

40. Nosmot Gbadamosi, "Ethiopia's Other War", *Foreign Policy*, 16 November 2022.

41. HRW, "Ethiopia's Other Conflict. Ethiopia's Tigray War Overshadows Ongoing Cycles of Violence in Oromia", *HRW*, 4 July 2022.

serious violations of human rights in the course of attacks by armed groups, government forces and the Amharic Fano militia. The OLA's actions included the destruction of farming locations and supplies and civil infrastructure, the looting of state property and the interruption of essential services. The clashes may have caused hundreds of fatalities and injuries. Covering the period between August and December, the report indicated that civilians had been deliberately targeted based on ethnic criteria or political opinions and that the clashes and ethnic cleansing had forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of people who ended up in deplorable conditions and with no access to humanitarian assistance.<sup>42</sup> The OLA spokesperson indicated that federal security forces carried out drone attacks in populated areas that caused the death of over 300 civilians between the last week of October and the first week of November, coinciding with the negotiations in South Africa. An ACLED body count of five of those days found that more than 55 civilians had been killed in shelling in three towns.<sup>43</sup> The AU-facilitated peace negotiations in relation to the armed conflict in the Ethiopian region of Tigray drew the attention of the international community, diverting it away from the acts of war in Oromia according to these analyses. A US-based organisation, the Amhara Association of America, stated that it had received information that the OLA and parts of the regional government of Oromia had made a deliberate and concerted effort to ethnically cleanse the Amhara minority population in the region.

Ethiopia (Tigray)	
<b>Start:</b>	2020
<b>Type:</b>	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government of Ethiopia, Government of Eritrea, security forces and militias of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), security forces of the Amhara and Afar regions, Amharic militia Fano
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↓

**Summary:**  
The appointment of Abiy Ahmed as Ethiopia's new prime minister in early 2018 brought about important and positive changes domestically and regionally in Ethiopia. However, Abiy's actions to reform the Ethiopian state led to its weakening. They gave a new impetus to the ethnic-based nationalist movements that had re-emerged during the mass mobilisations initiated in 2015 by the Oromo community that eventually brought Abiy Ahmed to power, as well as strong resistance from key actors such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party, formerly the

leading party of the coalition that has ruled Ethiopia since 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which established the system of ethnic federalism after he came to power. The Tigray community leadership perceived a loss of power and privilege in the changes enacted by Abiy Ahmed. The TPLF is resisting the loss of power resulting from its non-participation in the new party forged from the ashes of the EPRDF coalition, the Prosperity Party (PP), which if it joined, would lead to the dilution of its power within a new party. These tensions intensified under Abiy Ahmed's liberalising reforms. As the EPRDF tightened its grip, new opportunities, grievances and discourses emerged from regional leaders and civil society actors. This triggered an escalation of political violence throughout the country and increased tension between the federal Government and the TPLF, culminating in the outbreak of armed conflict between the Ethiopian security forces and the security forces in the Tigray region. Moreover, the crisis took on regional dimensions due to the involvement of Eritrea, as well as militias and security forces from the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Amhara.

**Two years after the start of one of the most serious armed conflicts in Africa in recent years, the federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region reached a peace agreement that could put an end to the serious atmosphere of violence and human rights violations committed in the regions by all the warring parties** that have caused one of the main displacement crises in the Horn of Africa in recent years. The serious human rights violations identified (extrajudicial killings, serious atrocities such as widespread sexual violence used as a weapon of war, sexual slavery and mass rape, acts of ethnic cleansing according to human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and HRW) could be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by all the actors involved in the conflict, according to various analysts. In addition to the cessation of hostilities, the peace agreement reached on 2 November included important concessions by the TPLF, such as the systematic and coordinated disarmament of its security forces. The federal government agreed to remove the TPLF from its list of terrorist organisations and start (Article 10.2) a political dialogue on the political future of Tigray, without the agreement defining any kind of supervision or monitoring of the dialogue.<sup>44</sup>

According to data collected by ACLED,<sup>45</sup> 145 violent events (battles, violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices) were reported in the Tigray region in 2022, which claimed the lives of 698 people. If the Amhara and Afar regions are included, where serious fighting also took place between the TPLF and the coalition of federal security forces, local security forces and regional militias from both provinces and the Eritrean Armed Forces deployed in the country, there were 388 episodes of violence that killed 1,359 people.

42. Ethiopia Observer, 'Serious human rights violations' in Oromia region: EHRC report, 8 December 2022.  
43. ACLED, EPO Weekly, 29 October – 4 November 2022, in Gbadamosi, Nosmot, "Ethiopia's Other War", Foreign Policy, 16 November 2022.  
44. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.  
45. ACLED, online. [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

These figures are significantly lower than those reported from when the conflict started in November 2020 until the end of 2021, when more than 800 violent events and 4,075 fatalities were reported in the Tigray region alone. If the adjacent provinces of Amhara and Afar are included, there were 1,473 episodes of violence and 8,436 fatalities, although these figures must be taken with caution due to the difficulties in getting reliable death counts due to restrictions on access to humanitarian staff, the media and independent sources.

According to UNHCR, there were over 2.7 million internally displaced people in the country at the start of 2023, though this figure does not include the displaced population in Tigray due to difficulties operating in the region, nor does it include statistics from parts of the region of Afar, which also remained inaccessible as a result of the conflict and insecurity.<sup>46</sup> In January 2023, the UNFPA indicated that over 26 million people, more than 20% of the population of the country, suffered from a serious food emergency situation and depended on humanitarian aid. This figure includes 20 million people affected by the drought and other climate disasters in the eastern and southern regions of the country. Conflict and displacement, severe drought, disease and the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are the main factors contributing to the situation. Following the agreement reached in November, humanitarian actors stepped up their response due to improved access to populations affected by the conflict. Commercial flights between Mekelle and Shire, electricity, telecommunications and banking services were restored in various parts of Tigray, which had a positive impact.<sup>47</sup>

The peace agreement reached in November was preceded by a breakdown of the humanitarian truce in force between March and August 2022, after which there was a serious escalation of violence between the parties. In October, the AU-led mediators got the parties to accept their invitation to travel to South Africa to discuss a cessation of hostilities, but it was postponed for logistical reasons. Ethiopia could have used this delay to accelerate the military offensive together with Eritrea to come to the negotiating table in a stronger position, according to some analysts.

Two years after the outbreak of an armed conflict that has caused thousands of deaths in the region, displaced more than two million people and forced almost one million out of the six million people that live in the Tigray region into starvation, there was a new escalation

***The Ethiopian federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region reached a peace agreement in 2022 that could put an end to the serious climate of violence that has affected the region in the last two years***

of fighting in late August between the militias and security forces of Tigray and the Ethiopian federal troops supported by Eritrea and the security forces of the Amhara region. The rise in violence sounded alarms for serious violations of human rights against civilians and led to an intensification of diplomatic initiatives to convince the parties of the need to reach a ceasefire. However, a humanitarian truce had been in force from March until the end of August. Both sides traded blamed for breaking the truce, which led to new fighting and the resumption of the humanitarian blockade. After the ceasefire agreement was signed in November, there were some sporadic clashes and continued abuse by Eritrean troops, as well as acts of looting and attacks against civilians. For instance, the Tigrayan authorities accused

the federal security forces of having carried out attacks against civilians in the town of Maychew after the agreement was signed. However, in general the parties respected the agreement and in late December, Eritrea began to withdraw its troops from various locations in the region, including the strategic locations of Shire and Axum, coinciding with the arrival of the AU monitoring mission included in the agreement. Meanwhile, the forces and security forces of the Tigray region began to deliver heavy weapons in compliance with the agreement.<sup>48</sup> In turn, fighting in the border area between the Ethiopian and Sudanese armies and Sudanese militias in 2021, which hindered the displacement of people fleeing the conflict, also subsided during the year. In December 2022, Ethiopia and Sudan reached a cooperation agreement on peace and security.

Somalia	
<b>Start:</b>	1988
<b>Type:</b>	Government, System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Federal government, regional pro-government forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan and warlord militias, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, AMISOM/ATMIS, EUNAVFOR Somalia, Combined Task Force 151, al-Shabaab, ISIS
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

#### **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

46. UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Ethiopia, 31 January 2023.

47. UNFPA, *UNFPA Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Situation Report*, 31 December 2022.

48. BBC, "Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: TPLF forces hand over weapons in peace move", BBC, 11 January 2023.

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

**The armed conflict in Somalia was much more intense than in the previous period. The year was marked by the rise in attacks by the armed group al-Shabaab, by the operations of the African mission in the country (AMISOM, transformed into the AU Transitional Mission in Somalia, ATMIS, in April) and of the Somali National Army and its international allies and by the culmination of the electoral process.** The Somali security forces and ATMIS continued to be the main target of the attacks, which were mainly carried out with improvised explosive devices. The states most affected by the activity of al-Shabaab and the counterinsurgent operations of the federal government and its allies were the rural areas and urban centres in the central and southern part of the country, especially in the state of Hirshabelle (especially the regions of Hiraan and Middle Shabelle); the state of Galmudug (the region of Galgudug); the state of South West (especially the regions of Benadir, which includes the capital, Mogadishu, and also Lower Shabelle, Bay and Bakool); and Jubaland (especially the Gedo region, which borders Ethiopia).

The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS)<sup>49</sup> reported that there was a 133% rise in deaths linked to the violence of militant Islamist groups during 2022. There were 6,484 violent deaths reported in Somalia in 2022, according to ACLED data, an increase from 3,181 the previous year. This is a record number of deaths and exceeds the total of 2020 (3,232) and 2021 (3,181) combined.<sup>50</sup> This was reflected in an increase in armed activity compared to the previous year, with a total of 2,936 violent events (battles,

violence against civilians and improvised explosive devices), compared to the 2,545 events of the previous year, but the slight difference shows that the actions in 2022 were much more lethal.

The escalation of confrontations and government combat actions increased after the election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in May and his call for an all-out offensive against al-Shabaab. This offensive expelled al-Shabaab from the main cities it had previously controlled, which provoked reprisal attacks. The government offensive against al-Shabaab caused an increase in actions by part of the rearguard, responding in pursuit of easy targets, such as the October attacks in Mogadishu that caused around one hundred deaths and injured hundreds more.

The conflict was also marked by a 34% increase in attacks with improvised explosive devices in 2022 and a doubling of the deaths resulting from them. The UN reported that 613 civilians died and 948 were injured that year, most of them by improvised explosive devices planted by al-Shabaab, which exacerbated the already dire humanitarian and human rights situation of the civilian population, according to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk.<sup>51</sup> State security forces, clan militias and other unidentified actors were also responsible for civilian casualties, as were aerial operations with drones from the US and Turkey.

In humanitarian terms, the ACSS said that Somalia experienced its fifth rainy season with hardly any precipitation and was expected to see a sixth season of below-average rains in March-June 2023, which could affect 8.3 million people. Much of the area facing the most extreme food insecurity, including possible famine, is in territory that al-Shabaab controls or disputes. This underscores the challenges of humanitarian access and occasionally the total sabotage of food aid deliveries. UNHCR reported that there were three million internally displaced people in the country as a result of the conflict, insecurity and the effects of climate change.<sup>52</sup>

**In addition to the activities of al-Shabaab and the severe drought and famine affecting the country, legislative and presidential elections were held as part of the implementation of the electoral agreement reached on 27 May 2021.** The presidential election was won by Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who became the new president of the country, ending the serious climate of tension between parts of the government and

49. Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, "Fatalities from Militant Islamist Violence in Africa Surge by Nearly 50 Percent", 6 February 2023.

50. ACLED, [online](#). [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

51. OHCHR, "Somalia: Türk decries steep rise in civilian casualties amid surge in Al-Shabaab attacks", OHCHR, UN, 14 November 2022.

52. UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Somalia, 31 January 2023.



the federated states and opposition groups, which had triggered several different negotiations to overcome the dispute.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the AU mission in Somalia ended its mandate on 31 March 2022 and was replaced by the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), established on 1 April. The mission has the mandate to strengthen both the military and institutional autonomy of the Somali government as it proceeds to withdraw from the country. Its mandate will end in late 2024, when Somalia's security forces and bodies are expected to fully assume the country's security responsibilities, guided by Somalia's Transition Plan. The first ATMIS troop drawdown took place in December 2022.

The elections also concluded with the formation of Parliament.<sup>54</sup> Outgoing President Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmajo" Mohamed acknowledged his defeat and President Mohamud took the oath of office immediately. The presidential election was considered transparent and widely accepted by the country's interested parties. Mohamud assumed full presidential powers on 23 May and was invested on 9 June. Since taking office, the president has intensified contacts with the leaders of the federal states to improve relations between the federal government and the federal states. President Mohamud said that he needed to weaken al-Shabaab militarily, economically and ideologically. In line with the president's determination to fight al-Shabaab beyond military means, the new government prominently appointed al-Shabaab's former second-in-command, Mukhtar "Abu Mansour" Robow Ali, who had defected from the armed Islamist group in 2017, to be the new minister of religious affairs. Abu Mansour had been threatened by al-Shabaab for being considered critical of it and for advocating peace negotiations with the government. He was arrested in December 2018 when he was running for the presidency of the state of South West and imprisoned without trial until his appointment. In a break with previous public statements, on 15 June the current second-in-command of al-Shabaab and leader of its intelligence services, Mahad Karate, told British media Channel 4 that the group could consider negotiations with the government when the time was right.<sup>55</sup> In an interview with *The Economist* published days before, President Mohamud stated his intention to roll back al-Shabaab before striking up peace talks.

According to the report of the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia published in October,<sup>56</sup> despite the efforts made by Somali and international forces to reduce al-Shabaab's capacities, it was still able to carry

out complex and asymmetric attacks in Somalia. Its cross-border offensives in Ethiopia and Kenya during the year highlighted its interest in expanding its ability to attack abroad and revealed its regional ambitions. Al-Shabaab kept large areas of central and southern Somalia under its control and continued to exert its influence over areas where security forces have been deployed. Therefore, the insurgent group retained its freedom of movement, which allowed it to organise ambushes and set up improvised explosive devices that hindered the movement of government forces. The Panel of Experts' investigations into the finances of al-Shabaab, whose economy is based on extortion in several sectors, such as livestock and property, revealed a solid financial position capable of sustaining its insurgent campaign, generating income and exercising control over companies and individuals in areas that it does not physically control, especially in large urban centres such as Mogadishu. This was facilitated by threats of violence against people and communities, as well as by the absence of constant pressure on its financial resources. Furthermore, the Panel of Experts has not seen enough indications that the federal government has attempted to curb al-Shabaab's extortion strategy outside of traditional military operations by its security forces.<sup>57</sup>

## Maghreb - North Africa

Libya	
<b>Start:</b>	2011
<b>Type:</b>	Government, Resources, System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Unity Government with headquarters in Tripoli, government with headquarters in Tobruk, armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA, also called Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF), ISIS, AQIM, mercenaries, Wagner Group; Turkey
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	=
<b>Summary:</b>	
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,	

53. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

54. UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia*, S/2022/665 de 31 August 2022.

55. Jamal Osman, "Inside Al Shabaab: The extremist group trying to seize Somalia", *Channel 4*, 15 June 2022.

56. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 10 October 2022 addressed to the President of the Security Council following Resolution 751 (1992) relating to Somalia by the Panel of Experts on Somalia*, United Nations, S/2022/754 of 10 October 2022.

57. Ibid.



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the rebels announced the liberation of Libya. However, the country remains affected by high levels of violence derived from multiple factors, including the inability of the new authorities to control the country and ensure a secure environment; the high presence of militias unwilling to surrender their weapons; and disputes over resources and trafficking routes. The situation in the country deteriorated from mid-2014 onward, with higher levels of violence and 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.

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The situation in Libya during 2022 was characterised by **growing polarisation and a new institutional fault line amid difficulties and deadlock in the negotiations over the future of the country**.<sup>58</sup> This atmosphere of tension and impasse, which lasted until the end of the year and took shape in the establishment of two parallel governments, together with the intermittent fighting between armed groups in the country, stoked concerns about the political future and the security situation in Libya. **However, in general terms, levels of violence remained similar to those of the previous year and well below what was observed in previous periods.** Following the trend observed since the ceasefire agreement was signed in October 2020, 157 people were reportedly killed in 2022 as a result of the armed conflict, according to the ACLED study centre. This figure is slightly higher than that of 2021, when 115 deaths were reported, but significantly lower than those of 2020 and 2019, when over 1,000 people were killed as a result of the hostilities (1,500 and 2,000, respectively). As in previous years, the perpetrators of the violence were armed groups aligned with the main factions in conflict in the country, organised armed groups engaged in illegal activities and, to a lesser extent, the local Islamic State branch, which was involved in some sporadic actions. Its leader, considered responsible for the kidnapping and beheading of 21 Egyptian citizens in Sirte in 2015, was killed in September by armed groups that control the eastern part of the country. During 2022, the United Nations and human rights organisations continued to warn about the impact of hostilities on civilians, the harassment of civil society actors by armed groups and the many different risks faced by the migrant and refugee population in the country, subjected as it was to abuse, mistreatment and arbitrary arrest.

Uncertainty about how the conflict in Libya was developing had already intensified by the end of 2021 after the general elections scheduled for 24 December

were cancelled. Given the failure to hold them, some questioned the legitimacy of the unity government headed by Abdul Hamid Mohamed Dbeibah, chosen in February 2021 as part of the peace process led by the UN with a mandate to lead the country until the elections. Thus, the House of Representatives, which is based in Tobruk (in the eastern part of the country), decided to appoint Fathi Bashagha as the interim prime minister in February. Hours before the vote, Dbeibah's convoy was attacked by armed men. Though Dbeibah himself was unharmed, it was described as an assassination attempt. In March, Bashagha, who is said to have made agreements and formed ties with an old rival, General Khalifa Haftar, a leading figure in the eastern part of the country, appointed his own government in a disputed process that was not recognised by the United Nations. Both Dbeibah and Bashagha announced different formulas and road maps for holding elections and resolving the crisis. There were mediation attempts to bring the different sides closer in the following months, but in practice the June 2022 deadline to end the transition phase (established in the 2020 agreement) elapsed without them reaching any agreement. At the same time, the main actors indulged in threatening and warmongering rhetoric and several incidents took place that raised the tension. In April, pro-Haftar and pro-Bashagha forces forced the closure of oil and gas fields and export terminals to weaken Dbeibah's access to resources coming from the sale of petrol (production was not restored until July). In May, Bashagha tried unsuccessfully to install his government in Tripoli. After clashes in the capital, his forces were eventually driven out of the city by armed groups loyal to Dbeibah. In July, there were a series of protests in Tripoli, Benghazi and Tobruk, including an assault on and burning of the legislative building in Benghazi, which demonstrated the population's frustration with the political leaders' inability to reach agreements and the problems with living conditions. **The most serious acts of violence occurred in August, when the worst clashes in Tripoli in several years claimed the lives of around 30 people and injured over 150.** Two days of fighting between forces allied with Dbeibah and Bashagha ended without the latter managing to drive the former out of the capital. During the second half of the year, Dbeibah consolidated his control over Tripoli, though violence between rival armed factions was reported. In the final months of the year, the main contending parties made demonstrations of force through military parades, exhibited aggressive rhetoric and, according to some reports, pursued intensive recruitment. At the end of the year, the UN reported minimal progress on a new road map to overcome the crisis and the obstacles to the talks led by representatives of the two rival legislative bodies became clear.

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58. See the summary on Libya in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks 2022 in Focus. Analysis on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

Although the ceasefire generally remained in force, an atmosphere of confrontation throughout the year influenced the development of the negotiations backed by the UN and other international actors, including in the security sector. The political crisis had an impact on the work of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, made up of representatives of the main rival military coalitions (five delegates from the Government of National Accord, the predecessor of the Government of National Unity, and another five linked to General Haftar's armed group, the Libyan National Army, renamed the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (known as LNA or LAAF). In April, members of the commission loyal to Haftar announced that they were ending their participation in it and called to overturn the confidence-building measures established under the ceasefire agreement. This development was attributed to the Government of National Unity's problems in paying salaries to LAAF members, but it was also interpreted as an attempt to pressure Dbeibah to hand over power to Bashagha. The meetings of the Joint Military Commission resumed at the end of October, in Sirte, after the appointment of the new UN special representative and head of the UN mission in the country (UNSMIL), Abdoluaye Bathily, and led to the establishment of a DDR subcommittee. Meanwhile, work continued on a plan to withdraw mercenaries and foreign combatants, another one of the important points stipulated in the truce agreement, given the proliferation of foreign forces in the country in recent years in support of one side or the other and the projection of many different regional and international actors' interests in the conflict. The withdrawal of a few hundred mercenaries from various parts of the country was reported during the year. About 300 Chadian mercenaries left eastern Libya in January, while 1,000 pro-Moscow Syrian mercenaries and another 200 members of the Russian paramilitary organisation Wagner Group reportedly departed the country in April. This latest move was attributed to the repercussions of the war in Ukraine. According to media outlets, around 5,000 pro-Russian mercenaries remained in the country in support of Haftar's forces in April. Tensions also rose in 2022 due to economic and maritime agreements between the Tripoli-based Libyan government and Turkey that open the door to joint exploration of oil and gas in an area of the Mediterranean disputed with Greece and Egypt. These agreements between Tripoli and Ankara, which also signed deals to strengthen their military cooperation, were rejected by Cairo, Athens and the EU.

## Southern Africa

Mozambique (north)	
<b>Start:</b>	2019
<b>Type:</b>	System, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) or Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP)- formerly Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)-, al-Qaeda, South African private security company DAG (Dyck Advisory Group), Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), "Naparama" local militias
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=

### Summary:

Since late 2017, the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique has suffered an armed conflict led by Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (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.

**The year was characterised by an increase in violent episodes against civilians in the province of Cabo Delgado, though there was a slight dip in armed violence-related deaths compared to the previous year.**

According to data collected by ACLED, 905 deaths were reported in the northern part of the country, concentrated in the province of Cabo Delgado, in 2022. These 905 deaths were slightly fewer than the deaths caused by violence in 2021 (1,067).<sup>59</sup> However, the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS) reported that the number of violent incidents related to jihadist groups in the province rose by 29% in 2022 (437), returning to the levels of 2020 before the intervention of the South African Development Community

59. ACLED, [Dashboard](#) [Viewed on 6 January 2023].

(SADC) and Rwandan forces. These episodes were distinguished by high levels of violence against civilians, whose deaths increased by 57% compared to the previous year. Violence against civilians accounted for 66% of all violent events in northern Mozambique, which according to the ACSS was the highest percentage reported in Africa.<sup>60</sup> Since the outbreak of violence in the region in late 2017, it is estimated that the conflict has claimed the lives of around 4,400 people. Cabo Delgado remains one of the five focal points of violence waged by jihadist groups in Africa, which also include the Sahel, Somalia, the Lake Chad basin and North Africa. As a result of the increase and expansion of violence against civilians, by the end of 2022, over one million people had been internally displaced in the four northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula and Zambezia.

***The Mozambican government maintained a narrative that it had control over the situation in Cabo Delgado during the year, but many local and international analysts said that the conflict is far from over***

The most significant scenarios during the year were characterised by the armed actions of groups affiliated with Islamic State that targeted civilians, the Mozambican security forces and international forces deployed in the country since mid-2021; the counterinsurgent actions carried out by the Mozambican Armed Forces (FADM), the deployed Rwandan forces and the reserve force of the SADC Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) in Cabo Delgado; and the counterinsurgent operations of local self-defence militias, known locally as “Naparama”. Throughout the year, armed activity led by groups linked to Islamic State continued in much of the province of Cabo Delgado (districts of Meluco, Maconia, Nangade and Namuno), which called into question the narrative that the government’s security situation had “normalised”. The self-styled Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) claimed responsibility for this activity. ISCAP is a branch of ISIS that also includes the DRC and Uganda and in May, ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks and referred to Mozambique as a separate branch, “Wilayah de Mozambique” (Islamic State Mozambique Province, or ISMP), which raised doubts about whether it has been granted independent status, as happened in March with its affiliated group from the Sahel.

The Rwandan and SAMIM forces maintained and expanded their operations against the insurgency during the year. On 12 April, the heads of state of the SADC, the representatives of the countries that support SAMIM and Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi agreed to extend SAMIM’s mandate and approved the mission’s transition from that of a “rapid deployment” force to that of a “multidimensional” force that assumed greater peacekeeping possibilities. South Africa extended

its own contingent of troops in the SADC mission for 12 months, while Rwanda expanded its troops in the country, as well as in its area of operation in the province of Cabo Delgado. A new 12-month extension of SAMIM’s mandate was agreed in August. At the end of the year, there were around 4,500 foreign soldiers and police officers in Cabo Delgado, of which around 2,000 were deployed by SAMIM (more than half of which were members of the South African National Defence Force) and the rest came from Rwanda.

Finally, the year was also characterised by the re-emergence of a new actor in the conflict: local militias known as “Naparama”. These militias had been part of the armed conflict in the country in the 1980s and they returned to the scene after the FRELIMO secretariat in Cabo Delgado encouraged them to take an active role in the conflict, setting up checkpoints in the main access roads and conducting patrols. To enable their operationalisation, the Mozambican government proposed legislating it as a temporary and transitional force to be used in the context of the conflict in Cabo Delgado. The Mozambican Parliament passed an amendment to Article 7 of the Law on National Defence and on the Armed Defence Forces of Mozambique to incorporate local forces into the structure of the FADM. The amendment was not supported by the opposition parties RENAMO and Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM). Most of the members of these militias are affiliated with the Combatants Association of National Liberation Struggle (ACLIN), an organisation linked to FRELIMO that brings together veterans of the Mozambique liberation war.

## Western Africa

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	
<b>Start:</b>	2018
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government of Cameroon, Government of Nigeria, a political-military secessionist movement including the opposition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako, to which belong the armed groups Lebialem Red Dragons and SOCADEF) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku, whose armed wing is the Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF), various different militias and smaller armed groups
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=

60. Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, “Fatalities from Militant Islamist Violence in Africa Surge by Nearly 50 Percent”, 6 February 2023.

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### 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.

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**The armed conflict between the state security forces and the separatist political and military movements in the two Anglophone provinces in southwestern Cameroon since 2017 remained active and has already caused the death of around 6,000 people, according to International Crisis Group.** It has also forcibly displaced more than 710,000 people, a figure that includes over 87,000 refugees in Nigeria, according to UNHCR data from December 2022. According to the UN, 2.2 million of the four million inhabitants of the English-speaking regions needed humanitarian assistance in 2022, while around 600,000 minors were unable to attend school due to the conflict. The armed groups committed some attacks in the neighbouring provinces of Littoral, Centre and West in 2022 to expand the conflict beyond the two secessionist regions. Tension and violence rose on the eve of 20 May, the national holiday, considered a key date marking the beginning of the conflict, when a constitutional referendum abolished the English-speaking federal state of West Cameroon and the French-speaking federal state of East Cameroon in 1972, as well as the eve of 1 October, the anniversary of the self-proclaimed Federal Republic of Ambazonia. On 1 October, Anglophone separatist movements held armed

marches in the provinces of North West and South West and government forces carried out punitive crackdowns on pro-independence demonstrations in various towns, burning houses and arresting dozens of civilians on 1-2 October.

Human rights organisations reported that both the security forces and the separatist fighters had committed serious abuses that include extrajudicial killings, rape, kidnapping and torture.<sup>61</sup> The separatist movements continued to attack schools, students and teachers, destroying buildings and depriving hundreds of thousands of children of their right to education. In February, following an attack on a girls' secondary school dormitory in Okoyong, Mamfe, South West province, international diplomats jointly condemned the attack and part of the secessionist political and military leadership, the Ambazonian Governing Council (AGovC), called for the attacks on the schools to cease on the same day. Months later, the Mamfe district hospital was destroyed in an attack by secessionist militias. One of the few humanitarian organisations still operating in the area, Doctors Without Borders, confirmed that it was leaving South West province on 29 March, citing government harassment. Local sources also warned that the dynamics of violence had recently been changing with the growth of a lucrative war economy, which generally involves kidnapping and other ways to extort the civilian population. According to analysts, the political and economic spoils of the war have reduced incentives to find a negotiated settlement.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, desertions among the security forces increased. In particular, on 5 and 16 February, the police announced that a total of 12 officers did not show up in different parts of North West province. As in previous years, various insurgent leaders and militia commanders were killed during the year, such as General Ebube in the village of Alabukam (North West) in February and "Field Marshal" Lekeaka Olivier Fongunueh in July, whose corpse was exhibited by the security forces in the city of Kumba. The commander of the special forces' Rapid Intervention Battalion, Major Eyenga Essama, was also killed during clashes in Kumba in July. Essama is the highest-ranking military officer to have fallen in battle since the conflict began in 2017. On 19 July, Defence Minister Joseph Beti Assomo condemned the military's abuses against Anglophone civilians and ordered soldiers to stop their human rights violations.

Speculation continued about the health and succession of octogenarian Paul Biya, who made a private five-day trip to Switzerland in May. Around Biya's 89th birthday on 13 February, there was talk of succession plans and of the growing power of First Lady Chantal Biya. Meanwhile, official celebrations and ceremonies were held in November to commemorate Biya's 40 years in power, during which plans for his son Franck Biya

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61. Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon, Events of 2022", *World Report 2023*, HRW, 13 January 2023.

62. R. Maxwell Bonne, "Why the spoils of war may outweigh incentives for peace in Cameroon", *The New Humanitarian*, 19 July 2022.



to succeed him were revealed. Traditional authorities, ruling party officials and residents of the northern region, a stronghold of the ruling party, greeted his son Franck with honours on 6 November.

In November, the UN working group on arbitrary detentions called for the “immediate and unconditional” release of Sisiku separatist leader Julius Ayuk Tabe and nine other prisoners, describing their arrest in Nigeria in 2018 as arbitrary. In recognition of the plight of the English-speaking regions, and after years of campaigning by activists and dozens of civil society groups, on 15 April the US government granted Temporary Protected Status to all Cameroonian immigrants, allowing them an 18-month stay until their individual status is determined.

Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	
<b>Start:</b>	2011
<b>Type:</b>	System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government of Nigeria, Civilian Joint Task Force pro-government militia, Boko Haram factions (ISWAP, JAS-Abubakar Shekau, Ansaru, Bakura), civilian militias, Multinational Joint Task Force MNJTF (Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=

**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 expanded to the Lake Chad Basin and affected border areas of neighbouring countries with the Nigerian region: the Extrême Nord region in Cameroon, Diffa in Niger and the province of Lac in Chad. Since mid-2016 Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon have developed a regional strategy of military pressure on BH through the implementation of a regional joint military force (MNJTF), which has highlighted the group’s resilience and also the unwillingness of the Nigerian political and military authorities to deal with the situation, in addition to

the shortcomings of the Nigerian Armed Forces, which have serious internal corruption problems. BH has split into four factions: The Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunna Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad (JAS) faction, led by Abubakar Shekau, leader of BH since 2009; Ansaru, which aligned with al-Qaeda in 2012 and had not committed any military actions since 2013 until early 2020; Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which split from JAS in 2016; and finally Bakura, an ISWAP splinter group that emerged in 2018 and subsequently moved closer to Shekau in opposition to ISWAP.

**Different Boko Haram (BH) factions continued to pursue their activities during the year in the Lake Chad Basin region,** which includes northeastern Nigeria, Diffa in Niger and the province of Lac in Chad, despite the counterinsurgency operations against them. These activities caused new population displacements and human rights violations by all the armed actors involved, as indicated by different human rights organisations. **Different clashes and acts of reprisal between armed insurgents were also verified. Meanwhile, the insurgent groups expanded their radius of action beyond the northeastern states of Nigeria and towards other states in north central and northwestern Nigeria.** In northeastern Nigeria, an estimated 2.2 million people had been displaced by violence and 8.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance by the end of 2022, according to OCHA. Nigeria is the country most affected by BH faction activity. The IDMC raised the number of internal displaced persons across the country at the end of 2021 to 3.2 million.<sup>63</sup>

The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS)<sup>64</sup> indicated that violence by Islamist armed groups stabilised in 2022 after a sharp 32% drop between 2020 and 2021. According to the ACLED research centre, 3,782 fatalities were reported in the Lake Chad Basin region (the Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa; the Extrême Nord region in Cameroon; Diffa in Niger; and the province of Lac in Chad) in 2022, slightly fewer than the number of deaths in 2021 (4,163). There were 1,002 violent events in 2022, a figure very similar to the 982 in 2021.<sup>65</sup> The ACSS noted that the Lake Chad Basin region is still the third deadliest in Africa, accounting for 20% of all deaths linked to Islamist militants. The region experienced the resurgence of JAS in 2022. Since 2017, JAS had been declining in its relative threat to ISWAP, which intensified after the death of historical leader Abubakar Shekau in 2021. However, during 2022, BH was associated with a 57% increase in violent episodes and a 70% increase in deaths. While ISWAP continues to be associated with more violence in the region, the levels are now comparable. These changes coincide with the geographical expansion of insurgency attacks beyond

63. IDMC, *Figures Analysis 2021- Nigeria*, 19 May 2022.  
 64. Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, “Fatalities from Militant Islamist Violence in Africa Surge by Nearly 50 Percent”, 6 February 2023.  
 65. ACLED, *online*. [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa in northeastern Nigeria.<sup>66</sup> According to the database Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), the death toll in the Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa rose slightly from previous years (2,078 in 2022, compared to 1,810 in 2021, 2,603 in 2020, 2,607 in 2019, 2,243 in 2018 and 1,907 in 2017).<sup>67</sup>

In 2022, ISWAP-linked attacks took place in the states of Kano, Kogi, Niger and Taraba, in the north central part of the country. ISWAP was also responsible for the bombing of a church in the southwestern state of Ondo, attacks on a military barracks and a prison on the outskirts of Abuja and an attempted attack on a military barracks near the Benin border in the western state of Niger. JAS and ISWAP were also linked to episodes of violence in various states in northwestern Nigeria, such as Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and others. Meanwhile, in October various Western countries, initially the US and the UK, warned of possible attacks by jihadist armed groups in the capital, Abuja, which escalated tension in an unprecedented deployment of security forces that led to the arrest of dozens of suspects in what was described as the largest counterintelligence operation ever carried out in Abuja. President Buhari tried to calm the panicked public, though local sources reported that “waves” of foreigners were leaving the country. Citing military sources, local media outlets warned of possible sleeper cells of armed groups set up in and around Abuja and hidden among the civilian population. JAS and ISWAP were also linked to relative escalations of violence in Chad and southeastern Niger. Meanwhile, security forces were responsible for the deaths of several JAS and ISWAP commanders, including JAS commander Abubakar Sarki in May and ISWAP commander Alhaji Modu in August. Fighting between jihadist armed groups also escalated during the year, mainly between ISWAP and JAS and especially in December, when JAS commander Aboubakar Munzir was killed by ISWAP forces. Another 200 combatants also lost their lives in clashes between both factions in that same month. Sources noted that following the 2021 death of JAS leader Abubakar Shekau and the weakening of JAS,<sup>68</sup> the group reorganised during 2022 and managed to threaten ISWAP’s dominance in the region. The JAS may also be acting under the leadership of Ibrahim Bakura Doron (also known as Abu Umayyah), the historical leader of the Bakura faction, which allegedly acts in alliance with JAS.

Mali	
<b>Start:</b>	2012
<b>Type:</b>	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	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 West Africa Province (ISWAP) –also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)-, Katiba Macina, MINUSMA, France (Operation Barkhane), G5-Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Holland, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom), Russia, Wagner Group
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

#### Summary:

The Tuareg community that inhabits northern Mali has lived in a situation of marginalisation and underdevelopment since colonial times which has fuelled revolts and led to the establishment of armed fronts against the central government. In the nineties, after a brief armed conflict, a peace agreement was reached that promised investment and development for the north. The failure to implement the agreement made it impossible to halt the creation of new armed groups demanding greater autonomy for the area. The fall of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, which for several 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. Although a peace agreement was signed in 2015 in the north of the country between the Arab-Tuareg groups (CMA and Platform), the exclusion of groups with jihadist agendas from the peace negotiations has kept the war going and extended the dynamics of the war to the central region of the country (Mopti).

**During the year, the security situation deteriorated even further in Mali amidst increased tensions between the Malian military junta and the regional and international military and security complex deployed in the country and made up of missions led by France, the UN, the EU**

66. Due to the complexity of differentiating acts of violence committed by JAS, ISWAP and other jihadist armed group factions compared to other types of violence, those committed in other states of the country have not been included in the body counts, so the real figures should be higher than those previously cited. These statistics help us to identify trends regarding the increasing geographical expansion of jihadist armed groups.

67. Nigeria Security Tracker, [online](#). [Viewed on 31 January 2023].

68. See the summary on the Lake Chad region in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2022! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, March 2022.

**and the G5 Sahel.** According to data from the research centre ACLED, 1,340 violent events (battles, violence against civilians and actions with improvised explosive devices) were reported across the country in 2022. Concentrated in the northern and central regions, these episodes left a death toll of 4,842.<sup>69</sup> These data account for a significant rise in violence compared to the previous year (2021), when 1,887 deaths were reported, making it one of the most intense years since the conflict began in 2012. The rise in deaths was due to two factors. First, deadly attacks against civilians by Malian security forces, together with members of the Wagner Group, increased as part of an unprecedented anti-terrorist campaign. Second, there was also a nearly four-fold increase in attacks against civilians by the two main jihadist groups active in the region: the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS or ISWAP). These events pushed Mali from seventh to second place on the list of countries with the highest levels of attacks against civilians, behind only the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>70</sup>

*Mali became the country with the second-highest levels of attacks against civilians in the world*

**The increase in instability and insecurity continued to forcibly displace thousands of people and worsen the humanitarian crisis.** According to data from the UN Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in the country, the number of internally displaced persons stood at 442,620 in October; 1,950 schools remained closed, affecting over 587,000 boys and girls, particularly in the Mopti region; 5.3 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance and only 34% of the necessary funding had been achieved; and over 2 million children under the age of five suffered from acute malnutrition. The UNHCR estimated that 200,471 people had sought refuge outside the country in mid-2022, mainly in Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

In relation to the development of **the armed conflict, the situation remained complex, especially in the northern and central part of the country, as well as in the triple border area that it shares with Burkina Faso and Niger.**<sup>71</sup> In the first few months of 2022, jihadist organisations caused more killings of civilians in the Ménaka and Gao regions in northern Mali than in any previous year of the conflict. In response, the Malian Army and the organisations that signed the 2015 peace agreement launched an offensive in Ménaka between 4 and 5 June to try to retake the strategic city of Andéramboukane from the ISGS. The clashes left at least 115 people killed, including 90 suspected jihadists. On 12 June, the French forces involved in Operation Barkhane arrested ISGS leader Oumeya Ould Albakaye in the

Ansongo district of the Gao region. On 7 August, an ISGS attack in the town of Tessit (Gao region) left 42 Malian soldiers dead in what was the deadliest attack against the military since 2019. In July, JNIM-affiliated groups expanded their operations by launching various attacks near the capital, Bamako. In central Mali (Mopti and Ségou), jihadist groups continued to take advantage of intercommunity conflicts to expand their influence and gain new recruits. The deadliest attack against the military in months was reported on 4 March, when at least 27 soldiers were killed at a military base in the city of Mondoro, near the border with Burkina Faso. During the year there were also various massacres of civilians. For example, in the city of Morra (Mopti) in late March, the Malian Army claimed to have killed more than 200 jihadists in a joint operation with Russian forces, though human rights organisations denied this and accused the government of summarily executing 300 civilians. Also, in Diassagou (Mopti), on 18 June, 132 people were killed in an attack attributed to Katiba Macina.

The security crisis coincided again with the **deterioration of diplomatic relations between the Malian military junta and its traditional security allies**, in part motivated by the decision to associate with the Russian private security company Wagner Group.<sup>72</sup> These disagreements had a profound impact on the international security complex, resulting, for example, in the termination of Operation Barkhane, the anti-terrorist mission in the country; the announcement that different European countries were withdrawing their troops involved in the European Takuba Task Force and that the EU was suspending the EUCAP and EUTM missions in Mali after the massacre in Mopti blamed on the Malian Army and Russian forces in April; the Malian authorities' blockade of the operations of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the withdrawal of troops from different countries from MINUSMA (Côte d'Ivoire, Germany and the United Kingdom); and Mali's withdrawal from all bodies and levels of the G5 Sahel, including the joint military force. In response to these challenges, and particularly those related to the MINUSMA mandate, the UN Secretary-General presented various options for restructuring it to the UN Security Council, which extended its mandate for another year on 29 June (UNSC Resolution 2640). These options were to: 1) increase the uniformed staff (currently set at 13,289 soldiers and 1,920 police officers) with between 3,680 and 2,000 additional troops; 2) establish the mission on the ground to optimise the use of its resources in the most effective implementation of MINUSMA's strategic priorities,

69. ACLED, [Dashboard](#) [Viewed on 6 February 2023].

70. ACLED, "Year in Review. Global Disorder in 2022. Escalating Violence and the Worsening Civilian Burden", ACLED, January 2023.

71. See the summary on the Western Sahel in this chapter.

72. See the summary on Mali in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

focusing mainly on supporting implementation of the peace agreement by concentrating its forces in northern Mali, drawing down personnel in the centre; and 3) withdraw uniformed personnel and turn MINUSMA into a special political mission based in Bamako.<sup>73</sup>

Western Sahel Region	
<b>Start:</b>	2018
<b>Type:</b>	System, Resources, Identity International
<b>Main parties:</b>	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, 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), USA, Takouba Task Force (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom), Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in the Province of West Africa (ISWAP) -also known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Katiba Macina, Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups and community militias, Russia, Wagner Group
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

#### Summary:

The Western Sahel 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.

**For yet another year, the insecurity situation in the tri-border region (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) continued to deteriorate due to persisting episodes of violence, governance crises in the region and tensions in the regional and international military and security complex.** During the year, according to data provided by ACLED, there were 3,357 violent events (battles, violence against civilians and actions with improvised explosive devices) that caused the death of 9,702 people in the region (almost double the deaths reported in 2021, which amounted to 5,279). There were 1,640 episodes of violence in Burkina Faso that left a death toll of 4,214, compared to the 2,290 fatalities reported in 2021; there were 1,340 violent events concentrated in the north-central and southern parts of Mali that cost 4,842 lives, almost triple those reported in 2021, when there were 1,887 deaths; and in the southwestern regions of Tillabéri, Dosso and Tahoua in Niger (the main area affected by the violence), there were reportedly 289 violent events causing 649 deaths, far fewer than the 1,102 fatalities in 2021.<sup>74</sup>

The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS)<sup>75</sup> noted that the Western Sahel region experienced the greatest escalation of violent events linked to jihadist groups (2,737 violent events) than any other region in Africa, with a 36% rise compared to 2021. In total, the region was the scene of 40% of all violent episodes reported in Africa in 2022, with 90% of them taking place in Burkina Faso and Mali. Behind this rise in violence are mainly the groups linked to the coalition Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), while Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS or ISWAP), continued to have a lesser impact, in keeping with the trend in 2021. Of the total deaths reported, 7,899 were associated with this type of group, mainly the JNIM, which was responsible for 67% of the deaths. This means that these groups caused 63% more deaths than the previous year. A worrying trend is the increase in violence against civilians, which during the year caused 49% more deaths than those reported in 2021. Sixty per cent of all non-combatant deaths caused by violent extremism in Africa, which also includes those in Lake Chad, Somalia, northern Mozambique and northern Africa, occurred in the tri-border area. As such, the ACSS stated that the Wagner Group further intensified violence against civilians, as it was linked to 726 civilian deaths. Though the violence perpetrated by these irregular actors was concentrated in Burkina Faso and Mali, there was also an increase in violence in the coastal states during the year: Benin reported 37 events (compared to five in 2021), while Togo experienced 17 events in 2022 (compared to one in 2021). In western Niger, there was a 43% increase in these types of events (214), but they caused half the deaths of the previous year (539).

73. UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Mali*, S/2023/21, 6 January 2023.

74. ACLED, *Dashboard*, [Viewed on 6 January 2023].

75. Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, "Fatalities from Militant Islamist Violence in Africa Surge by Nearly 50 Percent", 6 February 2023.



Due to the rise in violence, **the trend of forced displacement continued, with over 2.9 million people forced to flee their homes. Burkina Faso remained the place of the most displacement**, accounting for over 1.8 million displaced people. The humanitarian situation remained very concerning across the region due to the combined impacts of instability, violence, forced displacement, loss of livelihood, food insecurity, climate change and disease. The World Health Organisation said that the crisis in the Sahel was both one of the fastest growing and most neglected in the world. According to their estimates, by 2023, over 37.7 million people in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, the far north of Cameroon, Chad and northeast Nigeria will need humanitarian assistance. In Burkina Faso, a total of 2.8 million people will need urgent medical attention; in Mali the level of need is at its highest point since the conflict began in 2012, with 7.5 million people requiring humanitarian assistance (compared to 3.8 million in 2017); and the combination of crises mired Niger in four epidemic-related health crises (meningitis, measles, polio and cholera) in 2022.<sup>76</sup>

***The rise to power of military juntas in Mali and Burkina Faso increased insecurity and violence in both countries***

This period of increased insecurity coincided with the rise to power of military juntas through **coups d'état** in Mali (August 2020) and Burkina Faso (January and October 2022), which claimed to aim to tackle the security threat in both countries.<sup>77</sup> Instead of ebbing, however, violence has risen in both countries. For example, in the five months after Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba rose to power in Burkina Faso (January 2022), there was a 23% increase in attacks carried out by armed groups compared to the five months leading up to the coup. In response to the rise in violence, the Burkinabe transition assembly granted rapid intervention powers to the military junta on 6 June, decreeing the creation of two military zones in the eastern and Sahel regions (the most affected), forcing civilians to evacuate their homes to enable security force operations.

The rise of these military juntas and the deployment of Russian forces linked to the private security company Wagner Group once again marked the deterioration of relations in the **international security complex in the region**.<sup>78</sup> In mid-August, France announced the definitive withdrawal of the last French troops in Mali, ending Operation Barkhane in the country after nine years. Previously, on 1 July, Paris had already announced the end of its participation in the European Takuba Task Force, from which other European countries also withdrew their forces. French troops will continue in the region with a contingent reduced by half (2,500 soldiers), but operating from Niger, since the Nigerien

Parliament passed a bill in April that authorises the deployment of French forces to help to fight the armed groups in the country. Nevertheless, some popular protests were staged against this bill. There was also continuous tension and disagreement between the Malian military junta and the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) during the year. The most notable episodes included the Malian authorities' blockade of MINUSMA operations, the withdrawal of troops from different countries from MINUSMA (Ivory Coast, Germany and the United Kingdom) and the crisis set off between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire due to the arrest of 49 Ivorian soldiers from the mission on charges of being mercenaries. In May, the Malian military junta announced the departure from the country of all bodies and levels of the G5 Sahel, including the joint military force. In August, Niger and Burkina Faso signed a military cooperation agreement aimed at increasing joint operations on the ground and asked Bamako to restore military cooperation as part of the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The deteriorating security situation in Niger forced the government to extend the state of emergency in parts of the Tillabery, Tahoua and Diffa regions in late July and prompted the Nigerien Ministry of Defence to announce plans to increase the size of the Nigerien Armed Forces from 33,000 to 100,000 soldiers by 2030.

### 1.3.2. America

Colombia	
<b>Start:</b>	1964
<b>Type:</b>	System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, ELN, groups that emerged from the FARC, paramilitary groups
<b>Intensity:</b>	2
<b>Trend:</b>	↓

**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

76. WHO, *Appel-Sahel*, February 2023.

77. See the summary on Mali and Burkina Faso in the chapter on Socio-political crises.

78. See the summary on Mali in this chapter.

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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.

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**The armed conflict in Colombia remained active, though the start of the peace negotiations with the ELN and the rapprochement with other armed groups as part of the Total Peace policy pursued by the government of Gustavo Petro led to a drop in violence in the country.<sup>79</sup>**

After he won the presidential election in June and was inaugurated in August, Gustavo Petro said that one of his main political priorities was to put an end to the different conflicts. However, armed clashes continued to take place between the security forces and the insurgent organisations and between the rebels themselves, in addition to other acts of violence like the persecution and murder of social leaders, human rights defenders and environmental activists and attacks against civilians. The organisation Indepaz reported 94 massacres in 2022, which claimed 300 lives. Especially serious was the massacre that took place in Puerto Leguizamo, in Putumayo, in March, in which 11 people died. The Colombian Army said that it was an operation against FARC dissidents, but various investigations led by journalists and human rights organisations revealed that the people killed included civilians, a minor and several social leaders. Indepaz also stated that 189 social leaders and human rights defenders and 42 former FARC combatants who signed the peace agreement were killed in 2022, raising to 1,413 the number of leaders and defenders killed and to 348 the number of former combatants killed since September 2016, the year the peace agreement was signed. The Ombudsman's Office said that many more defenders and leaders had been murdered than in 2021, since there were 199 homicides in 2022 and 136 in 2021.

Meanwhile, in August the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Colombia warned of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country, with phenomena such as the displacement, confinement, use of explosive devices and disappearance of people as a result of the conflict. This deterioration occurred mainly in some regions of the country such as Nariño, Cauca, Chocó, Antioquia, Sur de Bolívar, the border with Venezuela in Norte de Santander and Arauca. The ICRC also said that there were six active conflicts in the country in 2022: the conflict between the government of Colombia and the ELN; between the government and the Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC); between the government and the structures of the former FARC-EP not involved in the peace process, led by Iván Mordisco; between the AGC and the ELN; between the Second

Marquetalia dissidents and the structures of the former FARC; and between those structures and the dissident group Comando de Frontera.<sup>81</sup> The CERAC research centre said that, even though acts of armed violence attributed to the ELN had increased overall during the year, this was due to the fact that there was a high concentration of these events in February. However, excluding this period, the ELN's violent activity has decreased compared to the previous year. The number of deaths resulting from actions in which the ELN was directly involved also fell. Thus, 53 people died in events involving the ELN, 22% less than in 2021, when 68 people died. In addition, the OCHA noted that while there had been a downward trend in mass population displacement, non-state armed groups were turning to other forms of social control over the civilian population, such as lockdowns and restrictions on mobility and individual trips.<sup>81</sup>

Clashes and armed actions took place throughout the year, but after the new government took office, the armed actors and the government made different announcements regarding possible rapprochement and dialogue. However, coinciding with these announcements, the armed groups also stepped up their violent activity in what could be attempts to consolidate their control over land to start the negotiations from a position of greater strength. Various ceasefires were announced throughout the year. The ELN observed a ceasefire between 10 and 15 March, coinciding with the legislative elections. The ceasefire was not repeated during the presidential election, when some violent incidents took place. After Petro was sworn in as president, the defence minister announced that air strikes against the insurgent groups were suspended. On 19 December, the ELN declared a ceasefire between 24 December and 2 January. On 31 December, President Petro announced a six-month bilateral ceasefire agreement with several insurgent groups, but two days later the ELN denied that any bilateral agreement had been reached.

Meanwhile, Venezuela remained one of the settings of the armed conflict and armed clashes were repeated in the border area between both countries, with attacks by the ELN and other insurgent and criminal armed groups and operations launched by the respective governments' security forces. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that there was no evidence of joint operations between the Venezuelan security forces and the ELN. The areas of Arauca in Colombia and Apure in Venezuela were the scene of multiple clashes between the ELN and the Comando Conjunto de Oriente, a dissident group of the former FARC. Gentil Duarte, one of the leaders of the dissidents, died in combat in Venezuela. However, after the change of government and Petro's inauguration as

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79. See then summary on Colombia in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Icaria, 2023.

80. Catalina Oquendo, "La Cruz Roja Internacional: "En Colombia hay seis conflictos armados"", *El País*, 9 August 2022.

81. OCHA, *Tendencias e Impacto Humanitario en Colombia 2022. Enero - Noviembre de 2022*, 19 December 2022.

president, there was rapprochement between the two countries, ending the diplomatic crisis experienced in recent years.

### 1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

#### South Asia

Afghanistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Taliban government, National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF)
Intensity:	2
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, and the refusal of the Taliban government to hand over Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders (on Afghan territory) the US attacked the country aided by a contingent of British forces. After the signing of the Bonn agreements, an interim government was established, led by Hamid Karzai and subsequently ratified at the polls. Since 2006 there has been an escalation of violence, motivated by the rebuilding of the Taliban militias. Following the 2014 presidential and provincial elections, the country was plunged into a crisis sparked by allegations of electoral fraud after the second round in which the two most voted leaders, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, kept the results in the air for months. In September, an agreement was reached to create a two-headed government with Ghani as president and Abdullah as chief executive. In 2011, the international troops began their withdrawal, which was completed at the end of 2014, although the mission "Resolute Support" was deployed on the ground, with a NATO mandate to train Afghan forces and another force to carry out training and counterterrorism operations, made up of US soldiers, "Freedom Sentinel" mission. In 2021, after a significant escalation of violence, the Taliban rose to power again and all international troops were withdrawn from the country.

**The Taliban consolidated its power in Afghanistan in 2022 and although violence persisted in the country, the situation changed completely compared to previous years. The armed conflict in Afghanistan centred on fighting between the Taliban government and the armed opposition led mainly by the National Resistance Front (NRF). There were also many attacks by ISIS-KP, the local ISIS branch operating in Afghanistan, Pakistan and some parts of India. Although there were clashes,**

**attacks and military operations, the armed violence was considerably less intense than it had been in the previous phase of the conflict** that pitted the Taliban insurgency against the Afghan Armed Forces and the international troops deployed in Afghanistan.

There were many violations of women's rights during the year, such as the ban on the right to education for girls and the prohibition of women's participation in all public spheres of the country, in a situation that women's rights activists described as gender apartheid. ACLED indicated that there were 3,970 deaths due to violence in the country in 2022, far below the almost 42,000 people who lost their lives in 2021. However, throughout 2022 the security situation in the country deteriorated compared to the first few months after the Taliban seized power, as stated by the UN Secretary-General's reports on the country. The United Nations indicated that it was aware of the existence of 23 armed opposition groups in the country and that the NRF, the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) and the Afghanistan Liberation Movement (AFL) had claimed responsibility for armed activity in the provinces of Helmand, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Nangarhar, Nuristan and Panjshir. The operations of the NRF, the main armed opposition group active in the country, were mainly concentrated in the provinces of Panjshir and Baghlan and the group claimed to have taken control of some districts and areas of the country. Although the group's Tajikistan-based leaders demanded foreign support and supplies of weapons, Russia's refusal to transfer weapons to Afghanistan made any support from other governments impossible. In September, Ahmad Massoud, the leader of the NRF, participated in a meeting in Vienna with various leaders of the political opposition, organised by the Austrian Institute for International Affairs. The armed group stated that it had 3,000 combatants. Armed clashes intensified with the end of winter and in September Taliban forces launched a major offensive against the NRF, in which they claimed to have killed 40 members of the armed group in Panjshir province, including four commanders, though the NRF denied having suffered so many casualties. Fresh fighting in October and November, including in areas close to the border with Tajikistan, led to a rise in tensions between the two countries.

In addition, although the United Nations verified a drop in armed activity by ISIS-KP and fewer attacks, the organisation expanded its operations to more provinces and some major attacks were reported. One of the most serious attacks of the year took place in September during a suicide bombing at a school in Kabul. The school was in a neighbourhood inhabited mostly by the Hazara population, which has been a target of constant persecution by the armed organisation. The United Nations said that 53 people died as a result of the attack, most of them girls and young women who were studying at the school. The attacker detonated the explosives in a classroom occupied by hundreds of

students preparing for university entrance exams, in the area where the women were located. After the attack, dozens of Hazara women demonstrated in the streets to protest the persecution they suffer. Six ISIS-KP members were later killed in an Afghan security force operation against one of the armed group's hideouts in Kabul that ended in a shootout. ISIS-KP also carried out an attack against the Russian embassy in Kabul, in which six people died, including two Russian diplomats. Later, it launched another attack in Kabul against the Wazir Akbar Khan mosque, in what is known as the Green Zone, a neighbourhood where embassies are located, causing the death of seven people and leaving more than 20 injured.

*Many violations of women's rights took place in Afghanistan in a situation that women's rights activists described as gender apartheid*

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

The armed conflict between the Indian security forces and the insurgency remained active, but the intensity of the fighting ebbed, as did the death count linked to the violence. According to data reported by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, there were 136 deaths associated with the armed conflict in 2022, nearly half of those reported in the previous two years, when 237 (2021) and 239 (2020) lost their lives. However, the conflict continued to have a significant impact on civilians, since 53 of the total number of people killed as a result of the violence in 108 lethal incidents were civilians, 15 were members of the security forces and 68 were members of the armed group CPI-M. More than half the fatalities occurred in the state of Chhattisgarh, where most of the fighting also took place, with 62 violent incidents during 2022. According to data provided by the Indian Ministry of the Interior, incidents of Naxalite violence in the country

plummeted by 77% between 2009 and 2021. Official data also showed an 85% drop in deaths between 2010 and 2021. In this sense, Director General of the Police

Kuldip Singh said that the Naxalites had been eliminated from the state of Bihar and security forces were entering parts of the state of Jharkhand that had previously been inaccessible due to the insurgent activity. The Indian government also said that the scope of Naxalite activity had been reduced from 96 districts in 2010 to 46 in 2021. Sporadic clashes in different states between security forces and the armed group were repeated throughout the year. Arrests of Naxalites continued, as did attacks against civilians accused of being informers for the security forces. Civilians were also accused of belonging to the insurgent group and killed. In May, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel indicated that the authorities would be willing to begin talks with the Naxalite insurgents if they were willing to lay down their arms and pledge allegiance to the Indian Constitution. The armed group responded by indicating that they could start talks if several conditions were met: the withdrawal of the security forces deployed in the conflict zones, the release of the armed group's detained leaders and the lifting of the ban on the CPI-M. The government responded that the talks would have to be unconditional.

India (Jammu and Kashmir)	
<b>Start:</b>	1989
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Governments, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, United Jihad Council, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), The Resistance Front (TRF)
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	=

#### Summary:

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

**The armed conflict in Jammu and Kashmir persisted, with clashes throughout the year between Indian security**



**forces and the insurgent groups** and body counts very similar to those of the previous year, with a slight drop. According to data compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, a total of 253 people were killed as a result of armed clashes in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, while 274 people were killed in 2021. According to data from this research centre, most were insurgents (193). Thirty members of the Indian security forces and 30 civilians also lost their lives. The research centre ACLED reported a very similar death toll associated with the armed conflict, indicating that 287 people died in 2022, compared to 290 in 2021. Therefore, the armed conflict remained at low levels of intensity. The government noted that violence had ebbed since the withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood. However, armed clashes continued constantly between security forces and armed opposition groups throughout the year, with many operations by Indian forces, which continued to accuse groups originating from Pakistan of infiltrating Indian-administered territory. Clashes broke out throughout the year and armed activity was pursued by groups such as LeT, which continued to be the most active insurgent organisation, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Muhammad. However, the International Crisis Group (ICG) warned of the emergence of new groups such as the Resistance Front, Kashmir Tigers, People's Anti-Fascist Front and United Liberation Front of Kashmir. Indian security forces said that these were LeT splinter groups and that their main objective was to circumvent money laundering legislation.<sup>82</sup> In August, three soldiers and two insurgents were shot dead after rebels attacked Indian military facilities in the district of Rajouri on the eve of Indian Independence Day celebrations. In October, during a visit by the Indian minister of the interior to the region, two bombs exploded, which the police blamed on LeT.

Moreover, **the killing of nearly 20 Hindu workers in the Kashmir Valley in May and June, several of them public labourers, led to protests by other public labourers, who demanded that they be relocated out of the area until their safety could be guaranteed.** During the 1990s, thousands of Hindu Kashmiris (known as Pandits) left the area as a result of the violence waged by armed groups against them. Some people have returned to the area since 2010, but during 2022, hundreds of Pandits left their places of residence for fear of new attacks and organisations such as Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti, which called for the entire Pandit population to leave Kashmir. Tensions also persisted over new electoral legislation that the government had presented that has been pending approval since the withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood. This legislation would entail a redistricting in favour of the ruling party (BJP) and would allow anyone residing in the region to participate in the elections even without being a permanent resident, which was interpreted as an electoral manoeuvre to benefit the government. In May there were also many protests after a court sentenced Yasin Malik, the leader

of the armed opposition group JKLF, who had been arrested in 2019, to life imprisonment. Meanwhile, human rights organisations continued to denounce the repression in the region. The International Press Institute (IPI) said that press freedom was in serious danger and criticised the severe restrictions on and harassment of communication professionals since the withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood. Human Rights Watch (HRW) also denounced the serious restrictions on press freedom and the activity of civil society organisations, as well as the impunity for serious human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings.

Pakistan	
<b>Start:</b>	2001
<b>Type:</b>	System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, Pakistani Armed Forces, intelligence services, Taliban militias (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan -TTP), international insurgents
<b>Intensity:</b>	2
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

#### 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 pitting the Pakistani government against the Taliban insurgency worsened in 2022 despite the negotiations between them and the ceasefire in force for a few months. This deterioration occurred amidst a worsening political and economic crisis in the country, with a troubled change of government as a result of a vote of no confidence in April against Prime Minister Imran Khan and an attack against Khan months after he was**

82. International Crisis Group, *Violence in Kashmir: Why a Spike in Killings Signals an Ominous New Trend*, Q&A / ASIA, 28 June 2022.

**deposed. Added to this situation were the serious floods that the country suffered as a result of climate change, which affected millions of people.** According to United Nations figures, at least 1,700 people died, close to 13,000 were injured (including at least 4,000 minors) and nearly eight million were forcibly displaced. Regarding the armed conflict, according to figures collected by the Centre for Research and Security Studies in Pakistan, 1,714 people lost their lives as a result of the violence and different conflicts in the country in 2022. The body count was higher than it had been the previous year. The research centre ACLED verified a rise in violence during the year, and especially in armed clashes, as well as a higher death toll, which counted 2,995 people killed across the country in 2022 and 1,241 in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, compared to 457 deaths reported in the same area in 2021. The border areas with Afghanistan, and especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, were the most affected by the violence, and the epicentre of the armed activity of the Taliban insurgents and of the operations carried out by the Pakistani security forces. They were followed by the province of Balochistan, where violence by both the Taliban and the Balochi insurgents was reported.

***The armed conflict deteriorated in Pakistan despite the attempt at negotiations amidst a serious political crisis and the impact of climate change***

The year began with an escalation of violence in Pakistan as a result of the strengthening of the Taliban insurgency after the Afghan Taliban seized power again in 2021. Pakistan accused Afghanistan of serving as a base for TTP operations on the ground in Pakistan and tensions between both countries rose when Pakistan built a fence on the border. The districts of Dera Ismail Khan and South Waziristan were the scene of attacks and clashes in January that killed policemen, soldiers and insurgents. Pakistan's accusations against Afghanistan continued in February and five soldiers were killed in the district of Kurram in an attack by insurgents who had come to Pakistan from Afghanistan. In April, the conflict escalated significantly when Pakistani government drones carried out attacks against sites that served as hideouts for the TTP in the provinces of Khost and Kunar in Afghanistan. These Pakistani attacks on Afghan soil may have been due to the intensification of the Taliban offensive against Pakistani military objectives; in the days leading up to them, seven Pakistani soldiers were killed in a Taliban attack in North Waziristan. Pakistani drone strikes reportedly killed at least 47 civilians. This escalation of violence was followed by the announcement of a 10-day ceasefire for the Eid religious festival. In June, the Pakistani government and TTP agreed to make the ceasefire indefinite, with the Afghan government mediating. However, security operations against the insurgents continued throughout the following months, as did clashes and attacks against security forces by the Taliban. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the scene of many episodes of violence in which insurgents and members of the security forces were killed.

The violence escalated after the TTP announced on 28 November that it was ending the ceasefire agreement it had made with the government. Following this announcement, which restarted the conflict, different attacks took place in various parts of the country that killed dozens, some of which were blamed on the TTP. The group cited the security forces' military operations as the main reason for ending the ceasefire and called on the insurgents to carry out attacks whenever and wherever they could. However, on 6 November, the TTP had carried out one of the deadliest attacks in recent months when six policemen were killed in an ambush in the district of Lakki Marwat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Prior to this attack, there had been other less serious attacks and the local population had complained of a rise in extortion and said that the Taliban insurgency was regrouping in the former tribal areas. After the ceasefire was broken, violence also increased in the province of Balochistan, on the border with Afghanistan. Balochistan served as a refuge for the Afghan Taliban for decades and is the scene of another conflict between the Pakistani security forces and the Balochi nationalist insurgency.

The largest attack carried out by ISIS in Pakistan took place in March, when a suicide attack conducted by ISIS-KP (a branch of ISIS operating in what it calls the province of Khorasan) against a Shia Mosque killed 63 people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and injured 200 others. In December, security forces claimed they had killed four ISIS-KP members as they tried to infiltrate from Afghanistan. This occurred days after an attack against the Pakistani embassy in Kabul that targeted the ambassador. This previous attack was blamed on ISIS-KP and one person was injured.

Pakistan (Balochistan)	
<b>Start:</b>	2005
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, BLA, BRP, BRA, BLF and BLT, Baloch Raji Aojoi Sangar, LeJ, TTP, Afghan Taliban (Quetta Shura), ISIS
<b>Intensity:</b>	2
<b>Trend:</b>	↑
<b>Summary:</b>	
Since the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, Balochistan, the richest province in terms of natural resources, but with some of the highest levels of poverty in the country, has suffered from four periods of armed violence (1948, 1958, 1963-69 and 1973-77) in which the rebel forces stated their objective of obtaining greater autonomy and even independence. In 2005, the armed rebel forces reappeared on the scene, basically attacking infrastructures linked to the extraction of gas. The opposition armed group, BLA, became the main opposing force to the presence of the	

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

The armed conflict in the province of Balochistan continued, pitting the Pakistani security forces against the Baloch nationalist insurgency. The conflict intensified during the year, with many repeated clashes and the use of heavy weapons. Once again, Chinese economic actors in the province were a source of the conflict and there were attacks against Chinese staff and installations in Pakistan. In addition, human rights organisations' complaints of arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial executions in the province persisted, as did the impunity of criminals and the security forces' inaction against this crime. Baloch insurgents reportedly had access to the weapons that the Afghan security forces abandoned after the Taliban took power, which may have increased their operational capacity. Balochistan was especially affected by the severe floods that hit the country in August as a result of the impact of climate change. More than 60% of the houses destroyed in the country were located in this province. According to data collected by ACLED, there were 705 deaths in the province of Balochistan as a result of violence in 2022. The Centre for Research and Security Studies of Pakistan reported that there were 254 fatalities in Balochistan as a result of violence in 2022. However, some of the violence in Balochistan was caused by the Taliban armed group TTP, which also operates in the province. The Baloch armed group BLA remained the most active insurgent organisation there, carrying out several high-profile actions in 2022 that resulted in many casualties, primarily among the ranks of the Pakistani security forces. The year began with several simultaneous attacks carried out by the BLA in various districts. For instance, the group attacked a military camp in the Panjgur district on 2 February, leading to a battle in which six insurgents and three soldiers were killed. It also carried out an attack against a checkpoint in the Nushki district in which nine insurgents and four soldiers lost their lives. In April, the BLA claimed responsibility for its first suicide attack by a woman against a Chinese cultural centre at the University of Karachi, killing three Chinese professors. Also in April, the BLA carried out a bomb attack on a military convoy in Balochistan, killing four soldiers. The BLF clashed with security forces in the Panjgur district and claimed to have killed nine soldiers. According to ACLED, missiles and other heavy weapons had been used in the fighting. Missiles were used again in other attacks carried out by the BLA in May, targeting a checkpoint and the offices of the Pakistani intelligence services in

the city of Kharan, killing five members of the security forces. In July, the BLA kidnapped a lieutenant colonel and a relative of his and later executed the officer while an operation was underway to rescue him, in which nine insurgents and one soldier were killed. A new attack in August demonstrated the intensification of the conflict when the BRAS coalition of armed groups claimed to have shot down a military helicopter using anti-aircraft weapons in the district of Las Bela. However, the Pakistani Armed Forces denied that it was an attack and claimed that the helicopter had been involved in an accident due to bad weather. Six members of the security forces died as a result of the incident.

## South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
<b>Start:</b>	1948
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	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); PDF
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑
<b>Summary:</b>	
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 intensified in Myanmar during the year, with clashes intensifying both between the Burmese Army and various ethnic armed groups, and between the Burmese Army and the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), a collection of armed groups that emerged after the military coup in 2021. According to ACLED, 19,324 people died throughout the year as a result of the armed violence. These casualties were considerably more than in the previous year, when 10,362 people lost their lives. In addition, the number**

of violent events rose from 6,800 in 2021 to 9,282 in 2022. The United Nations warned of the serious deterioration in the country's humanitarian situation due to forced displacement and food insecurity.<sup>83</sup> In late December 2022, there were 1.5 million internally displaced people in the country, which was more than double the number of displaced persons a year earlier, when there were 660,000. This included 330,400 people living in protracted displacement as a result of previous conflicts, most of them in Rakhine State. The conflict and inflation had a significant impact on the civilian population, with more than 15 million people facing moderate and severe food insecurity, 13 million more than the previous year. In addition, the United Nations' special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar stated that the security forces had killed over 2,000 civilians and detained more than 14,000 people since the coup, including 1,400 children.

***The armed conflict in Myanmar intensified, including armed clashes between the Burmese Army and ethnic armed groups and the Popular Defence Forces, with serious humanitarian consequences***

The year began with an escalation of violence in Kayah State after the massacre that had taken place on 24 December 2021 in which Burmese security forces killed over 30 civilians. The clashes between the armed group KNDF and the Burmese Armed Forces (known as the Tatmadaw) forcibly displaced 60,000 people (some sources indicated that up to 170,000 people may have been displaced). There was also fighting between the security forces and the KNDF in alliance with Popular Defence Force (PDF) groups, which emerged after the military coup. These clashes were repeated throughout the year. Another one of the areas most affected by the conflict and where intense armed clashes took place was the Sagaing region, the epicentre of fighting between the Tatmadaw and the PDF with the support of ethnic armed groups such as the KNU. Thousands of people were displaced as a result of Burmese military operations, which often destroyed homes with air strikes and mortar fire. As in other northeastern areas of the country, there were significant restrictions on mobility in the Sagaing region, with checkpoints and roadblocks that greatly hindered access to humanitarian aid for the population affected by the armed violence, leaving civilians vulnerable and isolated. In Rakhine State and southern Chin State, clashes between security forces and the armed opposition group AA intensified starting in August, following the breakdown of a ceasefire that had been reached in 2020 after years of fierce fighting. Those areas witnessed intense clashes that displaced thousands of people (23,000 between August and November, according to data collected by the OCHA) and the Tatmadaw conducted air strikes in various parts of both states. In addition, thousands of additional military personnel were deployed to the area, causing

serious insecurity among the civilian population. However, a new informal ceasefire agreement was reached in late November, which remained in force at the end of the year, though it was extremely fragile. The AA's refusal to join the talks with the ethnic armed groups proposed by the military junta, as well as the contacts maintained with the National Unity Government (NUG), formed by the opposition to the military regime after the coup d'état, may have been behind the military escalation in August, after months of tension between the AA and the Tatmadaw. Kachin State was also severely affected by the violence and a major escalation in fighting began in October after a Tatmadaw bombardment in Hpakant killed at least 60 people, many of them members of the armed opposition group KIA, including several of its leaders. The attack against the armed group occurred while it was celebrating the 62nd anniversary of its founding and led to an outbreak of violence in the following months. There were also armed clashes in the states of Kayin, Shan and Mon, which destroyed basic infrastructure and displaced civilians.

Regarding the human rights and political situation in the country, **the repression of the political opposition to the military regime continued with thousands of detainees.** By the end of 2022, more than 13,000 political prisoners were still detained in the country and 2,688 activists and political opponents had died at the hands of the security forces, according to data provided by the Association for Assistance to Political Prisoners (AAPP). Aung San Suu Kyi, who remained under house arrest following the coup in February 2021, was transferred to prison and placed in solitary confinement. At the end of the year, a military court extended her sentence by seven more years with five additional corruption charges, bringing her total sentence in Naypyitaw prison to 33 years. The military regime also extended the state of emergency until 2023. After the 2021 coup, the military authorities imposed a state of emergency and announced elections for 2023, which may be held in August, though the date was not specified. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council approved a resolution for the country with 12 members voting in favour and China, Russia and India abstaining. UNSC Resolution 2669 called for an end to violence in the country while expressing concern about the actions of the Burmese military regime. This is the first resolution for the country since 1948, as vetoes by China and Russia had previously prevented the Security Council from ruling on the situation in the Asian country. The resolution demanded the release of everyone arbitrarily detained in the country.

83. OCHA, *Myanmar Humanitarian Update*, no. 25, 30 December 2022.



Philippines (NPA)	
<b>Start:</b>	1969
<b>Type:</b>	System Internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, NPA
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	=
<b>Summary:</b>	
<p>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.</p>	

**The many clashes that continued to take place in several provinces of the country between the state security forces and the NPA caused the deaths of at least 160 people, but by the end of 2022, the Philippine Department of Defence and the Philippine Armed Forces declared Manila's strategic victory over the communist insurgent movement.** This statement was based on data released by the government in Manila, according to which the number of active NPA military fronts had fallen by over 75% since 2016. Thus, while in July 2016 the NPA had 89 active fronts across the country, according to the government, it only had five effective ones (mainly in Northern Samat and South Cotabato) in September 2022, as well as another 19 fronts that Manila considered severely weakened and in the process of being dismantled. According to these same government data, the number of active NPA combatants had dropped to 2,112, clearly fewer than in recent years and the peak of the communist movement in the 1980s, when it is estimated that the NPA had about 25,000 fighters. The Philippine Armed Forces stated that 10,608 regular NPA fighters had been killed, captured or surrendered in the last five years and that more than 41,000 people belonging to the movement, including some in hiding, had stopped supporting the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NDF. In the same period (2016-2022), according to Manila, 2,890 municipalities affected by violence were reportedly "liberated" and 31,254 towns and 1,386 cities reportedly declared the NPA a persona non grata. Along the same lines, at

*In the Philippines, Jose Maria Sison, the leader and founder of the CPP and the NPA, died of illness at the end of the year*

the end of the year, Eastmincom (the Philippine Army structure in eastern Mindanao, one of the regions with the NPA's greatest historical presence), declared that 4,797 NPA members have been "neutralised" since 2016 (3,579 surrendered, 524 captured and 403 killed), including 101 group leaders. Furthermore, Eastmincom announced the official dismantling of six NPA guerrilla fronts in December, mostly in Davao and Bukidnon.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) flatly denied the official figures and the government's declarations about the defeat or imminent collapse of the communist insurgent movement, though it refused to give data on the current membership of the NPA. Thus, during the celebration of the 53rd anniversary of the founding of the party in late March, the CPP crowed that the government had been unable to defeat them before the end of Duterte's term, as the Philippine Armed Forces and government had assured on several occasions in recent years, and urged the NPA to step up the recruitment of new troops and increase activity in urban areas. The CPP acknowledged that it had suffered some major setbacks of late and said that Manila had notably increased its counterinsurgency efforts and operations in recent years, including by neutralising combatants through localised peace processes and offering aid packages for reintegration. In this regard, in May the Department of Defence declared that at least 26,414 NPA combatants (which the government officially calls the Communist Terrorist Group) had surrendered or turned themselves in. In the middle of the year, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) recommended that the government pardon NPA combatants, which could benefit between 8,000 and 10,000 NPA fighters. Both the NDF and the CPP strongly opposed the localised peace negotiations, considering them a counterinsurgency strategy aimed at dividing the revolutionary movement, promoting psychological warfare, obtaining intelligence and exercising greater control over people, relatives and communities with ties to the insurgent group. Finally, Jose Maria Sison, the leader and founder of the CPP and the NPA, died of illness at the end of the year. Previously, in August, a battle between the Philippine Armed Forces and the NPA in the province of Samar may have caused the deaths of Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria, historical leaders of the CPP and the NPA. According to some sources, they were the top leaders of the CPP and the armed group. Tiamzon and Austria had been captured in 2014, but they had been released by Duterte to join the NDF negotiating delegation. After the talks collapsed in 2017, they returned to hiding. However, at the end of the year, the Philippine Armed Forces acknowledged that they had been unable to corroborate the deaths of Tiamzon and Austria.

Philippines (Mindanao)	
<b>Start:</b>	1991
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/ Dawlah Islamiyah/ Maute Group, Ansarul Khilafah Mindanao, Toraife group, factions of MILF and MNLF
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	↓

#### 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 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 led 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.

**In line with falling levels of violence in recent years, the number of battles and their associated body counts dipped slightly in 2022 compared to 2021.** Even so, fighting continued between the Philippine Armed Forces and various armed groups operating in the south of the country, between factions of the same groups and between these factions and private armed militias, often at the service of clans or local political groups. Though the government does not publish official death tolls linked to the armed conflict in Mindanao and it is often difficult to distinguish between clashes with clearly political intent and others linked to family disputes, land disputes or illegal economic activities, the research centre ACLED noted that 168 people had died in 2022 alone in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), slightly fewer than last year. The government stated on several occasions that the decline in insurgent activity and crime rates in the southern part of the country were mainly due to the success of its combatant demobilisation and reintegration programmes. In early November, the Philippine

government declared that only since July, coinciding with the beginning of new President Ferdinand Marcos' term, over 1,100 former combatants had surrendered or turned themselves in. Though many of them were members of the Maoist armed group NPA, hundreds of members of the armed groups operating in Mindanao took advantage of government reintegration programmes during 2022, including 174 members of Abu Sayyaf (including 100 in late July, the group's largest collective surrender to date). Dozens of former BIFF combatants also turned themselves in, including around 40 in March and over 110 between late October and early December. Around 30 members of Dawlah Islamiyah Lanao, also known as the Maute Group, demobilised in early March. The figures for combatant demobilisation in 2022 were slightly higher than in previous years. In 2020 and 2021, 372 members of Abu Sayyaf and 418 of the BIFF surrendered or turned themselves in. As part of the strategy to reduce violence in the southern Philippines, Manila said that 15 private armed groups operating in the BARMM had been dismantled in April. The neutralisation of these groups, which sometimes operate as criminal organisations or as militias at the service of certain political clans, was stipulated in the peace agreement signed by the Philippine government and the MILF in 2014. Even though these groups were dismantled, levels of violence during the campaign for the presidential and legislative elections on 9 May were high. On election day alone, seven people died and another 20 were injured in different incidents in the BARMM.

Regarding the dynamics of violence in the conflict, 10 MILF combatants were killed and thousands of people were displaced by two consecutive days of fighting between the Philippine Armed Forces and a contingent of the armed group in the town of Ungkaya Pukan (Basilan province). Both the government and the MILF regretted the incident, stressed the rapid activation of the Joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation for Hostilities (JCCCH) and Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) and declared that these types of isolated incidents do not affect the smooth implementation of the 2014 peace agreement. However, the two parties had already clashed on previous occasions. For example, in early March the MILF formally complained about an air strike against a contingent of the Maute Group in the province of Lanao del Sur that killed seven combatants (some of them MILF fighters, according to the group). In April, the MILF once again told the government that it was concerned that MILF combatants had been attacked during a counterinsurgency operation by the Philippine Army against Abu Sayyaf in the town of Sumisip. At various times during the year, some MILF leaders warned that problems and delays in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the 40,000 MILF combatants stipulated in the 2014 peace agreement could cause discontent among certain factions of the group. By the end of the year, approximately 20,000

had not yet begun their demobilisation. There were also clashes between factions of the MILF during the year, or between these factions and other armed groups, such as the MNLF, the BIFF and private militias. In February, for example, a MILF commander was killed along with eight other people after a convoy was attacked, according to the government, by a group of people led by MILF members. In late November, several people died during armed skirmishes between two MILF factions in Maguindanao del Sur. In late August, MILF and MNLF factions fought for several days in Basilan, while in November there were clashes between members of the BIFF and the MILF in which a MILF commander was killed. Several MILF members were also killed in firefights with armed militias linked to local political clans throughout the year, often due to political harassment or family or land disputes. The two main BIFF factions (led respectively by commanders known as Karialan and Bungos) continued to carry out sporadic attacks mainly in the provinces of Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur, Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

Abu Sayyaf, a group of autonomous cells operating primarily in the Sulu archipelago, lost dozens of fighters in several different battles there. However, the Philippine government said that Abu Sayyaf combatants' defections and surrenders were clearly weakening it and that by the end of the year it had only about 130 fighters, most of whom belong to the groups led by Radullan Sahiron (a member of the group since the early 1990s, who may have died in 2021, though this is unconfirmed) and Mundi Sawadjaan, who is much closer to ISIS and a nephew of the former leader of Islamic State in Mindanao, Hajan Sawadjaan. Manila repeatedly stated that the trilateral agreement signed in 2017 by the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia to jointly patrol the Sulu and Celebes seas and better coordinate their intelligence services was paying off and greatly weakening Abu Sayyaf, which had historically obtained substantial resources from their kidnappings and piracy in the region. Thus, the Philippine government said that there had not been any incident of this nature throughout 2021 and the first three months of 2022 and announced that the agreement with Malaysia and Indonesia would be expanded and strengthened. Finally, regarding Dawlah Islamiyah, which means "Islamic state" in Arabic and is a category that Manila has used to refer to some groups that have sworn allegiance to ISIS in recent years and that cooperate with each other even though they have different territorial strongholds, the Philippine Armed Forces noted that the most active organisations were the Maute Group (operating mainly in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur), two BIFF splinter groups active in central Mindanao (one led by Abu Turaife and another led by Salahuddin Hassan, who died in late 2021) and Dawlah Islamiya-Socsargen Khatiba, a remnant of the defunct Nilong Group and Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines that previously operated in the provinces of South Cotabato and Sarangani. In March, the Philippine

Armed Forces declared that Fahrudin Hadji Satar, also known as Abu Zacariah, the leader of the Maute Group, had been appointed the new leader of Islamic State in the region and the new emir in Southeast Asia. Although the military capacity of the Maute Group has clearly declined in recent years, Manila maintains that it continues to pose a threat to the state and that it has deep pockets (due to its occupation of various parts of the city of Marawi for five months in 2017) so it can continue recruiting fighters. According to the Philippine Armed Forces, 64 members of the Maute Group died in combat between January and March alone. In early March, for example, seven members of the Maute Group and one Philippine soldier were killed during air and ground attacks by the Philippine Army in Maguing (Lanao del Sur), while in late March another five combatants died during another operation in the town Butig, also in Lanao del Sur. There were also some armed clashes with the Turaife Group. In late May, Turaife himself was injured in a Philippine Army ground and air operation in which two people died and 17 were injured. Days after the operation, Manila accused the group of orchestrating the consecutive detonation of two explosive devices in the city of Koronadal in South Cotabato province.

Thailand (south)	
<b>Start:</b>	2004
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity Internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, BRN and other separatist armed opposition groups
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	↓
<b>Summary:</b>	
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.	

**Alongside the upward trend in the peace negotiations between the Thai government and the BRN, as well as the clear and sustained drop in the violence experienced**

**in southern Thailand in recent years, the number of armed attacks and episodes fell substantially in 2022.**

Although the government did not provide official statistics on deaths resulting from the armed conflict, the research centre Deep South Watch noted that between January and the end of March, 30 people had lost their lives and another 57 had been injured. According to more data from the same centre, between January 2004 to March 2022, there were 21,485 violent incidents in which 7,344 people died and 13,641 were injured in the three provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat and in four districts of the province of Songkhla province. Fifty-two per cent of the victims were Buddhists, 45% were Muslims and 15% were women. In comparative terms, violence in the southern part of the country has plunged since 2007, the year when it reached its zenith (892 fatalities and 1,670 injured). In the last decade, violence has also experienced a marked decline. Thus, in 2012, 1,850 episodes of violence were reported (an average of more than five per day) in which 507 people died and more than 1,000 were injured. The decline in violence has become even more pronounced since 2020, when 116 people were killed (compared to 180 in 2019). Although the Thai government argues that the downward trend in violence is mainly due to how it is managing the conflict, several media outlets indicate that there are other explanatory factors, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of peace talks between the Thai government and the BRN in early 2020. One of Bangkok's main demands of the BRN in these talks is a reduction of violence and a demonstration that the people who represent the group at the negotiating table have a real impact on the group's military decisions and on levels of violence on the ground. Thus, one of the most important events in terms of the dynamics of the conflict in 2022 was the truce (called the Ramadan Peace Initiative) that the Thai government and the BRN agreed to from 3 April to 14 May, which was not generally or significantly violated. In a new round of negotiations in early August, the government proposed a new truce of three and a half months (from 15 August to 30 November), but the BRN rejected the idea.

Another one of the most important aspects of the armed conflict of the year was the reappearance of the armed group PULO, one of the historical insurgent groups in southern Thailand, which had not carried out any armed action since 2016. On 15 April, when the truce between Bangkok and the BRN expired, one person was killed and three policemen were injured after two bombs went off simultaneously in the Sai Buri district (in the province of Pattani). Kasturi Mahkota, one of the group's leaders, said that the attack was a statement that peace talks should be conducted with other armed groups and

*Although the Thai government argues that the downward trend in violence is mainly due to how it is managing the conflict, other voices indicate that there are other explanatory factors, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the peace talks between the Thai government and the BRN in early 2020*

not just with the BRN. PULO was one of the insurgent groups that participated in MARA Patani, the umbrella organisation for different groups in the three southern Muslim-majority provinces that began negotiations with the Thai government between mid-2015 and late 2019. Later, in early July, the Philippines Armed Forces killed two combatants in the province of Yala and detained another five members of the PULO, which according to Mahkota has five units in southern Thailand. One of the episodes of violence that had the greatest political impact and media coverage was the BRN's simultaneous attack in mid-August against 17 targets in the three southern provinces bordering Malaysia (mainly shops and petrol stations) that killed one person and injured seven. The BRN claimed responsibility for the attacks, lamented the loss of life and said that the businesses that had been attacked

were damaging the local economy and according to some media may have been run by groups close to the government. Though some media outlets described it as the biggest coordinated attack in southern Thailand in recent years, the head of the government's negotiating team condemned it and added that it would not interrupt the negotiations. In late November, one policeman was killed and between 31 and 45 people were injured after an improvised explosive device was detonated in an apartment block housing policemen and their families in the Muang district, Narathiwat province. Following this attack, the Thai government renewed the emergency decree in most of the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat.

### 1.3.4. Europe

#### Eastern Europe

Russia - Ukraine	
<b>Start:</b>	2022
<b>Type:</b>	Government, Territory International
<b>Main parties:</b>	Russia, Wagner Group, Donbas militias, Ukraine
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↑

#### Summary:

Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, resulting in the military occupation of southern and eastern parts of the country, and also affected other areas and had serious impacts on human security, including mass forced displacement, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, sexual violence and food and energy insecurity. The invasion of Ukraine was preceded by previous cycles of conflict and failed dialogue:



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anti-government protests between late 2013 and early 2014 that led to the fall of the government of President Viktor Yanukovich, Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and war in eastern Ukraine since April 2014 between Russian-backed local militias and the Ukrainian Army. In contravention of international law, Russia's invasion and war targeted Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The antagonism between the US, the EU and NATO on one side and Russia on the other, as well as a failed security architecture in Europe, also influenced the context of the conflict and the prospects for resolution. Between late February and April 2022, Russia and Ukraine held political-military negotiations, which were unsuccessful. The invasion had multidimensional global repercussions, including food security for countries in the MENA region and Africa, a strained international order and greater militarisation in Europe.

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**Russia launched a military invasion against Ukraine in February 2022, which led to an interstate armed conflict, causing a severe humanitarian crisis and global multidimensional impacts.** The invasion, which broke international law, went beyond the previous armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, which had been active since 2014, and dismantled the previous negotiating process. It was preceded by Russia's massive military deployment of troops along the border with Ukraine, including in Belarus, in the final months of 2021, as well as diplomatic contacts between late 2021 and early 2022 to address the crisis, but which failed to redirect it.<sup>84</sup>

On 21 February, Russia recognised the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk and ordered troops to those territories, accompanied by a presidential speech in which Putin questioned the historical legitimacy of Ukraine as an independent country. On 24 February, Russia began its invasion with Putin's announcement of a "special operation" in pursuit of "demilitarisation" and "denazification" of Ukraine. It gave way to invasion, war and military occupation, which was still active by late 2022 and without prospects for a short-term resolution. The invasion revolved around Russia's challenge to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and led to an international dispute between Russia and the West, among other developments. The forces on Moscow's side included the Russian Armed Forces, reservists mobilised by decree and mercenaries hired by the Russian paramilitary organisation Wagner Group. Kiev deployed the Ukrainian Army, expanded with the activation of the territorial defence forces. The declaration of martial law by presidential decree in Ukraine prohibited men between the ages of 18 and 60 from leaving the country. The military invasion caused severe devastation. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that at least 8,231 civilians were killed and another 13,734 were injured between the start of the invasion and 18 December 2022, and that the actual numbers

***Russia launched a military invasion against Ukraine in February 2022, which led to an interstate armed conflict, causing a severe humanitarian crisis and global multidimensional impacts***

could be significantly higher. According to the OHCHR, most of the civilian casualties were due to the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects, including heavy artillery attacks, multiple launch rocket systems, missiles and air strikes. Some estimates put the number of combatants killed or wounded on each side in the tens of thousands, or even exceeding 100,000 military casualties killed or wounded on each side. As of mid-December, there were 5.59 million internally displaced people, 7.83 million refugees and 17.7 million people requiring humanitarian assistance, according to OCHA data. The consequences for human security included psychosocial trauma, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war under occupation, increased risks of gender violence and more difficulties in coping with it, the destruction of civil infrastructure, such as homes, the energy network and medical facilities, among other impacts.

The Russian land, sea and air invasion began on 24 February from the north, northeast, east and south. Ukraine responded to the invasion with military defence. At the start of the invasion, Russian troops besieged the capital, Kiev, as well as other centres, such as Chernihiv, Kharkov, Kherson and Mariupol, and seized territory in areas to the north, east and south, including the capture of the port city of Kherson on 2 March. There were public protests against the occupation in Kherson and other towns. Between late March and early April, Russia withdrew its troops from the Kiev region and other northern areas. After the Russian withdrawal from the north, evidence emerged of serious human rights violations in previously occupied towns such as Bucha and Irpin, including the extrajudicial killing and torture of civilians. In the following months, the war fronts were focused on the east and south, though Russia also bombarded other parts of Ukraine. In May, Russian forces took the port city of Mariupol (southeast), which had been under Russian siege since the start of the invasion, setting off a serious humanitarian crisis. According to the Ukrainian authorities, 25,000 people died during the long siege and 90% of the buildings were destroyed. Its capture allowed Russia to connect the occupied territories of the southern and eastern parts of the country. Later that month, after also taking Lisichansk (Luhansk), Moscow claimed control over the province of Luhansk. In the summer, Russian control expanded, albeit in a limited way, with the seizure of parts of Donbas, and Russian air strikes took place in areas far from the war fronts.

The Ukrainian Army regained control of the Kharkov region (northeast) in September as part of a military counteroffensive that dislodged Russian troops from the occupied areas, including the towns of Izium and Kupiansk, which are communication hubs. New

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84. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

testimonies and evidence of the killing and torture of civilians under the occupation emerged in the region and a mass grave was found in Izium with at least 440 bodies, including minors and people showing signs of torture. Russia decreed the annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia and Kherson regions in September, following independence referendums held later that month in the areas of those provinces under Russian military occupation. Also that month, Russia announced the mandatory partial conscription of Russian men, which prompted thousands of citizens to leave Russia to avoid it (hundreds of thousands, according to Reuters). In October, an explosion caused serious damage to part of the only bridge connecting the Crimean peninsula with Russia. The bombing was attributed to Ukraine and was followed by Russian missile attacks against the capital and towns in at least 12 provinces, including from the centre and west, against civilian targets such as homes, offices and the power grid, killing a dozen people and injuring one hundred. In November, the Ukrainian Army retook control of the city of Kherson. In the final months of the year, hostilities increased in areas of Luhansk and Donetsk, including in the town of Bakhmut. A Ukrainian attack on a school converted into a Russian military base in Makiivka (Donetsk) in the early morning of 1 January 2023 caused the death of dozens of Russian soldiers (89 according to Russia and several hundred according to Ukrainian sources). Throughout its invasion in 2022, Russia carried out attacks that left high numbers of civilian casualties, such as an attack in March against a maternity and children's hospital in Mariupol that killed three people and injured 17, including minors; a missile attack against the Kramatorsk (Donetsk) train station in April that killed 60 civilians and wounded one hundred; an attack against a shopping centre in Kremenchuk (Poltava) in June that killed at least 20 civilians and injured 50; a Russian missile attack in mid-July in Vinnitsia that killed 23 people, including three children; and a Russian missile attack in September against a civilian convoy near the city of Zaporizhia that killed 31 people and injured more than 80. Russia also intensified air strikes against the power grid in the last quarter of the year, which worsened the energy and humanitarian emergency situation.

The war escalated at various times due to Russia's threats to use all means at its disposal, alluding to the use of nuclear weapons. Hostilities around the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe and occupied by Russia at the beginning of the invasion, also posed security risks. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) deployed a permanent mission at the plant and engaged in dialogue with Russia and Ukraine to establish a security zone around it, without reaching an agreement. Meanwhile, Russia and Ukraine held political and military negotiations with third-party support from the start of the invasion

until its blockade in April 2022. Since then, Moscow and Kiev have only maintained open dialogue on humanitarian issues, the export of cereals and the protection of nuclear infrastructure, with third-party support. The few achievements included an agreement in July for grain exports, with the participation of the UN and Turkey.<sup>85</sup>

The invasion and war had an international dimension, with the participation of international actors in the supply of weapons. Western countries provided massive military support to Ukraine, including HIMARS and MLRS missile launch systems, Javelin, Stinger and NLAW anti-tank systems, anti-aircraft missiles, guns and other weapons. At the end of the year, the US announced the shipment of a battery of Patriot anti-aircraft missiles. Ukraine accused Iran of supplying Russia with weapons during the invasion, including various models of drones that were widely used in Russian attacks, while Iran only admitted having sent pre-invasion supplies. Overall, the invasion prompted a rise in militarism around the world and specifically in Western countries. In reaction to the invasion, Finland and Sweden applied to join NATO, though it still required ratification by two NATO members, Hungary and Turkey, at the end of the year. Already in 2021, world military spending had topped two trillion dollars for the first time, with a rise of 0.7% compared to 2020, and the top hundred arms companies had continued to grow.<sup>86</sup> In 2022, Western governments announced new moves to increase military budgets and to militarise the continent. Civil society organisations denounced this militarisation.

In response to the invasion, the United States, European Union, United Kingdom and other actors imposed successive packages of sanctions, including selective ones against Putin and other senior officials, businessmen, the owner and commanders of the Wagner Group, banks and finance companies and military and aviation companies, as well as economic sanctions and the suspension of the visa facilitation agreement. The economic and trade sanctions included an EU ban on the import of Russian crude oil by sea and a ban on shipping companies and insurers from transporting the crude if its sale exceeded a price limit imposed by the EU and the G7. However, the year ended without the sanctions having persuaded Russia to end the invasion and without having a serious economic effect on the country, which benefited from the rise in energy prices and alternative markets to the West, though analysts indicated possible scenarios of greater impacts on the Russian economy at a later date. The invasion and the global impacts of rising energy, food and other costs had repercussions throughout the world, including in countries of the MENA region and Africa, worsening situations of inequality and the lack of human security.

85. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

86. SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 2022*, 2022.

Since the start of the invasion, there have been initiatives to respond to the humanitarian crisis and calls for an end to the war, as well as action in the field of international justice. The Ukrainian population mobilised massively in the social response to the invasion, providing mutual support and assistance in accessing basic goods, helping with evacuations, searching for missing persons and getting involved in many other activities. Human rights activists and individuals opposed to the war in Russia and Belarus carried out initiatives against the invasion and denounced internal policies that violated human rights. In terms of international justice, in March 2022 the Prosecutor's Office of the International Criminal Court (ICC) began to collect evidence for an investigation into past and present allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity and genocide in Ukraine since 2013. At the multilateral level, the UN General Assembly condemned the invasion and demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops with a resolution in March 2022 (141 votes in favour, five against and 35 abstentions, Resolution A/ES-11/L.1). Another resolution in November, with less support, urged Russia to pay war reparations to Ukraine (94 votes in favour, 14 against, 73 abstentions, A/RES/ES-11/1). Players such as China, India, Iran, Pakistan and South Africa abstained. The invasion had repercussions on international relations in multiple areas, including increased Russian rapprochement with and dependence on China and a more tense multifaceted international order.

## South-east Europe

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

### 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 (Democratization Initiative in 2008, Oslo Dialogue in 2009-2011 and the Imrali process in 2013-2015). In 2015 the war was restarted. The armed conflict has caused around 40,000 fatalities since the 80s. The war in Syria 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 armed conflict between Turkey and the PKK remained active in southeastern Turkey and mainly in northern Iraq, where the Turkish Army launched new military operations against the Kurdish armed group.** International Crisis Group (ICG) estimated 434 fatalities resulting from the conflict between Turkey and the PKK in Turkey and northern Iraq (323 members of the PKK, 92 members of the security forces and 19 civilians), a body count similar to that of 2021 (420 deaths). **In Turkey, the provinces of Hakkari (77 deaths) and Şırnak (43) suffered the most fatalities (77 and 43, respectively), followed by Diyarbakir (12) and Mardin (11).** The Turkish Army carried out military operations in these and other provinces (Tunceli, Sanliurfa, Bingöl, Muş, Hatay and Elazığ). On 20 April, an attack with a remote-controlled explosive device against a bus carrying prison guards in the northwestern city of Bursa (the fourth-largest in the country) killed one guard and injured four others. Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack. Days before, Turkey had started a new land and air military operation against the PKK in northern Iraq (Operation Claw-Lock). Also around this time, Duran Kalkan, a member of the PKK executive committee, threatened to expand the war to the cities of Turkey. During the rest of the year, some armed incidents continued to take place in mainly rural areas. In December, a car bomb attack on a police minibus in Diyarbakir province injured eight policemen and one civilian. Nobody claimed responsibility for the attack, though the government blamed the PKK. The YPS and YPS-JIN (organisations linked to the PKK, which pursue an urban guerrilla strategy) also claimed responsibility for various attacks during the year.

**Most of the Turkish Army's attacks against the PKK took place in northern Iraq.** This region suffered 389 of the 434 fatalities associated with the conflict between Turkey and the PKK in 2022, according to ICG. Turkey carried out Operation Winter Eagle in February against Kurdish forces in Iraq (Sinjar and Majmur) and in northern Syria and a separate air and ground offensive in April against the PKK in the Duhok governorate in northern Iraq (Operation Claw-Lock), which remained active at the end of 2022. During that operation, nine Iraqi tourists were killed, including a child, and 20 were injured in a Turkish attack with artillery shells against a holiday resort in the Zakho district. The Iraqi government

condemned the attack and accused Turkey of violating Iraqi sovereignty.<sup>87</sup> The Kurdish authorities in Iraq also criticised the attack and called for an end to fighting between Turkey and the PKK. Hostilities also took place during the year between the Turkish Army and Syrian Kurdish forces, the YPG, with frequent Turkish attacks in northern Syria and YPG attacks against Turkish targets in Turkish provinces bordering Syria. In November, Turkey blamed the PKK and the YPG for an attack in a central avenue in Istanbul that killed six people and injured 81. In the days that followed, Ankara bombarded Kurdish areas of Syria, including targets near a compound housing US forces. Both the PKK and the YPG denied any involvement in the Istanbul bombing. In the closing months of the year, Turkey threatened a ground invasion against Kurdish-controlled areas in Syria to establish a 30-kilometre buffer zone. Turkey kept up its air strikes, but did not deploy a ground invasion.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, Turkey continued police and judicial persecution against Kurdish civil actors, including politicians, journalists and Kurdish activists, as well as against other members of the political and social opposition and human rights defenders, resulting in dozens of arrests. In April, a court sentenced Turkish philanthropist and democracy and human rights activist Osman Kavala to aggravated life imprisonment and seven other people to 18 years in prison, a sentence blasted by human rights organisations as politically motivated. In June, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Turkey for not complying with the opinion that it had issued in 2019 requiring Kavala's immediate release. Other crisis factors in 2022 included the economic deterioration in the country and the political tension ahead of the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2023. Turkey also made geopolitical moves, such as its rapprochement with rival players like Syria, Israel and Armenia. The war in Ukraine provided Turkey with greater international political influence as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine. Finally, Ankara's ability to veto NATO's request to incorporate Sweden and Finland into the alliance prompted it to demand greater persecution against Kurdish actors.

### 1.3.5. Middle East

#### Mashreq

Egypt (Sinai)	
<b>Start:</b>	2014
<b>Type:</b>	System Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) or Sinai Province (branch of ISIS), pro-government militia Union of Sinai Tribes (UST)
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	=

#### 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 mainly active in the Sinai peninsula in Egypt continued to simmer with low-intensity levels of violence similar to those reported the previous year. As in previous periods, it was difficult to establish a death toll related to the conflict due to inaccurate or contradictory information on the number of casualties in the hostilities. Nevertheless, the ACLED database reported **a total of 272 people killed in fighting that broke out after detonations and explosive attacks and in actions against civilians**. The conflict continued to pit the regional Islamic State (ISIS) branch, the self-proclaimed Sinai Province, against the Egyptian security forces supported by pro-government militias. Media outlets and human rights organisations said that these **militias made up of local clans, such as the Sinai Tribal Union (STU), became increasingly involved in hostilities in 2022**. Even though the Egyptian president said in April that the military operations against the insurgency in the Sinai was nearing its end, incidents continued

87. See the summary on Iraq in this chapter.

88. See the summary on Syria in this chapter.



throughout the year. The hostilities took place primarily in northern and central parts of Sinai, in places like Arish, Bir al-Abd, Sheikh Zuweid, Rafah, Al-Gafgafa, Maghara and Jilbana, an area very close to the Suez Canal. Later in the year, in an unusual move, ISIS also claimed responsibility for an attack on police officers in Ismailia, west of the Suez Canal.

Following the pattern of previous years, the acts of violence included airstrikes, clashes, ambushes, bomb attacks, suicide bombings, murders, kidnappings and more. **ISIS abducted several civilians and killed people for allegedly collaborating with the Egyptian Army.** One of the deadliest attacks by the armed group occurred in May, when an offensive against a military post in the town of Qantara, west of Bir al-Abd, killed between 11 and 17 soldiers. It was the bloodiest attack for which ISIS claimed responsibility in the area in two years. In September, the ISIS branch suffered one of its biggest setbacks of the year after losing a dozen fighters in a joint military operation with tribal militias. Two senior officers were killed days later. Human Rights Watch (HRW) confirmed the authenticity of videos circulating on social networks showing the extrajudicial killing of at least three detainees by militiamen and members of the security forces. Although the authorities allowed some families expelled from the area in 2021 and 2022 to return, HRW reported that Egypt continued to fail to comply with its obligations towards people forcibly displaced from North Sinai during a massive home demolition campaign between 2013 and 2020, without demonstrating that it was militarily necessary or compensating the uprooted families. In October, the Egyptian Parliament extended the state of emergency in North Sinai for another six months.

Iraq	
<b>Start:</b>	2003
<b>Type:</b>	System, Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Government, Iraqi military and security forces, Kurdish forces (peshmerga), Shia militias Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) and Saraya Salam, Sunni militias, ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, USA, Iran, Turkey
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=
<b>Summary:</b>	
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. The levels of violence have been reduced since 2018, after the announcement of defeat of ISIS, although the group continues to operate with actions of lower intensity. The country has also been affected by the growing dispute between Washington and Tehran and its competition to influence Iraqi affairs.

Iraq continued to be the scene of a high-intensity conflict in 2022, with levels of violence slightly higher than those observed the previous year, though far from the periods with the worst death tolls due to the hostilities (2003-2008 and 2014-2017). **According to data collected by Iraqi Body Count (IBC), 2,013 people lost their lives in 2022 due to multiple episodes of violence, including 740 civilians (74 minors).** Most of these victims died in incidents blamed on ISIS, but others died in clashes and disputes between clans, a growing phenomenon, while still others were killed in actions led by security forces and affiliated armed groups. According to IBC, a total of 1,273 combatants were killed in 2022, including members of ISIS, members of the PKK and related groups, Iraqi and Turkish soldiers, members of the Shia militia Forces or Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs) and police officers and others. **However, the ACLED database reported a total of 4,477 people killed in 2022** in clashes, bomb attacks, acts of violence against civilians and violent demonstrations. The death toll in 2021 was 1,610 and 2,511 according to IBC and ACLED, respectively. As in previous years, the violence in the country was carried out by many different actors and influenced by political tensions and internal power struggles and by regional and international dynamics, which turned Iraq into the scene of disputes between Iran and the USA and Israel and constant incursions by Turkey and Iran against Kurdish groups with bases in the northern part of the country.

**ISIS continued to be an active armed actor in Iraq, carrying out many attacks** against Iraqi soldiers, police officers, members of the Kurdish security forces (peshmergas) and civilians in various parts of the country, including Anbar, Bagdad, Kirkuk, Diyala, Nineveh and Salah al-Din. US forces, which formally ended their combat mission in the country, but remain in an "advisory" role for Iraqi forces and peshmergas, especially in the

fight against ISIS, were targeted by drones in January, coinciding with the second anniversary of Washington's assassination in Iraq of the Iranian commander of the Al-Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani. In March, fresh attacks against facilities linked to the US and Israel in Erbil were blamed on Iran, allegedly in retaliation for an Israeli attack in Syria. In May, new attacks in Erbil were blamed on Shia PMU militias. Clashes also took place during the year between Iraqi forces and the Yazidi militia Sinjar Resistance Units (known by the acronym YBS), which is believed to have links to the PKK. In April, the government of Turkish President Erdogan announced that it was launching Operation Claw-Lock, a new offensive against PKK positions in northern Iraq. In July, an attack attributed to Turkey at a tourist resort in Duhok, in Iraqi Kurdistan, killed nine people, injured 30 others and stoked diplomatic tensions between Baghdad and Ankara. Turkey denied responsibility for the attack and blamed it on the PKK, while the Iraqi government and the KRG denounced the attack and other events as repeated violations of the sovereignty of the country and the region. In November, after an attack in Istanbul that Turkey blamed on the PKK, Erdogan's government launched a new offensive against Kurdish positions in northern Iraq and Syria as part of a campaign called Operation Claw-Sword and threatened a land invasion.<sup>89</sup> In 2022, Tehran also stepped up its actions against Iranian Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, especially after protests broke out in Iran over the death in police custody of a young Kurdish woman named Mahsa Amini. The attacks were mainly directed against the PDKI and Komala and caused dozens of fatalities.<sup>90</sup> In September, the United States shot down one of the drones used in these attacks, assuring that it posed a threat to US forces in the area.

**Violence in the country also escalated, especially from the middle of the year, as a result of the persistent political blockade and power struggles that made it difficult to form a new government for months.** The party of Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr won the October 2021 elections and began efforts to form a government led by his party. The negotiations in 2022 led to a growing gulf among the country's Shia forces, since the Shia Coordination Framework (SCF) coalition, which brings together various pro-Iranian forces and the party of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, pushed to form an alternative government. The deadline for appointing the president, speaker of Parliament and prime

***ISIS continued to be an active armed actor in Iraq, carrying out many attacks against Iraqi soldiers, police officers, members of the Kurdish security forces and civilians in various parts of the country***

***Violence in Iraq escalated, especially from the middle of the year, as a result of the persistent political blockade and power struggles that made it difficult to form a new government for months***

minister, in charge of forming the government, expired during the first quarter without any agreement made on filling the offices. By political convention, these positions are traditionally distributed among the different ethnic groups of the country, creating more problems due to power struggles for the appointments.<sup>91</sup> The crisis worsened after the formation of new coalitions (the al-Sadr bloc joined other groups in the Coalition for Saving the Homeland), several failed votes due to a lack of quorum and failed initiatives by independent politicians. In June, al-Sadr ordered the more than 70 MPs of his party to resign. They were replaced by the second-most-voted candidates in the election, most of them SCF members. This

coalition then proposed the appointment of Mohamed Shia al-Sudani as prime minister, considered a figure close to al-Maliki, al-Sadr's historical rival. In late July, followers of the Shia cleric staged demonstrations, stormed Baghdad's fortified Green Zone and occupied Parliament to prevent a vote that would ratify al-Sudani. The protests, which later moved to the outskirts of the legislative building, lasted for a month, while al-Sadr demanded that the judicial branch dissolve Parliament and call new elections. This show of force coincided with the release of reports indicating that al-Maliki was arming groups in southern Iraq for a showdown with al-Sadr.

Acting Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi called for a political dialogue in which al-Sadr refused to participate. Finally, after al-Sadr's spiritual mentor made some critical statements in a movement supposedly orchestrated by Tehran, in late August al-Sadr announced his withdrawal from politics and the closure of all political bodies linked to his movement. The announcement sparked new protests from his followers and an escalation of violence. **Fighting between the UMP and groups aligned with the SCF, the military wing of al-Sadr's movement (Saraya Salam) and the Iraqi security forces resulted in the death of 30 people and wounded over 700 in the most serious acts of violence in Baghdad in several years.** Iraqi armed groups also clashed in other towns in the southern part of the country. The violence stopped after al-Sadr urged his supporters to leave the streets.

According to reports, the influential Iraqi Shia cleric Ali al-Sistani had discreetly intervened so that al-Sadr would publicly call for an end to the violence. **Thus, a year after the elections, the new government was formed,** with the appointment of the Kurdish politician

89. See the summaries on Turkey (south-east) and Syria in this chapter.

90. See the summary on Iran and Iraq (northwest) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

91. According to this political convention, the president is traditionally a Kurdish politician; the parliamentary speaker, a Sunni; and the prime minister, a Shia.

Abdul Latif Rashid as president and al-Sudani as prime minister (Sunni politician Mohamed al-Habousi, the leader of the Taqaddum party, had already been elected as the speaker of Parliament in January). Hours before Abdul Latif Rashid's election, Parliament had been attacked with rockets. The UN special representative in Iraq and head of the mission in the country (UNAMI), who tried to facilitate dialogue between the parties, was openly critical of Iraqi leaders from across the political spectrum for their lack of political will to prioritise the national interest and for getting involved in power struggles that prolonged the impasse. In November, the new Iraqi prime minister met with the Iranian president in Tehran and they announced a commitment to strengthen security cooperation. Al-Sudani was also in favour of keeping US troops in the country to continue the fight against ISIS.

***The rise in violence in the West Bank was observed in a context of intensifying and almost daily Israeli military operations characterised by the excessive use of force and increasing actions by settlers***

Throughout 2022, violence associated with Israeli occupation policies, clashes between Israelis and Palestinians and conflict-related attacks caused the deaths of at least 211 people, according to OCHA data. The death toll reported last year was relatively lower than that of 2021, in which 350 deaths were reported. Following the trend of previous years, the vast majority of everyone who lost their lives in 2022 were Palestinians (190), compared to 21 Israelis in the same period. Of those injured, 10,345 were Palestinians and 251 were Israelis. Unlike previous periods when most deaths were in Gaza, last year the highest number of people killed and injured was concentrated in the West Bank. **In fact, the United Nations highlighted that 2022 had become the year with the most Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank** since it began to systematically report deaths in 2005 (152 deaths and 9,909 people injured in 2022). According to UN data, 2022 was also the year with the most Israeli civilian casualties since 2015. Among the 16 Israeli civilian deaths in 2022, OCHA specifies that four were settlers, while another five were members of the security forces.

Israel – Palestine	
<b>Start:</b>	2000
<b>Type:</b>	Self-government, Identity, Territory International <sup>92</sup>
<b>Main parties:</b>	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, brigades of Jenin, Nablus and Tubas, Lion's Den
<b>Intensity:</b>	1
<b>Trend:</b>	=

#### Summary:

The conflict between Israel and the various Palestinian actors started up again in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, favoured by the failure of the peace process promoted at the beginning of the 1990s (the Oslo Accords, 1993-1994). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict started in 1947 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 divided Palestinian territory under British mandate into two states and soon after proclaimed the state of Israel (1948), without the state of Palestine having been able to materialise itself since then. After the 1948-49 war, Israel annexed West Jerusalem and Egypt and Jordan took over control of Gaza and the West Bank, respectively. In 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza after winning the "Six-Day War" against the Arab countries. It was not until the Oslo Accords that the autonomy of the Palestinian territory would be formally recognised, although its introduction was to be impeded by the military occupation and the control of the territory imposed by Israel.

The rise in violence in the West Bank was observed in a context of intensifying and almost daily Israeli military operations characterised by the excessive use of force and increasing actions by settlers. During 2022, and for the sixth consecutive year, a new rise in attacks by Israeli settlers was observed and **UN experts stressed that the evidence that Israeli forces facilitate, support and participate in these attacks makes it difficult to discern between the violence of the settlers and the violence of the Israeli government.**<sup>93</sup> Most of the Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in 2022 occurred amid Israeli military incursions and clashes in the towns of Jenin and Nablus (north), in a context of **resurging Palestinian armed resistance**. Israel's military Operation Breakwater intensified as of March following a series of attacks by Palestinians in Israel and has been aimed at persecuting alleged members of armed groups such as the al-Quds Brigades, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, as well as others formed more recently (2021). These include the Jenin Brigades, which may be supported by PIJ, the Nablus and Tubas Brigades and a group called Lion's Den (Nablus), which gained notoriety in 2022 and fought with the Palestinian security forces during the year. **In Gaza, the most high-profile acts of lethal violence occurred in August** as a result of three days of an Israeli offensive that was part of this same campaign. Fifty-one Palestinians were killed in this

92. Despite the fact that "Palestine" (whose Palestinian National Authority is a political entity linked to a specific population and territory) is not an internationally recognised state, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is considered "international" and not "internal" because it is an illegally occupied territory with Israel's alleged claim to the territory not being recognised by international law or by any United Nations resolution.

93. Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Israel: UN experts condemn record year of Israeli violence in the occupied West Bank", OHCHR, 15 December 2022.

raid, including 17 minors. Throughout the year there were also repeated incidents in Jerusalem and Hebron. In November, thousands of settlers celebrating a religious festival entered the part of Hebron under Palestinian control, carrying out attacks and dealing damage. In late November, an attack at a bus stop in Jerusalem killed two Israelis and injured around 20 people in the first attack of its kind since 2016, according to media reports.

The death of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while covering an Israeli attack on a Jenin refugee camp in May 2022 caused a special international impact. Various investigations concluded that the journalist, who had an extensive career and was well-known in Palestine, was shot in the head by an Israeli soldier despite being clearly identified as a reporter. After initially denying any responsibility for the events, Israel said the journalist's death was an accident and ruled out opening a criminal investigation. The crackdown by Israeli forces during the journalist's funeral caused consternation. **The persecution of Palestinian human rights organisations that Israel declared as "terrorists" in 2021** for their alleged links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also continued during the year. In August, these groups' offices were searched and closed down. Human rights experts from the UN and several European countries denounced the criminalisation of these NGOs, warning that Israel had not presented credible evidence to support its accusations.<sup>94</sup> People linked to these organisations were also subjected to persecution. Thus, for example, the French-Palestinian lawyer Salah Hamouri of the NGO Adameer, which specialises in assisting Palestinian prisoners, was imprisoned in March and expelled to France in December. Even though the UN approved a resolution in 2016 specifically aimed at stopping Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory (considered contrary to international law), **the Israeli authorities also continued with their expansion policy during 2022 and announced new colony construction plans. Israel also continued with its policies to expel the Palestinian population and demolish homes.** In one of the most emblematic cases of 2022, in May the Israeli Court of Justice rejected appeals against orders to expel the residents of the Palestinian town of Masafer Yatta, designated a firing zone by Israeli forces in the late 1980s. The decision threatens to expel around 1,200 Palestinians, half of whom are minors, in what would be the largest forced displacement from a single town in decades. The UN special envoy for the Middle East voiced concern over the severe restrictions on movement imposed by Israel on the Palestinian population. The United Nations also called attention to the situation of the detainees during the year. As of mid-December, Israel had detained more than 6,000 Palestinians, including 452 minors. This is the highest number of people arrested since 2008, while the number

of people in administrative detention has doubled in the last two years.

Early in the year, **Amnesty International published a report denouncing Israel's apartheid policies against the Palestinian population**, thereby adding to previous complaints by Palestinian organisations, Israel human rights organisations and Human Rights Watch.<sup>95</sup> At the end of the year, the UN General Assembly (Resolution 77/400) decided to request an opinion from the International Court of Justice on the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, its settlement and annexation policies, measures to alter the demographic composition and discriminatory laws. Events in 2022 were also marked by the dissolution of the Israeli government in the middle of the year and a new call for elections, the fifth since April 2019. The eight-party coalition led by Prime Minister Neftali Benet and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid collapsed in June, dissolved Parliament (Knesset) and called elections that were held on 1 November and won by the Likud party. **The return to power of Benjamin Netanyahu led to the inauguration of the most far-right government in the history of Israel at the end of 2022.** The new government includes openly supremacist Jewish nationalist groups that have incited further violence against the Palestinian population. Netanyahu noted that settlement expansion would be the top priority of his government.

Syria	
<b>Start:</b>	2011
<b>Type:</b>	Government, System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	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, Israel
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	=
<b>Summary:</b>	
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 and the Arab Israeli conflict, internally the regime has been characterised by 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	

94. OHCHR, "Israel/Palestine: UN experts call on governments to resume funding for six Palestinian CSOs designated by Israel as 'terrorist organisations'", *OHCHR*, 25 April 2022; RFI, "EU resumes funding for six Palestinian NGOs branded as terrorists by Israel", RFI, 7 August 2022.

95. Amnesty International, "Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime against Humanity", *AI*, 1 February 2022.



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.

Although the death tolls of the conflict have been falling in recent years, the country continues to be the scene of fighting involving different local, regional and international actors and the number of people killed as a result of the violence continues to rank Syria among the most intense armed conflicts worldwide. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), **2022 was the year with the lowest body count since the armed conflict began over a decade ago, with a total of 3,825 deaths.** Of this total, 1,627 were civilians, including 321 minors and 159 women, and 2,198 were combatants of the various armed groups operating in the country, including members of the forces of Bashar Assad's regime, ISIS, opposition and/or Islamist armed groups, government-backed militias, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) led by Kurdish groups, Iranian-backed militias, Turkish soldiers, members of Hezbollah and other actors. **However, the ACLED database reported a total of 5,649 people killed in Syria in 2022** due to various acts of violence, including clashes, explosions and attacks against civilians. In 2021, the death toll of the conflict was very similar (3,882 according to the SOHR and 5,737 according to ACLED), compared to much higher figures observed in previous periods (nearly 8,000 people killed in 2020, 15,000 in 2019 and 30,000 in 2018).

In late 2022, the country was still divided into various areas of influence and continued to be targeted by continuous air raids by foreign actors, mainly Russia, Turkey and Israel. One of the most notable acts of violence came in January, when ISIS carried out its biggest attack since its territorial defeat in 2019. **ISIS members launched an attack on Kurdish-controlled al-Sina'a prison in the northeastern part of the country to free detained fighters. In the days that followed, clashes with members of the SDF and the US-led international coalition against ISIS resulted in the deaths of more than 500 people.** These hostilities also forcibly displaced more than 45,000 civilians. During the year, ISIS cells continued to launch attacks mainly in Deraa, Dayr-al-Zawr, Hassakah, Homs

***ISIS carried out its biggest attack since its territorial defeat in 2019 and launched an attack on Kurdish-controlled al-Sina'a prison in the northeastern part of Syria to free detained fighters***

***The humanitarian crisis in Syria fell to its worst level since the start of the war***

and Hama, confirming the resilience of the armed group and its ability to act across different dividing lines.<sup>96</sup> The ceasefire in Idlib agreed in 2020 was formally upheld throughout the year, though periodic violations were reported and the UN warned of an escalation of hostilities throughout the northern part of the country in late 2022. Fighting between pro-government forces and armed opposition groups, including Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, continued in both Idlib and Aleppo while Syrian and Russian airstrikes continued, resulting in civilian casualties. Turkey also continued to intervene periodically in the northern part of the country. In November, Ankara intensified its offensives against Kurdish forces in northern Syria and Iraq as part of its Operation Claw-Sword. Airstrikes increased and were accompanied by threats of a new land invasion, which would be the fourth in northern Syria, after a bomb attack in Istanbul killed six people. The Turkish government blamed the attack on the PKK and the YPG, who denied responsibility. In southern Syria, incidents throughout the year were mainly concentrated in the provinces of Deraa, Quneitra and Suwayda. Many murders continued to be reported in this government-controlled area. At the same time, Israel continued with its attacks in different parts of Syria, including one on the Damascus airport that was allegedly intended to prevent the delivery of weapons to Iranian-backed militias, including Hezbollah. The US also launched attacks against militias with suspected ties to Tehran and followed up with raids against ISIS, including one that killed the group's leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, in February.

The Syrian civilian population continued to be severely affected by the armed conflict. In its investigations and reports on Syria, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that the warring parties were not taking the necessary steps to prevent or minimise loss of civilian life in attacks and clashes, which continued to affect residential areas and deliberately destroyed civilian infrastructure. The hostilities also continued to cause serious explosive contamination throughout the area. An investigation by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (IICCOI) repeated allegations of the systematic use of torture and mistreatment in detention centres. At the end of the year, the UN special envoy confirmed that there was no news of detained and disappeared persons after the presidential amnesty decreed by Assad on 30 April 2022. The decree, which led to the release of a few hundred prisoners, was criticised for its lack of transparency. Families of detainees continued to search

96. International Crisis Group, *Containing a Resilient ISIS in Central and North-eastern Syria*, Middle East and North Africa Report No. 236, 18 July 2022.

for news of the whereabouts of their relatives. According to media reports, more than 136,000 people remained in Syrian government prisons at the end of 2022. **In 2022 the humanitarian crisis in the country fell to its worst level since the start of the war. In December, the UN warned that food insecurity had reached a record of 12 million people. Estimates indicated that 15.3 million people, equivalent to 70% of the population, would need humanitarian aid in 2023 and that 90% of the population lived below the poverty line.** The deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation was also shaped by the rise in food prices and provoked protests against the regime, especially in the southern part of the country. Added to this was growing concern about the spread of a cholera epidemic, with thousands of cases registered in every province in the country. The challenges were especially serious in northern Syria due to difficulties in accessing drinking water and health services. In 2022, the UN and human rights organisations also continued to report the worrying situation of thousands of people detained in the camps at al-Hawl and al-Raj, which mainly house families of ISIS fighters, including around 38,000 minors. Along with overcrowding and insecurity, the high rate of deadly violence drew attention to the situation in the camps, with 42 murders in al-Hawl alone last year, including of 22 women and four minors.

As the conflict evolved, formal diplomatic schemes to address the crisis continued to be implemented, though no progress was made in the search for a political solution. The UN-sponsored Geneva process was blocked from the middle of the year due to Russia and Syria's reluctance to continue talks in the city, as they no longer considered Switzerland an impartial actor. The fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine also prompted closer rapprochement between Moscow and Tehran, which expanded their collaboration beyond Syria, with Iran transferring drones to Russia for its operations in Ukraine. Media outlets also reported the recruitment of Syrians to support Russian forces in Ukraine. Rapprochement between Turkey and Syria was also observed in 2022. The government of Ankara, the main supporter of armed groups and Syrian opposition politicians, said it was willing to sit down and talk with Damascus. In December, the defence ministers and intelligence chiefs of both countries met in Moscow for the first meeting of its type since the war began. **Rapprochement between Turkey and Syria, which Moscow viewed as a priority, caused concern among parts of the Syrian opposition, Kurdish forces and the Syrian refugee population.** Looking ahead to 2023, there were fears of an intensification of the forced return of Syrian refugees, an important issue for the electoral calculations of the Turkish president, who would face general elections in May. A Human Rights Watch report charged that Turkish authorities had arbitrarily arrested, detained and forcibly returned

hundreds of Syrian refugee men and boys between February and July 2022.<sup>97</sup>

## The Gulf

Yemen	
<b>Start:</b>	2004
<b>Type:</b>	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
<b>Main parties:</b>	Armed forces loyal to the internationally recognised Government, followers of the cleric al-Houthi (al-Shabaab al-Mumen/Ansar Allah), tribal militias linked to al-Alhmar clan, Salafist militias (including Happy Yemen Brigades), armed groups linked to the Islamist Islah party, separatist groups under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Joint Forces (including the Giants Brigades), AQAP, ISIS, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE)
<b>Intensity:</b>	3
<b>Trend:</b>	↓

### 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 in 2014 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. Additionally, Yemen has been the scene of al-Qaeda activities since the 1990s, especially since the merger of the Saudi and Yemeni branches that gave rise to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2009. As of 2014, the group has taken advantage of the climate of instability in the country to advance its objectives and its militiamen have

97. Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: Hundreds of Refugees Deported to Syria", *HRW*, 24 October 2022.

been involved in clashes with the Houthis, with government forces, with UAE troops and with tribal militias. Since al-Qaeda's attack on the USS Cole in 2000, the US has been involved in periodic attacks against the group. The conflict in Yemen has also favoured ISIS activity in the country.

**In 2022, Yemen remained affected by a high-intensity armed conflict that claimed at least 6,721 lives, according to data collected by the ACLED database. Nevertheless, this body count is significantly lower than those in the last few years,** in which over

20,000 people died each year (22,000 in 2021, 20,000 in 2020 and 23,000 in 2019). The drop in deaths due to violence in the country was mainly due to the ceasefire agreement between the main parties to the dispute. The truce was in force for six months (2 April to 2 October 2022) and significantly reduced hostilities, provided the population with more freedom of movement and improved access to fuel and humanitarian aid. The armed conflict continued to have a great impact on civilians. According to the body count of the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project initiative, at least 716 civilians died as a result of the armed conflict between January and November 2022 while another 1,602 people had been injured. During the months the truce was in force, civilian casualties dropped off considerably, though various bomb-related incidents occurred in different parts of the country. The highest levels of violence in Yemen were reported in early 2022. The hostilities had already intensified in the final months of 2021, amid the intensification of the Houthis' campaign to control the central area of Maarib and the consequent clashes with forces aligned with the internationally recognised Yemeni government and armed groups mainly supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In January 2022, in retaliation for the setbacks in Maarib, the Houthis launched armed attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These set off a series of reciprocal attacks, including many airstrikes on Yemeni soil. These events were interpreted as a sign of the risks of regional expansion of the armed conflict and once again elicited harsh criticism against the armed actors involved in the conflict due to the violence against the population and civil infrastructure. In fact, **January was the month with the most civilian victims in three years** (234 people killed and 432 injured) and the hostilities forcibly displaced thousands of people. One of the bloodiest attacks was carried out by the Saudi-led coalition against a detention centre in the capital of Yemen, Sana'a, causing the death of 91 detainees and wounding 236. In this context, in February, the UN Security Council approved UNSC Resolution 2624,

***In 2022, Yemen reported a significant decrease in hostilities and in the number of people killed from the violence as a result of the truce that was in force for six months***

***Over 80% of the population in Yemen had problems meeting their basic needs, including food, drinking water and access to health services***

renewing financial and travel sanctions against Yemeni actors, including an arms embargo against the Houthis. Brazil, Ireland, Mexico and Norway abstained. The UAE, which became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in January, lobbied various actors with the intention of designating the Houthis as a terrorist group.

Alongside the hostilities, the UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, persisted in his diplomatic efforts with various actors to try to promote a political solution to the conflict.<sup>98</sup> As a result of this initiative, **in late March the main warring parties agreed to begin a nationwide ceasefire for the first time since 2016. The ceasefire would start on 2 April, marking the beginning of Ramadan**, the holiest month in Islam. The five-point agreement included a halt to all types of military offensives (land, air and sea) inside and outside Yemen. The armed actors also promised to remain in their positions until that date. Thus, in the following months there were no airstrikes or large-scale operations, though some incidents continued to be reported along the lines of contact on the various battlefronts. Meanwhile, other aspects of the agreement were implemented, such as the entry of fuel through the port of Al Hudaydah, the resumption of flights from Sana'a airport to two specific destinations (Egypt and Jordan) and the continuation of meetings with the special envoy to try to end the war. No major progress was made on one of the points: talks to reopen the roads, including that of Ta'iz, which has been under siege by the Houthis for years. The ceasefire agreement was initially signed for two months and renewed twice, in June and August, but not in September. The UN special envoy then wanted the truce to be extended for six months and include additional actions such as the urgent release of prisoners and the strengthening of the de-escalation mechanisms of the Military Coordination Committee (established after the April agreement). The Houthis were blamed for blocking the renewal of the ceasefire by including additional demands for its extension, especially their claim that their military forces be paid from the funds for paying public officials. **Some lamented the formal end of the truce and stressed its positive impacts**, such as the reduction (by around 60%) in the number of deaths due to violence, the drop in the levels of forced displacement (by half) and a partial decrease in the amount of people affected by food insecurity. The consequences of the war in Ukraine and the increase in global prices also affected Yemen, an importer of fuel and food (the country bought almost 50% of its wheat

98. For further information, see the summary on Yemen in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2023.

from Ukraine and Russia). According to the OCHA, 17 million people faced food insecurity at the end of the year and over 80% of the population had problems meeting their basic needs, including food, drinking water and access to health services.

**Despite the official end of the truce, large-scale clashes between the parties had not resumed by late 2022 and various aspects of the agreement continued to be fulfilled.** However, there were increasing acts of violence on different fronts, such as Maarib, Ta'iz, Al-Jawf, Lahj and Shabwa. Uncertainty persisted due to the possibilities of a new escalation, amid reports on the preparation of the parties for new hostilities and signs of greater confrontation in other areas, such as the economic war, which took shape in Houthi attacks on

oil infrastructure under government control. Although the negotiations sponsored by the UN remained largely deadlocked in the last quarter, the Omani-facilitated talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia remained active until the year's end. The Houthis prefer Riyadh as their interlocutor, while Riyadh would like to find a solution to a conflict that is costing it dearly. After the truce agreement, Yemeni President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi resigned. The outgoing president transferred his powers to a Presidential Council with eight members, representatives of different forces that make up the anti-Houthi coalition, selected primarily by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The UN mission in the country, UNMHA, which specifically monitors the ceasefire in the port of Al Hudaydah following the 2018 Stockholm Agreement, remained operational in 2022.