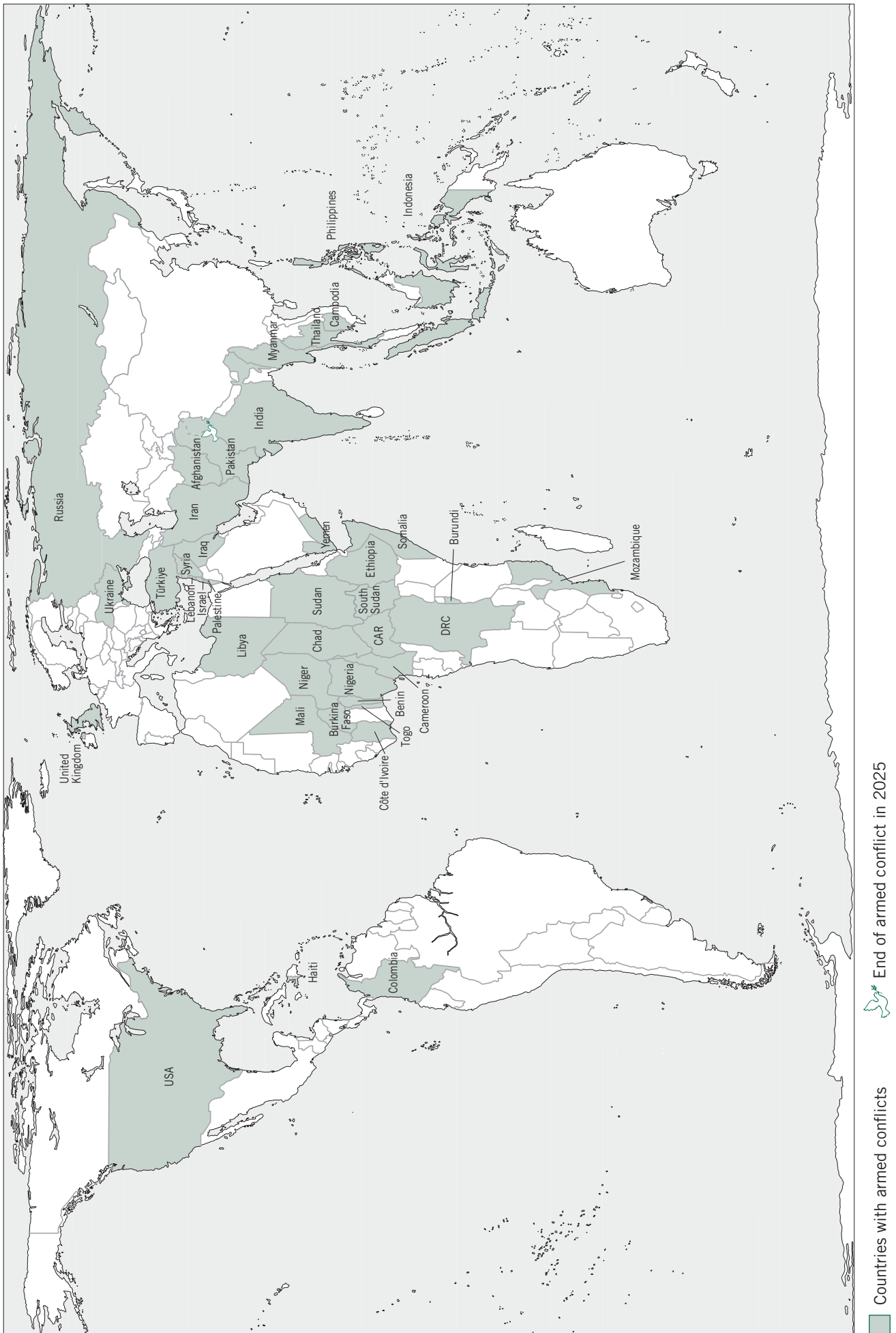


Map 1.1. Armed conflicts



1. Armed conflicts

- In 2025 40 armed conflicts were recorded, a higher number than in 2024 (37 cases). Since the School for a Culture of Peace began using its current armed conflict classification system in 2007, the threshold of 40 cases had previously been reached only once before, in 2011.
- Most armed conflicts were located in Africa (17), with the rest distributed between Asia and the Pacific (12), the Middle East (seven), Europe (two) and America (two).
- Half the armed conflicts were of high intensity (50%), fewer than in 2024 (57%), but still above any year in the period 2007-2020.
- 45% per cent of the conflicts (18 out of 40 cases) experienced higher levels of hostilities and violence than the previous year.
- The M23 and Rwanda intensified their offensive in the DRC, which entailed a risk of regional escalation due to Burundi's growing involvement in support of the DRC.
- Jihadist groups shifted their strategy in Mali, besieging Bamako by controlling key supply routes to suffocate the state and the population.
- A resurgence of jihadist insurgent activity in the Lake Chad Basin region was gradually linked with criminal violence in northwestern Nigeria.
- The war in Somalia remained one of Africa's deadliest, compounded by internal polarisation and regional geopolitical competition over Somaliland.
- The war in Sudan continued to intensify, making the country the scene of the year's worst humanitarian crisis.
- The armed conflict resurged in Colombia, with intense fighting in the Catatumbo region between the ELN and FARC dissident factions.
- Haiti's humanitarian and security crisis became further entrenched, with around 9,000 people killed and more than half the population facing food insecurity.
- India and Pakistan fought a four-day armed conflict.
- The longstanding border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand escalated into armed clashes in July and December.
- The armed conflict between Türkiye and the PKK moved towards its ending, with the group announcing its dissolution, the end of its armed struggle and the start of disarmament.
- Hostilities between Israel and Iran –joined by the United States– escalated in June and claimed over 1,000 lives in what was termed the “Twelve-Day War”.
- Israel maintained exorbitant levels of violence against the Palestinian population and prompted growing accusations of genocide.

The present chapter analyses the armed conflicts that occurred in 2025. 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 2025, including global and regional trends and other issues related to armed 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 2025.

Table 1.1. Summary of armed conflicts in 2025

Conflict ¹ -beginning-	Typology ²	Main parties ³	Intensity ⁴
			Trend ⁵
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 the armed groups Lebialem Red Dragons and SOCADEF belong) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku, whose armed wing is the Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF), different 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), Siriri ethnic armed opposition coalition AAKG, Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militias, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia, Wagner Group	2
	Government, Resources		=
DRC (east) -1998- ⁶	International	DRC, Angola, Burundi, SAMIDRC (SADC Regional Force composed by South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania), MONUSCO, pro-government militias Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP, composed of dozens of former Mai Mai militias and other armed groups from North Kivu and South Kivu, like APCLS, PARECO-FF, Nyatura, Raia Mutomboki, and other pro-government militias known as Wazalendo), FDLR, FDLR splinter groups (CNRD-Ubwiyunge, RUD-Urunana), private security companies (Agemira RDC and Congo Protection), March 23 Movement (M23), Twirwaneho, Rwanda, other armed groups that are not part of Wazalendo, Burundian armed groups, Ugandan armed group LRA, Ituri groups and community militias (including CODECO/URDPC, FPIC, FRPI, MAPI, Zaire-FPAC), AFC Coalition and allies	3
	Government, Identity, Resources		↑

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. The intensity of an armed conflict (high, medium or low) and its trend (escalation of violence, reduction of violence, unchanged) are evaluated mainly on the basis of how deadly it is (number of fatalities) and according to its impact on the population and the territory. Moreover, there are other aspects worthy of consideration, such as the systematisation and frequency of the violence or the complexity of the military struggle (complexity is normally related to the number and fragmentation of the actors involved, to the level of institutionalisation and capacity of the state, and to the degree of internationalisation of the conflict, as well as to the flexibility of objectives and to the political will of the parties to reach agreements). As such, high-intensity armed conflicts are usually defined as those that cause over 1,000 fatalities per year, as well as affecting a significant proportion of the territory and population, and involving several actors (who forge alliances, confront each other or establish a tactical coexistence). Medium and low intensity conflicts, with over 100 fatalities per year, have the aforementioned characteristics but with a more limited presence and scope. An armed conflict is considered ended when a significant and sustained reduction in armed hostilities occurs, whether due to a military victory, an agreement between the actors in conflict, demobilisation by one of the parties, or because one of the parties abandons or significantly scales down the armed struggle as a strategy to achieve certain objectives. None of these options necessarily mean that the underlying causes of the armed conflict have been overcome. Nor do they exclude the possibility of new outbreaks of violence. The temporary cessation of hostilities, whether formal or tacit, does not necessarily imply the end of the armed conflict.
5. This column compares the trend of the events of 2025 with those that of 2024. The escalation of violence symbol (↑) indicates that the general situation in 2025 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.
6. The evolution of the situation between the DRC and Rwanda, analysed in previous editions of the *Alert!* report in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) and as part of the DRC (east) summary in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts), is no longer considered a socio-political crisis and will now be analysed exclusively in the DRC (east) summary in chapter 1. However, the armed conflict in the DRC (east) exceptionally remains unchanged in its designation, as it is an international-type conflict involving other state actors, in addition to Rwanda.

Conflict -beginning-	Typology	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
DRC (east – ADF) -2014-	Internationalised internal	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ISCAP-ADF, CODECO, M23, MONUSCO	3
	System, Resources		↑
DRC (west) -2023-	Internal	DRC, Teke community militias, Yaka and Suku community militias (including the armed group Mobondo) and other allied community militias	1
	Identity, Resources, Territory		=
Ethiopia (Amhara) -2023-	Internationalised internal	Government of Ethiopia, government of Amhara Region, Amharic Fano militia, Oromo armed group OLA	3
	Government, Self-government, Identity		=
Ethiopia (Oromia) -2022-	Internal	Government of Ethiopia, government of Oromia Region, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Amharic Fano militia	3
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		=
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of Nigeria, pro-government militia Civilian Joint Task Force, Boko Haram factions (ISWAP, JAS-Abubakar Shekau, Ansaru, Bakura), civilian militias, Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF – Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger)	3
	System		↑
Libya -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government of National Unity (GNU) based in Tripoli, Government of National Stability (GNS) based in Tobruk, various armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA, also called the Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF), Stability Support Apparatus (SSA), 444 Combat Brigade, Special Deterrence Force (Al-Rada), ISIS, mercenaries, Africa Corps (former Wagner Group), among others; Russia, Türkiye	1
	Government, Resources, System		=
Mali -2012-	Internationalised internal	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for the Defense of the People of Azawad (CSP-DPA), Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), Katiba Macina, Africa Corps (former Wagner Group), Russia, Alliance of Sahel States (AES)	3
	System, Self-government, Identity		=
Mozambique (north) -2017-	Internationalised internal	Government; Islamic State's Central Africa Province (ISCAP) or Islamic State's Mozambique Province (ISMP), previously known as Ahlu Sunnah Waljama'a (ASWJ); al-Qaeda; Tanzania; Rwanda; South Africa; "Naparama" local militias	2
	System, Identity		↑
Somalia -1988-	Internationalised internal	Federal government, pro-government regional forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan and warlord militias, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, Türkiye, UAE, AUSSOM, EU NAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta), Combined Task Force 151, al-Shabaab, Islamic State in Somalia (ISS or ISIS-Somalia)	3
	Government, System		↑
Somalia (Somaliland – SSC Khatumo) -2023-	Internal	Republic of Somaliland, SSC Khatumo administration (Khatumo State)	1
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		↓
South Sudan -2009-	Internationalised internal	Government (SPLM/A); armed group SPLA-in Opposition (Riek Machar faction); SPLA-IO dissident Kitgwang factions led by Peter Gatdet, Simon Gatwech Dual and Johnson Olony ("Agwalek"); SPLM-FD; SSLA; SSDM/A; SSDM-CF; SSNLM; REMNANA; NAS (Cirillo); NAS (Loburon); SSUF (Paul Malong); SSOA; community militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwalek); armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N); Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously known as the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance, SSOMA), which includes the rebel organisations NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF and SSNMC; Sudan; Uganda; UNMISS	3
	Government, Resources, Identity		↑
Sudan -2023- ⁷	Internationalised internal	National: Government (Sudan Armed Forces), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), mercenaries (Russia, Colombia) Darfur: Government, janjaweed, RSF, armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), various SLA factions and other armed groups, community-based militias South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government, SPLM-N, armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), pro-government militias PDF, RSF, South Sudan East: Government, RSF, Eastern Sudan Liberation Forces, United Popular Front for Liberation and Justice, Beja National Congress, Beja Armed Congress	3
	Government, Self-government, Resources, Identity		↑

7. Before 2023, two distinct armed conflicts were identified in Sudan: Sudan (Darfur), which broke out in 2003, and Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), which began in 2012. Both conflicts were characterised as internal-internationalised and motivated by self-governance, resources and identity. Following the outbreak of armed conflict in the country in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which affects a large part of the country and particularly the regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, all are now analysed under a single armed conflict labelled Sudan (2023). Irregular armed actors from these regions are also actively participating in the hostilities.

Conflict -beginning-	Typology	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
AFRICA			
Western Sahel Region -2018-	International	Burkina Faso; Mali; Niger; Côte d'Ivoire; Togo; Benin; Alliance of Sahel States (AES); Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM); Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), also known as Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP); Katiba Macina; Ansaroul Islam; other jihadist groups and community militias; Russia; Africa Corps (former Wagner Group)	3
	System, Identity, Resources		=
AMERICA			
Colombia -1964-	Internationalised internal	Government, ELN, Estado Mayor Central (EMC), Segunda Marquetalia, Estado Mayor de Bloques y Frente (EMBF), Coordinadora Nacional Ejército Bolivariano, narco-paramilitary groups	3
	System		↑
Haiti -2024-	Internationalised internal	Government, Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti (MSS), Gang Suppression Force (GSF), armed gangs (including Viv Ansanm, an alliance between two coalitions of armed groups -GPèp and Revolutionary Forces of the G9 Family and Allies), vigilante and self-defense groups (Bwa Kale movement), private military company Vectus Global	3
	Government, Resources, Territory		↑
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC			
Afghanistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, National Resistance Front (NRF), ISIS-KP, Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)	2
	System		↓
India (CPI-M) -1967-	Internal	Government, CPI-M (Naxalites)	2
	System		↑
India (Jammu and Kashmir) -1989-	Internationalised internal	Governments, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed, United Jihad Council, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), The Resistance Front (TRF)	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
India – Pakistan -2025-	International	India, Pakistan	1
	Territory		End
Indonesia (West Papua) -2024-	Internal	Government, OPM	1
	Self-government, Identity, Resources		↑
Myanmar -1948-	Internationalised internal	Government, armed groups ABSDF, ALP, CNF, DKBA, KNU, KNU/KNLA-PC, PNLO, RCSS, NMSP, LDU, KIA, NDAA, MNDAA, SSPP/SSA, TNLA, AA, UWSA, ARSA, KNPP, PDF	3
	Self-government, Identity, System		↓
Pakistan -2001-	Internationalised internal	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-KP	3
	System		↑
Pakistan (Balochistan) -2005-	Internationalised internal	Government, BLA, BNA, BLF, BLT, LeJ, TTP, ISIS-KP	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/Dawlah Islamiyah/Maute Group, MILF and MNLF factions	1
	Self-government, Identity, System		↓
Thailand (south) -2004-	Internal	Government, BRN and other pro-independence opposition armed groups	1
	Self-government, Identity		=
Thailand – Cambodia -2025-	International	Thailand, Cambodia	1
	Territory		↑
EUROPA			
Türkiye (PKK) -1984-	Internationalised internal	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS	1
	Self-government, Identity		↓
Russia – Ukraine -2022- ⁸	International	Russia, Donbas militias, Ukraine	3
	Government, Territory		↑
MIDDLE EAST			
Iraq -2003-	Internationalised internal	Government, Iraqi military and security forces, Kurdish forces (peshmergas), Shia militias (including Harakat al-Nujaba, the Hashd al-Shaabi coalition, Kataib Hezbollah and the coalition/network Islamic Resistance of Ira), ISIS, US-led international anti-ISIS coalition, USA, Iran, Türkiye, Israel	2
	System, Government, Identity, Resources		↓

8. Between 2014 and 2021 the war in eastern Ukraine was analysed as an internationalised internal conflict. See the summary on “Ukraine (east)” in pre-2022 editions of this report.

Conflict -beginning-	Typology	Main parties	Intensity
			Trend
MIDDLE EAST			
Israel – Hezbollah -2023-	International	Israel, Hezbollah, other Lebanese armed organisations (Al-Fajer Forces, Amal Movement) and Palestinian armed organisations active in Lebanon (Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades and Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades)	2
	Government, Territory		↓
Israel – Palestine -2000-	International	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafist groups, Jenin, Brigades, Nablus Brigades, Tubas Brigades, Lion's Den	3
	Self-government, Identity, Territory		=
Israel, USA – Iran -2025 ⁹	International	Israel, USA, Iran	3
	System, Government		↑
Syria -2011-	Internationalised internal	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army, Ahrar al-Sham, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, coalition led by the Kurdish militias YPG/YPJ of the PYD), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra Front), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, US-led international anti-ISIS coalition, Türkiye, Israel	3
	Government, System, Selfgovernment, 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 the al-Ahmar 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 Giant Brigades), Security Belt Forces, AQAP, ISIS, international Saudi Arabian-led coalition, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE)	3
	System, Government, Identity		=
Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom -2025-	International	Houthis /Ansar Allah, Israel, USA, United Kingdom, Iran	2
	System, Government		↑

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 2025

This section offers an analysis of the global and regional trends in armed conflicts in 2025. This includes an overview of conflicts as compared to that of previous years, the geographical distribution of conflicts and the main trends by region, the relationship between the actors involved and the scenario of the dispute, the main causes of the current armed conflicts, the general evolution of the contexts and the intensity of the conflicts according to their levels of violence and their impact. Likewise, this section analyses some of the main consequences of armed conflicts in the civilian population, including forced displacement due to situations of conflict and violence.

1.2.1 Global and regional trends

Following the trend in recent years, the number of armed conflicts grew overall in 2025. **40 armed conflicts were counted throughout the year, compared to the 37 reported in 2024.** Between 2007, the year Escola de Cultura de Pau (ECP) began using its current armed conflict classification system, and 2025, the threshold of 40 conflicts has only been reached twice: in 2011 and in 2025 (see Graph 1.1). The number of

9. In the previous edition of *Alert!*, this case was analysed as a socio-political crisis under the heading "Israel-Iran". The new designation of the case as an armed conflict includes the United States due to its prominent role in the events of 2025.

armed conflicts in recent years has risen alongside a significant increase in the number of socio-political crises worldwide, although with a slight decrease in 2025 (see Chapter 2).

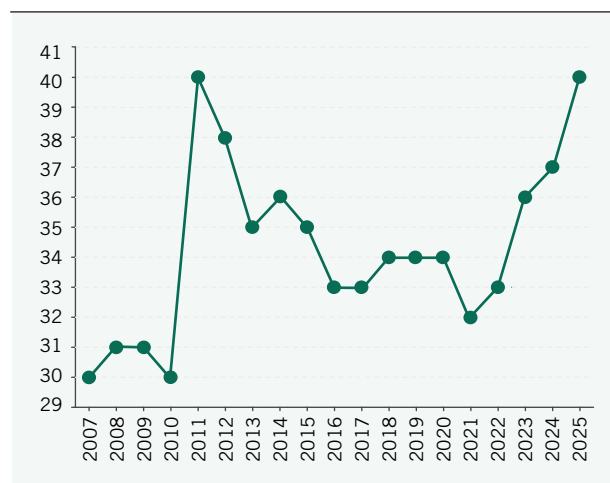
In 2025, the dynamics of violence led to four new contexts being considered as armed conflicts. In Asia and the Pacific, the nuclear powers **India and Pakistan** faced off in a four-day armed conflict, during which both countries attacked each other's military installations. The long-standing border dispute between **Thailand and Cambodia** also escalated into an armed conflict, making it one of the most intense interstate conflicts in Southeast Asia in recent decades. In the Middle East, following the escalation of tensions between **Israel and Iran** in 2024, what has been called the 'Twelve-Day War' broke out between the two countries in 2025, in which the **United States** also participated, causing more than a thousand fatalities. Likewise, the confrontation pitting the Yemeni armed group known as the **Houthis** against the **United States and Israel** (and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom), escalated significantly and came to be considered an armed conflict, with its focal point in 2025 in Yemen and, to a lesser extent, in Israel, compared to the previous year's focus on the Red Sea. In contrast to these four new armed conflicts, the case of Egypt (Sinai) had ceased to be considered an active armed conflict by the end of 2024 due to the reduction in hostilities between fighters of the Islamic State branch in the region and the Egyptian Army, which is supported by tribal militias.

As in previous years, Africa remained the area with the highest number of conflicts worldwide (17), but its proportion of the global total decreased slightly and stood at 42.5% in 2025, compared to 46% in 2024. Asia and the Pacific was the scene of 12 armed conflicts, two more conflicts than the previous year (30% in 2025, compared to 27% in 2024). The Middle East reported seven armed conflicts, one more than the previous period (17.5%, compared to 16% in 2024). The Americas and Europe had two armed conflicts each, the same as the previous year (5% each).

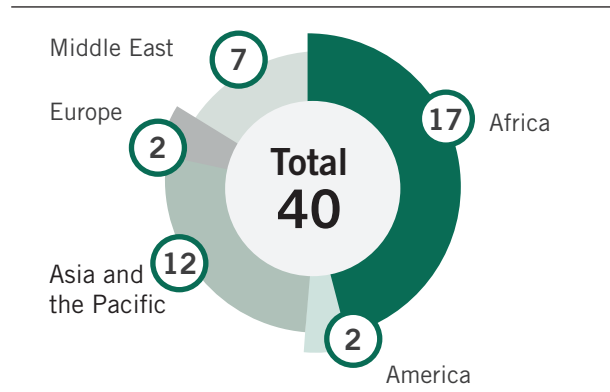
The School for a Culture of Peace (ECP) identifies three types of armed conflicts to describe the relationship between the actors involved in the conflicts and the setting of the hostilities: internal, internationalised internal and international. Internal disputes accounted for 17.5% of all conflicts (seven), and all took place in Africa and Asia. This was slightly less than in 2024, when 19% of all armed conflicts were internal. Furthermore, certain transformational dynamics of recent years became more pronounced in 2025. Most conflicts remained internationalised internal (24 cases), but their proportion continued to shrink (from 69% in 2023 to 68% in 2024 and 60% in 2025, in contrast to 80% in previous years).

In 2025, most of the armed conflicts continued to be concentrated in Africa (17), followed by Asia (12), the Middle East (seven), Europe (two), and America (two)

Graph 1.1. Evolution in the annual number of armed conflicts since 2007



Graph 1.2. Regional distribution of the number of armed conflicts in 2025

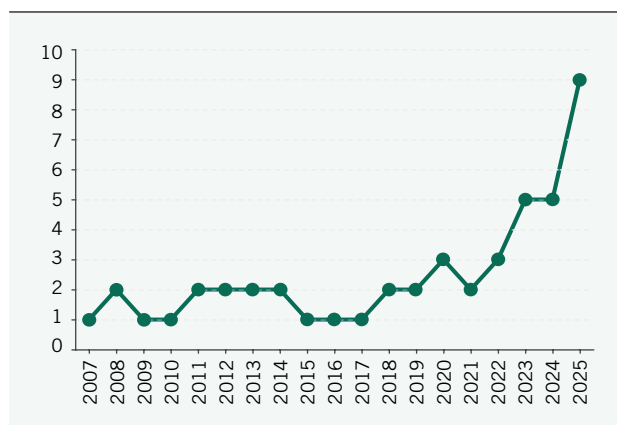


Meanwhile, the number of international armed conflicts continued to trend upwards, with a marked increase in 2025 (nine cases, accounting for 22.5% of the total). The year 2025 saw the highest number of international armed conflicts since 2007, the year in which ECP began using the current classification of internal, international and internationalised internal armed conflicts (see Graph 1.3). In addition to the five international armed conflicts active in 2024 (eastern DRC, the Sahel region, Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Hezbollah and Israel-Palestine), the year 2025 saw the addition of the international conflicts of India-Pakistan, Thailand-Cambodia, Israel/US-Iran and Yemen (Houthis)-Israel/US/UK. The Middle East was the region with the highest number of international conflicts, with 44.4% occurring there. International conflicts occurred in every region except the Americas, although the United States was a contending actor in two of the international armed conflicts in the Middle East: Israel/US-Iran and Yemen (Houthis)-Israel/US/UK. Five of the seven international armed conflicts

Table 1.2. International armed conflicts in 2025

DRC (east)
India – Pakistan
Israel – Hezbollah
Israel – Palestine
Israel, USA – Iran
Russia – Ukraine
Thailand – Cambodia
Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom
Western Sahel Region

Graph 1.3. Evolution in the number of international armed conflicts per year since 2007



experienced an increase in hostilities and levels of violence in 2025. Among others, the case of DRC (east) in 2025 can be highlighted. The situation in the eastern DRC in 2025 was marked by the intensifying offensive prosecuted by the armed group M23 and Rwanda into Congolese territory that began in late 2021, and by Burundi’s growing involvement in support of the DRC, which risked regional escalation of the conflict. Moreover, Uganda’s involvement in the DRC became evident, serving Ugandan interests that extended beyond pursuing the ADF and implied tacit Ugandan support for M23 and Rwanda.

The year 2025 saw the highest number of international armed conflicts since 2007, the year in which ECP began using its current armed conflict classification system

Despite the increase in international conflicts, most armed conflicts in 2025 remained internationalised internal ones (24). They are characterised by the fact that even though some of the dynamics of internationalised internal armed conflicts are internal, some of the conflicting parties are foreign, the armed actors to the conflict have bases or launch attacks from abroad and/or the conflict has spilled into neighbouring countries. In many conflicts, this internationalisation factor has taken the form of the involvement of third parties as conflicting parties, including international missions, ad hoc regional and

international military coalitions, states, armed groups that mount cross-border attacks, international private security companies and other actors.

The involvement of third countries and the cross-border actions of armed groups were crucial in many internationalised internal conflicts and added complexity in numerous scenarios. Particularly notable in 2025 was the case of Sudan. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have intervened in the conflict and have backed the Sudanese Army, whilst the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is considered the main supporter of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Russian and Colombian mercenaries have also been involved in support of the RSF, which is also said to receive backing from the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and some actors in Libya. On the other hand, among other dynamics of internationalisation in the Lake Chad Basin region conflict (Boko Haram) in 2025, the US launched an airstrike on insurgent bases, supposedly in coordination with Nigerian authorities. In the DRC (eastern-ADF) conflict, the Ugandan Army doubled its military presence in the DRC, bringing in troops in addition to those already involved in Operation Shujaa in support of the Congolese military (FADRC) against the ADF. There was also an unprecedented increase in ISS attacks in Puntland in Somalia over the past year. Most of this activity was related to operations by Puntland security forces against ISS, supported by airstrikes from the UAE, Türkiye and the US. In the conflicts in Mali and the Western Sahel region, the military juntas of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger announced the creation of a “unified force” of 5,000 personnel and a joint military battalion to combat insurgents and secure borders. Moreover, in the face of Western isolation, Mali strengthened its relationship with Russia, shifting from the informal presence of Wagner Group mercenaries to direct state cooperation through Africa Corps, controlled by the Russian Ministry of Defence. In the armed conflict in Colombia, the border with Venezuela remained one of the areas most affected by armed violence, with significant activity carried out by the parties to the conflict. The violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan was exacerbated by the deterioration of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as Islamabad accused its neighbour of supporting and serving as a base for the Pakistani Taliban insurgency. This situation has only deteriorated in recent years since the Taliban’s takeover in Afghanistan.

As in previous years, **regional organisations also remained involved in many conflicts in the form of missions or military operations.** In the case of Somalia, in early 2025, the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) was transformed into the AU Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) and its mandate was extended in December. Analysts indicated

that the federal government of Somalia remained heavily dependent on the AU mission for its security. Meanwhile, the AU mission is currently drawing down.

UN peacekeeping missions or UN-authorized operations remained active in some contexts in 2025. In Haiti, the UN Security Council authorised transforming the Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) into the Gang Suppression Force (GSF), which will have greater military strength, territorial coverage, funding and operational autonomy from the Haitian authorities. It was estimated that the effective deployment of the GSF would begin around April 2026. The GSF received technical support from the OAS, as recognised in the resolution establishing the mission. Furthermore, in the context of the international armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, in mid-2025 the UN Security Council decided to renew the mandate of its mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the last time, until the end of 2026, after which it will cease its operations and begin its withdrawal from the country. Furthermore, the UN mission UNAMI withdrew from Iraq (an internationalised internal armed conflict) after 22 years, though its activity had been focused on supporting the transition in the country.

Armed conflicts continued to be characterized by multi-causality in 2025. Causes related to **questioning the political, economic, social or ideological system of the state and/or disputes over the internal or international policies of the respective governments** decreased slightly, though they remained predominant. This combination was present in 70% of all armed conflicts (28 cases), compared to 73% in 2024. The causes of two of the four new conflicts in 2025 included disputes over the system and over internal and international government policies: Israel/US–Iran and Yemen (Houthis)–Israel/US/UK.

If the system/government combination is analysed separately, the causal factor linked to disputes about the system was significant in 2025, as it was found in 19 of the 40 conflicts (47.5%, 46% in 2024). In most of them, it was related to actors with political agendas who claim an alleged jihadist inspiration based on their particular interpretation of Islamic precepts.¹⁰ These groups include Boko Haram factions (JAS and ISWAP) in the Lake Chad region, the Pakistani Taliban militias of the TTP and various groups that have claimed to be branches and/or “provinces” of ISIS beyond their areas of origin in Iraq and Syria, in contexts such as the Lake Chad region, Somalia, Libya, Mozambique (north), Afghanistan, Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), the Philippines (Mindanao) and Yemen. In some of these

cases, such as Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao) and Iraq, hostilities decreased in 2025, but in many other cases, violence increased (northern Mozambique, the Lake Chad Basin region, the ADF insurgency in the eastern DRC, Somalia, Pakistan and the dispute between the Houthis and Israel/US/UK). In another range of disputes with a systemic component, Israel and the US attacked the Islamic Republic of Iran, resulting in the Twelve-Day War. In other cases, such as the Philippines (NPA) and India (CPI-M), challenges to the system were associated with other types of insurgents ideologically linked to Marxism and Maoism.

Furthermore, **armed conflicts motivated by the domestic or international policies of the respective governments**, which resulted in struggles to erode or gain power (and in some cases, to the establishment of rival government structures) were found in 16 of the 40 cases (40%, compared to 38% in 2024). Such cases include, among others, Ethiopia (Amhara), the DRC (east), Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, Russia-Ukraine, Israel/US–Iran, Syria and Yemen, all of which were high-intensity cases in 2025 and most of which evolved towards increased hostilities and violence.

Other main causes of the armed conflicts were **disputes about identity-related issues and/or demands for self-government**, which were found in 22 of the 40 armed conflicts in 2025, or 55% (in every region except America). This was slightly less than in 2024, when that combination of causes was present in 59% of all conflicts. Following the trend of previous years, the most relevant factor among these motivations was associated with identity-related issues, which were present in 22 of the 40 cases (55%, 59% in 2024). A lower number (15 out of 40) of conflicts were caused by disputed claims for self-government among other main causes (37.5%, compared to 41% in 2024). Armed conflicts linked to identity and/or self-government showed great geographical diversity and variation in the intensity of violence and the trend in 2025. Identity-related issues and/or demands for self-governance were motivations for some long-standing conflicts, such as that of Türkiye (PKK), which was moving back towards its possible conclusion in 2025, India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Myanmar, but also for some crises that have escalated into armed conflicts more recently, such as Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Amhara), Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo) and Indonesia (West Papua). The vast majority of armed conflicts that were linked to disputes over identity and/or self-government demands had simultaneously other main causes that were related to questioning the system or

About half of the conflicts (47.5%) had among their main causes the control of territories and/or resources

10. The concept of *jihad* has historically had different connotations. The term connotes the idea of “effort” and many Muslims and Islamic scholars reject its use to describe armed groups, arguing that it uses a religious concept to justify illegitimate violence. Considering this disagreement, coupled with the widespread use of the term in international relations and peace and security studies, this report refers to “groups with jihadist agendas” when the armed organisations themselves appeal to their particular interpretation of Islamic precepts in their narratives and statements of intent.

internal/international policies, or disputes over resources and/or territory.

Finally, with regard to causal factors, it is also worth mentioning that numerous armed conflicts had among their main motivations the **control of territories and/or resources**. These factors were identified in 19 of the 40 armed conflicts, equivalent to 45% (46% in 2024). Regarding these two causes, disputes over resources were particularly prominent, as they were found in 13 of the 40 conflicts in 2025 (32.5%, 38% in 2024). Most of the armed conflicts involving disputes over resources were in Africa, in line with what was observed in previous years, though they were also indirect factors in many others in other regions, perpetuating violence through war economies. Notable cases included Ethiopia (Oromia), the Western Sahel region, the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), Sudan, South Sudan and Haiti.

Meanwhile, issues related to territorial control were found in seven of the 40 armed conflicts in 2025 (17.5%, compared to 16% in 2024). Two of the four new armed conflicts in 2025 were caused in part by territorial disputes: India-Pakistan and Thailand-Cambodia. This type of conflict was found in every region. In Haiti by the close of 2025 around 300 armed gangs, many of them integrated into the armed group coalition Viv Ansanm, controlled 90% of the capital, more than 50% of the Artibonite department (Haiti's largest) and a significant proportion of the Centre and West departments and other regions of the country. In the case of Israel–Palestine, the approval and construction of settlements in the West Bank in 2025 was the highest since the UN began systematic monitoring in 2017, thereby accelerating a scenario of de facto annexation.¹¹ Following the 'Trump plan' announced in October, Israeli forces partially withdrew from Gaza but retained control of more than 50% of the territory. In the war between Russia and Ukraine, the Russian government maintained military control over 19% of Ukrainian territory by the end of 2025.

Regarding the **evolution** of armed conflicts, unlike recent years, which saw a continued upward trend in the proportion of armed conflicts evolving towards higher levels of violence, it fell in 2025. **Around 45% of the conflicts (18 out of 40) experienced higher levels of hostilities and violence in 2025 compared to the previous year (60% in 2024)** (see Table 1.3). However, the proportion remained higher than in previous years (42% in 2023 and 30% in 2022), so this did not necessarily imply a change in trend. Among the cases that experienced deterioration, the year marked a critical turning point in Sudan's civil war, giving rise to a de facto partition of national territory. The conflict

in Mozambique (north) also intensified, with the resurgence of the insurgency Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP), which expanded its operations from Cabo Delgado into Niassa and Nampula. The war in Somalia also saw growing deterioration. The Somali al-Shabaab insurgency gained ground towards Mogadishu and captured strategic towns in the first half of 2025. In South Sudan, the year marked a critical regression, with the de facto collapse of the 2018 peace agreement and a return to widespread armed violence. The armed conflict in Haiti drastically intensified in 2025, in the context of a multidimensional crisis characterised by institutional collapse, territorial control by armed gangs and a severe humanitarian emergency. In Asia and the Pacific, the long-standing border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia escalated, whilst in Europe, Russia intensified its attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. In the Middle East, the escalation of the dispute between Israel/US and Iran led to war.

On the other hand, 30% of the armed conflicts (12 of the 40 cases) showed levels of violence similar to those of the previous year (24% in 2024), whilst only 25% (10 of the 40 cases) had less fighting and violence (19% in 2024).

Various dynamics drove changes towards a decrease in hostilities. In some cases, it was related to the reduction in activity and/or apparent weakening of some of the armed actors involved in the conflict. Afghanistan remained mired in armed conflict, though the intensity of the violence and the number of conflict-related casualties decreased. In the internal armed conflict in the Jammu and Kashmir region of India, fatalities and violent events continued to subside, in line with uninterrupted trends since 2018. Both the NPA insurgency and the jihadist armed groups operating in the Mindanao region of the Philippines reduced their armed activity and became weaker. In Iraq, levels of violence continued to fall throughout 2025, consistent with recent trends, and reached their lowest point since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. In other contexts, reductions in violence were at least partially related to the impact of ongoing negotiating processes and/or the achievement of ceasefires. In relation to the war between India and Pakistan, a ceasefire was eventually reached, which held for the remainder of the year, though with mutual accusations of violations. The negotiating process in the Türkiye (PKK) conflict led to a unilateral ceasefire by the PKK, its announcement of an end to armed struggle and the withdrawal of its forces to northern Iraq, although the context remained fragile due to internal and regional dynamics. Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah decreased compared to the previous year following the ceasefire reached in late November 2024 at the instigation of the US and

**45% of the conflicts
(18 out of 40)
experienced higher
levels of hostilities
and violence in
2025 compared to
the previous year
(60% in 2024)**

11. International Crisis Group, *Sovereignty in All but Name: Israel's Quickening Annexation of the West Bank*, Report N° 252, 9 October 2025.

Table 1.3. Trends in armed conflicts in 2025¹²

Escalation of violence	Reduction of violence	Similar levels of violence
Burundi	Afghanistan	Cameroon (Ambazonia/
Colombia	India (Jammu and Kashmir)	North West and South West)
DRC (east)	India – Pakistan*	CAR
DRC (east – ADF)	Iraq	DRC (west)
Haiti	Israel – Hezbollah	Ethiopia (Amhara)
India (CPI-M)	Myanmar	Ethiopia (Oromia)
Indonesia (West Papua)	Philippines (Mindanao)	Israel - Palestine
Israel, USA – Iran	Philippines (NPA)	Libya
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo)	Mali
Mozambique (north)	Türkiye (PKK)	Syria
Pakistan		Thailand (south)
Pakistan (Balochistan)		Western Sahel Region
Russia – Ukraine		Yemen
Somalia		
South Sudan		
Sudan		
Thailand – Cambodia		
Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom		

*Armed conflicts that ended in 2025

France. However, Israel continued to carry out almost daily attacks on Lebanese soil during 2025.

In terms of the **intensity** of armed conflicts,¹³ the **trend of rising intensity and of increase in the number of the most serious armed conflicts was partially halted in 2025**. High-intensity armed conflicts, characterised by great deadliness (more than one thousand deaths annually) and severe impacts in terms of population displacement, infrastructure destruction and territorial consequences, accounted for 50% of the armed conflicts in 2025 (figure 1.4). There had been an almost uninterrupted increase in high-intensity conflicts since 2018 and the highest proportion of high-intensity conflicts since ECP began using the current armed conflict classification system in 2007 was reached in 2024, at 57%. **Despite the relative reduction in 2025, the percentage of high-intensity conflicts remained above those observed in any year between 2007 and 2020**. The region affected by the highest number of high-intensity conflicts was Africa (11 high-intensity wars, accounting for 55% of the most serious cases worldwide), followed by the Middle East (four, accounting for 20% of the most serious worldwide). Furthermore, eight armed conflicts were of medium intensity (20% of all armed conflicts,

compared to 13% in 2024) and 12 were characterised by low levels of violence (30%, the same percentage as in 2024).

Despite the relative reduction in 2025 as compared to 2024, the percentage of high-intensity conflicts (50% of the armed conflicts) remained above those observed in any year between 2007 and 2020

In many of the high-intensity armed conflicts, the threshold of one thousand fatalities per year has been far surpassed. The year 2025 was no exception and the hostilities and dynamics of violence in many conflicts caused death tolls that were well above that limit, in addition to making many other impacts in terms of human security. In some armed conflicts, the hostilities claimed over 3,000 lives. In South Sudan, the return to widespread armed violence caused more than 3,200 deaths. The conflict in Pakistan also claimed between 3,400 and 5,200 lives, depending on the source. Pakistan experienced its worst security situation in recent years, with the highest death toll as a result of the armed conflict in a decade, and the region most affected by armed violence was Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the epicentre of the armed conflict with the TTP Taliban insurgency. The conflict in Mali continued to face very high levels of violence and lethality. ACLED reported 3,889 violent deaths in that country, nearly half of them in the central region (Ségou and Mopti).

On the other hand, the Lake Chad Basin reported a 7% rise in deaths (3,982) related to militant Islamist violence

12. This table reflects the trends in the year 2025 compared to 2024. ‘Escalation of violence’ is indicated if the overall situation of the conflict during 2025 is more serious than in the previous year, ‘Reduction of violence’ if it has improved and ‘Similar levels of violence’ if it has not experienced significant changes. The armed conflict between India and Pakistan both began and ended in 2025, so it is listed in the table as ‘Reduction of violence’.

13. In previous years, when using data from the research centre ACLED to count the number of violent events and associated deaths in an armed conflict, the category ‘Organised Violence’ was used, which included the following events: battles, violence against civilians and explosions/remote violence events. This year, due to changes made by ACLED in its methodology for keeping track of violence, the category ‘All Events’ is used as the general criterion for establishing the number of events and deaths caused in an armed conflict. This category includes the following subcategories: demonstrations, political violence, insurgency, atrocities, repression, terrorist activity and foreign military engagement. This may mean that some of the events and deaths counted do not relate directly to the armed conflict in question, but rather come from other events in the country or region. To try to avoid this bias, in those case studies in which it is possible to identify and filter some of these subcategories mentioned above, this has been done and it identified in the text. Furthermore, the change in methodology applied by ACLED this year affects the comparative analysis of event and death figures with previous years. For more information, see: ACLED, *Introducing ACLED’s new conflict categories. Conflict is changing – and we’re changing how we track it*, 30 July 2025.

Table 1.4. High intensity armed conflicts in 2025

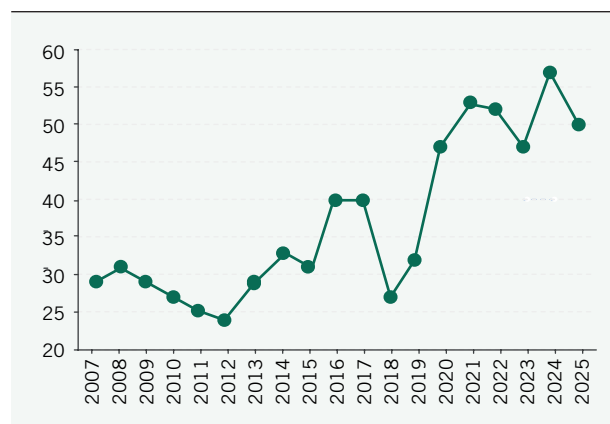
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West)
Colombia
DRC (east)
DRC (east – ADF)
Ethiopia (Oromia)
Ethiopia (Amhara)
Haiti
Israel, USA – Iran
Israel – Palestine
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)
Mali
Myanmar
Pakistan
Russia – Ukraine
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria
Western Sahel Region
Yemen

during 2025, demonstrating the continued resilience of BH and ISWAP. However, despite this increase, viewed in perspective, annual deaths in the region fell by 50% from levels reported between 2014 and 2016. Some sources put the number of deaths in the Lake Chad Basin region as a whole at more than 4,100 in 2025. On the other hand, in Ethiopia (Amhara), according to ACLED data, 1,555 violent events were reported in the region during 2025, claiming 4,476 lives (6,386 was in 2024).

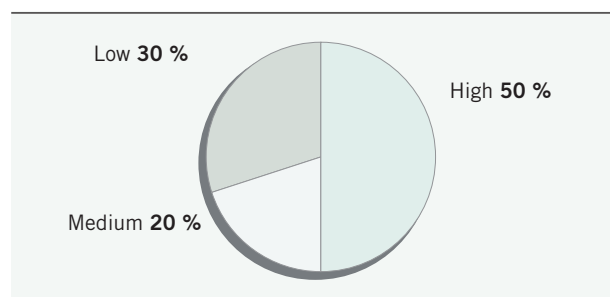
Over 6,800 deaths were recorded in the DRC (east) in 2025. The situation in the eastern DRC in 2025 was marked by the intensifying offensive prosecuted by the armed group M23 and Rwanda into Congolese territory that began in late 2021, and by Burundi’s growing involvement in support of the DRC. On the other hand, different body counts confirmed that Syria continued to be the scene of a high-intensity armed conflict in 2025. According to data compiled by ACLED, nearly 7,900 people lost their lives due to episodes of violence in the country, compared to more than 7,100 recorded in 2024. Most of these casualties were civilians. In Haiti, according to UN data, more than 8,100 murders were recorded between January and November 2025, a figure that the UN itself estimates could be significantly higher due to difficulties in accessing areas controlled by gangs.

There were also several armed conflicts that killed over 10,000 people in 2025. All violence in Somalia caused more than 9,900 deaths, approaching the threshold of 10,000, according to ACLED figures. In the Western Sahel Region, political violence caused more than 10,000

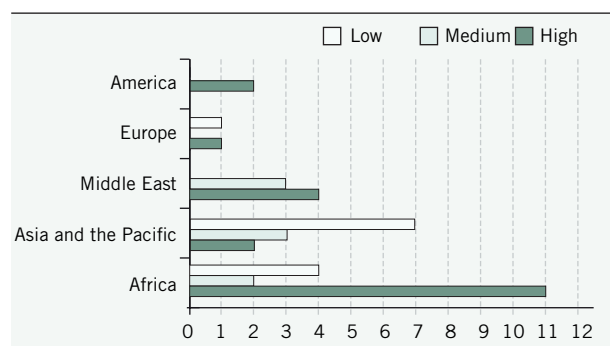
Graph 1.4. Percentage of high-intensity armed conflicts since 2007



Graph 1.5. Intensity of the armed conflicts in 2025



Graph 1.6. Intensity of conflicts by region in 2025



deaths in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in 2025. For yet another year, Burkina Faso held its position as the country most affected by jihadist violence in the region, accounting for 55% of all conflict-related deaths in the Sahel. Furthermore, the civil war in Sudan caused 17,853 deaths in 2025, making it the deadliest armed conflict in Africa. Conflict and armed violence in Myanmar killed more than 15,300 people in 2025. However, this was fewer than the 20,000 deaths approximately in 2024 and the more than 23,400 in 2022, the year with the highest levels in recent decades.

The Israeli offensive against Gaza continued at very high levels of lethality. According to OCHA’s tally based on information from the Gaza Ministry of Health, from

Box 1.1. Regional trends in armed conflict

AFRICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the trend of previous years, Africa had the largest number of armed conflicts worldwide with 17, accounting for 42.5% of the total. In 2025, 65% of the armed conflicts were of high intensity (11 out of 17), a proportion equal to that recorded in 2024, although still lower than that observed in 2022 (75%). The vast majority of conflicts in Africa either worsened (47%) or experienced no significant changes (47%), with only 6% of cases seeing a decrease in dynamics of violence. The vast majority of African armed conflicts were internationalised internal (12 of the 17). Compared to other regions, however, Africa also had a significant proportion of the highly internal conflicts (three of the seven cases) identified worldwide.
AMERICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Americas remained the scene of two armed conflicts, the same as in 2024. These two cases account for 5% of the total around the world, the same percentage as in Europe. Both conflicts (in Colombia and Haiti) were considered high-intensity and experienced higher levels of violence in 2025. Although only two armed conflicts were counted in America, the region continued to report high levels of violence due to other dynamics of tension and crime and stood out for its high homicide rates.¹⁴
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the trend of previous years, Asia and the Pacific was the region with the second-highest number of armed conflicts, trailing Africa, with a total of 12 (30% of the total). Two more conflicts were recorded in 2025 than in 2024: the four-day war between India and Pakistan and the escalation of the long-standing border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia to an armed conflict. Asia and the Pacific was the region with the most internal armed conflicts (four) The region continued to have the most low-intensity conflicts (five of the 11 cases accounted for globally), but the dynamics of violence worsened in the two high-intensity conflicts (Myanmar and Pakistan).
EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Europe was the scene of two armed conflicts, Russia-Ukraine and Türkiye (PKK), which account for 5% of all cases worldwide. The high-intensity Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated to higher levels of violence in 2025; whilst violence in the case of Türkiye (PKK) dropped to a minimum following the new negotiating process. The Russia-Ukraine armed conflict was international. The Türkiye (PKK) armed conflict was internationalised internal. In 2025, the PKK withdrew its remaining forces from Türkiye to northern Iraq, the stronghold of most of its guerrilla forces and the centre of the conflict in recent years.
MIDDLE EAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven armed conflicts were recorded in the region, accounting for 17.5% of the total worldwide. Two new armed conflicts were reported due to the escalation of tensions between Iran and Israel/US and between the Houthis and the US/Israel/UK. The Middle East was the part of the world with the second-highest number of high-intensity armed conflicts, after Africa. Four of the seven armed conflicts in the region were high-intensity. High-intensity conflicts in the region either experienced greater hostilities and violence (25%) or similar levels (75%), yet in no case did they trend towards lower levels. All armed conflicts in the Middle East were either international (57%) or internationalised internal (43%).

October 2023 to the end of 2025, over 70,000 Palestinians had died in Gaza.¹⁵ Over 25,000 of these people had reportedly died in 2025 due to Israeli policies, which were increasingly described as genocidal. This was considered a minimum and conservative estimate, according to various analysts. The deadliest armed conflict in 2025 was the war between Russia and Ukraine, which caused more than 78,000 deaths in Ukraine, according to ACLED.

Finally, the intensification of armed conflicts and its serious impacts on civilians came amid mounting geopolitical tensions worldwide, given changes in the global order and growing militarism and militarisation. In line with the trends observed in preceding years, the SIPRI's annual report confirmed an **unprecedented increase in military spending worldwide**.¹⁶ According to data published in

Several armed conflicts claimed over 10,000 lives in 2025, including Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Sudan, the Western Sahel and Myanmar

2025, this expense reached 2.718 billion dollars in 2024, a 9.4% hike compared to 2023, the most pronounced annual increase at least since the end of the Cold War.

1.2.2. Impact of conflicts on the civilian population

In 2025, **civilians continued to suffer grave consequences from armed conflicts**, whose effects were often interrelated with other crises such as the climate emergency, inequalities and situations of food insecurity that aggravated the violations of rights in these contexts. In his yearly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, published in June 2025 and referring to the events that occurred in 2024, the UN Secretary-General warned of alarming trends.¹⁷ UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned about the high number of civilian deaths and injuries, including

14. See the section on America in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

15. UN OCHA OPT, *Reported impact snapshot. Gaza Strip*, 28 January 2026.

16. SIPRI, "Unprecedented rise in global military expenditure as European and Middle East spending surges", *SIPRI*, 28 April 2025.

17. United Nations Security Council, *Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/385, 15 May 2025.

as a result of the increasing use of larger bombs with high-powered explosives in densely populated areas. He also expressed concern about unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. According to data from that report, the United Nations reported more than 36,000 civilian deaths in 14 armed conflicts. Cases such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Syria, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Ukraine and Palestine saw high numbers of civilian deaths and injuries. The international body also documented allegations of torture, extrajudicial killings, arrests, arbitrary detentions, hostage-taking, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and forced displacement, including in territories such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Mali, Niger, the CAR, the DRC and Palestine. There was notable damage to civilian property and critical infrastructure in many conflicts, including in Gaza due to the severe magnitude of the conflict. Another worrying trend highlighted by the United Nations was food insecurity in conflicts. Over 280 million people faced high levels of food insecurity (Phase 3) in 2024 in 59 countries and territories, a large proportion of which were affected by armed conflict. The UN also condemned the continuation of conflict-related sexual violence, with 4,500 verified cases in 2024. Around 93% of the victims were women or girls. The UN Secretary-General also lamented the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law.

The School for a Culture of Peace's analysis of armed conflicts in 2025 confirms that the worrying trends highlighted in the UN Secretary-General's report have continued. Armed conflicts in Gaza, the DRC (east), Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Haiti, Russia–Ukraine, Myanmar and others stood out for the severity of their impact on civilians in 2025. Israel maintained exorbitant levels of violence against the Palestinian population and prompted growing accusations of genocide. According to OCHA's tally based on information from the Gaza Ministry of Health, from October 2023 to the end of 2025, over 70,000 Palestinians had died in Gaza – a figure considered conservative and which other estimates multiply significantly. Furthermore, 80% of the infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged and more than 630,000 Palestinian children continued to lack access to formal education for the third consecutive year.

In the DRC (east), the M23 and Rwanda conducted a systematic campaign of repression in occupied areas, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture, enforced disappearances and night attacks on

In 2025, the UN Secretary-General warned about alarming trends regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflicts

Armed conflicts in Gaza, the DRC (east), Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Haiti, Russia–Ukraine, Myanmar and others stood out for the severity of their impact on civilians in 2025

hospitals. The conflict continued to produce serious problems in protecting civilians, including gender-based violence, child recruitment, kidnapping and widespread displacement. Around 27.7 million people (more than a quarter of the population) required humanitarian assistance between January and June 2025. In Sudan the war had a devastating impact on civilians during the year. An estimated 21 million people were suffering from acute food insecurity, with areas of famine across the country as both conflict sides actively blocked humanitarian aid. In this conflict, mass atrocities, widespread sexual violence and ethnically motivated attacks against the Zaghawa, Masalit and Fur communities were documented in the capture of El Fasher by the paramilitary

Rapid Support Forces. In South Sudan, the war exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and almost half the population suffered from acute hunger. In Somalia, the UN estimated that over 4.4 million people would suffer from acute food insecurity through December.

Haiti's humanitarian and security crisis became further entrenched, with around 9,000 people killed and more than half the population facing food insecurity. Furthermore, UNICEF warned that approximately half the members of armed gangs were minors. There was a serious deterioration in living conditions in the regions on the front of the war between Russia and Ukraine during the year, with extensive damage to housing and other civilian infrastructure. According to OCHA, 10.8 million people in Ukraine will require humanitarian assistance in 2026. In Syria, the perpetration of massacres was particularly serious during the year, with data showing nearly 2,700 deaths in 63 mass killings, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).

Many armed conflicts involved the documented use of sexual violence in 2025, including in Burundi, the CAR, the DRC (east), the Lake Chad Basin region (Boko Haram), Somalia, Sudan, Haiti and Colombia.¹⁸ Among other cases, in Somalia, widespread sexual violence continued, committed primarily by al-Shabaab. Authorities received nearly 15,000 reports of sexual and gender-based violence between March and August 2025. In Haiti, the United Nations warned of an increase in gang rapes and reported that cases of sexual violence had risen by 40% in 2025,¹⁹ almost entirely against women and girls, and overwhelmingly committed by armed gangs as a strategy of control, terror and revenge against individuals accused of collaborating with the state.

18. See Chapter 3 (Gender, peace and security).

19. UNICEF, "UNICEF Haiti Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8", *Reliefweb*, 31 December 2025.

One of the most notorious impacts of armed conflicts continued to be forced population displacement. **According to the semi-annual trend report published by UNHCR in November 2025, which includes data collected during the first half of the year, the global forcibly displaced population, including both refugees and internally displaced persons, stood at 117.3 million people.**²⁰ This was 5% less than in 2024, in contrast to the trend of incessant increase in previous years (see Graph 1.7). According to UNHCR, the reduction was associated with a marked increase in returns of refugees and displaced persons in some of the most severe crises, such as in the DRC, Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan. As UNHCR noted, many returns took place in adverse conditions and in areas still experiencing insecurity and with little or no access to basic services. Furthermore, some of these returns were forced, such as in the case of Afghan refugees. For example, more than one million Afghans were expelled from Iran in the middle of the year, following the Twelve-Day War with Israel and the US.

The severe global crisis of violent forced displacement was confirmed for another year, although displacement figures fell compared to the previous year

Despite the reduction, the total volume of forced displacement remained at very high levels. As of mid-2025, the total displaced population included 42.5 million refugees worldwide, 1% less than in late 2024 (and 2% less than in late 2023), according to UN data. Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Ukraine and Venezuela were the countries of origin of 65% of the refugee population. Colombia, Germany, Iran, Türkiye and Uganda hosted one third of this global refugee population. As in previous years, 65% of the refugee population resided in countries neighbouring their country of origin. According to the UNHCR report, as of mid-2025 a total of 67.8 million people were displaced within their own countries, fewer than the 72.1 million in the same period of 2024.

According to UNHCR data, at least 5.1 million people were reported as having been forcibly displaced in the first half of 2025 (2.9 million newly internally displaced people and 2.2 million new refugees). Around 65% of the new displacements due to conflict and violence occurred in just five countries: the DRC (1.5 million), Sudan (518,900), Ukraine (480,000), South Sudan (421,800) and Myanmar (391,400).

The analysis throughout 2025 in the *Alert!* report confirms the severity of the global crisis of violent forced displacement. At the end of the year, Sudan was the world's most serious displacement crisis. According to the UN, by the end of the year, 12.8 million people had

been displaced by the fighting, of whom more than 4.3 million had fled across borders, primarily to Egypt, Chad and South Sudan. In the Western Sahel region, due to the growing instability, over 3.5 million people had been forcibly displaced by violence in the region, according to UNHCR data, though this figure is likely much higher given the lack of independent reporting and updates by military authorities in Burkina Faso since 2023. In South Sudan, more than two million people were displaced due to the conflict raging across the country and widespread flooding, and over one million more had fled the civil war seeking refuge in neighbouring Sudan, which was also at war. Furthermore, more than three and a half million people are internally displaced in Myanmar and over one and a half million people have taken refuge outside the country, primarily in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand.

Regarding Ukraine, 3.3 million people were internally displaced by December and 5.8 million were refugees,²¹ 5.3 million of which were in European countries.

Other serious displacement crises in 2025 included the situation in Palestine, as a result of Israeli attacks. In late 2025, practically the entire population of Gaza (2.1 million) remained displaced, having fled on multiple occasions. In Haiti by the end of 2025 around 1.4 million people (12% of

the total population, double the figure in September 2024) were in a situation of forced displacement.²² The cross-border fighting in July and December between the armed forces of Thailand and Cambodia, considered one of the most intense interstate conflicts in Southeast Asia in recent decades, displaced around 1.5 million people. In Somalia over 300,000 people were displaced as a result of the war between February and October 2025. In Ethiopia clashes between Oromo and Somali communities displaced approximately 288,000 people in just three months, between July and October 2025. Such levels of violence had not been seen since 2018.²³

Furthermore, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) warned about the displacement crisis in Cameroon in 2025, which it considered the most neglected in the world.²⁴ According to UNHCR, over 2.22 million people were forcibly displaced in the country by late 2025, including 408,617 refugees. Though on a lesser scale, in Colombia the number of forced displacements was the highest in 18 years, with 88,000 people subjected to mass displacements and another 103,150 to individual ones.

Armed conflicts also continued to have specific impacts on some population groups in especially vulnerable

20. UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends 2025*, 4 November 2025.

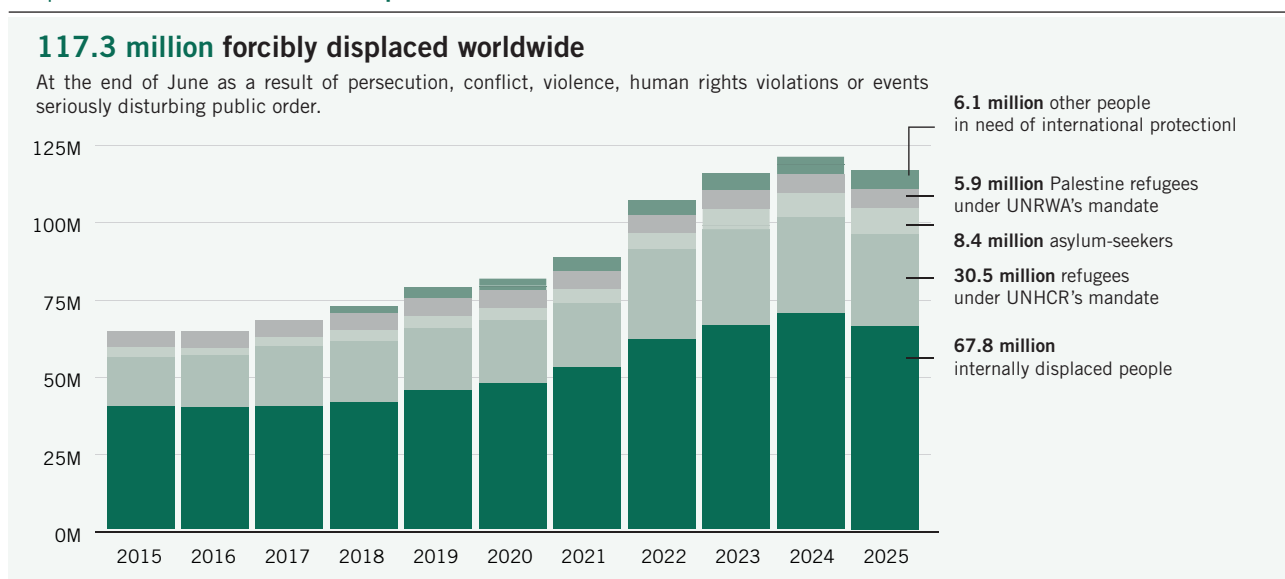
21. IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix. Ukraine* [Viewed on 26 January 2026].

22. OIM, "Displacement in Haiti Reaches Record High as 1.4 Million People Flee Violence", *IOM*, 15 October 2025.

23. OCHA, *Ethiopia: Renewed violence in districts bordering Oromia and Somali regions (As of 1 October 2025)*, *OCHA*, 8 October 2025.

24. Norwegian Refugee Council, *Cameroon: the world's most neglected displacement crisis*, 3 June 2025.

Graph.1.7. Evolution of forced displacement worldwide (2015-2025)



Source: UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends 2025*, November 2025.

situations. In his periodic reports on the consequences of conflicts for civilians, the UN Secretary-General has raised alarm about the disproportionate effects suffered by older people, who often cannot abandon battle-torn areas and are forced to face a greater risk of dying, being wounded or lacking access to essential services or support networks. He has also called attention to the extraordinary difficulties facing people with disabilities.

Armed conflicts continued to have extraordinary impacts on boys and girls.

According to the report of the UN Secretary-General on children in armed conflicts, which was published in June 2025 and covers the events that occurred in 2024, violence against children reached ‘unprecedented levels’.²⁵ The United Nations reported a 25% increase in the number of acts considered ‘grave violations’ of children’s rights between 2023 and 2024. The most frequent violations in 2024 were mutilation, denial of humanitarian access, recruitment and the use of minors, killings and abductions. The violations affected 22,495 minors in 2024 (14,383 boys, 7,320 girls and 792 of unknown sex). Likewise, sexual violence against minors increased by 35%. In the DRC, Nigeria and Somalia, a significant increase in this type of violence was identified.²⁶ 50% per cent of all grave violations were committed by non-state armed actors, although the United Nations noted that government forces were primarily responsible for certain specific types of violations (killings, mutilation, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian

access). According to the UN report, the highest number of grave violations in 2024 occurred in ‘Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory’ (8,554),²⁷ followed by the DRC (4,043), Somalia (2,586), Nigeria (2,436) and Haiti (2,269), although the highest percentage increases compared to the previous year occurred in Lebanon, Mozambique, Haiti, Ethiopia and Ukraine.

The analysis of the events of 2025 in the different scenarios of armed conflict ratifies the trend of serious impacts on children. Palestinian children continued to lack access to formal education for the third consecutive year. In Haiti an estimated 1,600 schools remained closed,²⁸ many others were occupied by armed gangs and several hundred had been destroyed (284 in 2024 alone), disrupting the school year for hundreds of thousands of children (and according to some estimates, one million) across the country. Whilst child recruitment in Haiti had already increased significantly in 2024 (by 70% compared to the previous year), the involvement of minors in gang activities skyrocketed in 2025 (by 700%, according to mid-year data).²⁹ In early 2025, the UN had already indicated that sexual violence against minors in Haiti had exploded by 1,000% compared to the previous year. In DRC verified grave violations against children doubled in early 2025 compared with the same period in 2024 and child recruitment continued in the conflict. In Somalia, the United Nations estimated that 1.85 million children would suffer from acute malnutrition by July 2026.

25. United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council, *Children and armed conflict. Report of the Secretary-General*, A/79/878-S/2025/247, 17 June 2025.
 26. United Nations Security Council, *Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/385, 15 May 2025.
 27. The UN Secretary-General’s report *Children and armed conflict* does not provide the number of grave violations in Palestine separately, but groups them under the category ‘Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory’. See General Assembly and Security Council of the United Nations, *Children and armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General*, A/79/878-S/2025/247, 17 June 2025, paragraph 7.
 28. Hauteville, Jean-Michel, “Gang violence deepens Haiti’s educational crisis”, *Le Monde*, 10 November 2025.
 29. Swissinfo, “Unicef registra un alarmante aumento del 700% en reclutamiento forzado de menores en Haití”, *Swissinfo*, 28 August 2025.

1.3. Armed conflicts: annual evolution

1.3.1. Africa

Central Africa

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

Summary:

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

Low-intensity conflict continued to simmer in Burundi in 2025, amid the government's growing involvement in the neighbouring armed conflict in the DRC and increased repression during the 2025 electoral process, in which the ruling CNDD-FDD party consolidated its power and control of the mechanisms of the state. In this context, Burundi's deepening role in the DRC conflict, in which it supports the FARDC against the M23 and Rwanda whilst pursuing Burundian armed groups in South Kivu province, risked regional escalation due to the threat of direct confrontation between Burundi and Rwanda.

The situation deteriorated as a result of Burundi's progressive involvement in the DRC conflict, compounded by a climate of electoral repression

The year was punctuated by security force operations and sporadic attacks conducted by insurgent groups, mainly RED-Tabara and the FNL. The security forces continued to carry out extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, particularly through the intelligence services and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling CNDD-FDD party, which reportedly received military training for deployment to the DRC. **This activity only intensified during the electoral period.** The research centre ACLED reported 201 conflict-related deaths in 2025.³⁰ This figure is slightly higher than in previous years, but lower than during the 2015–2021 period. The death toll stood at 168 in 2024, similar to the one in 2023 (178), though below those in preceding years (261 in 2022, 305 in 2021 and 330 in 2020). It is unknown how many deaths in South Kivu province were attributable to clashes between the Burundian Armed Forces (backed by local Congolese militias) and the Burundian insurgent groups active there.

In addition, the government stepped up pressure and intimidation against the political and social opposition and restricted freedom of expression during the legislative and communal elections held on 5 June 2025. The ruling CNDD-FDD party won all 108 parliamentary seats (96% of the votes), with the opposition obtaining only residual representation in the communal elections. Similar results were reproduced in the municipal elections held on 25 August. The African Union observer mission described election day as peaceful and transparent, and yet civil society observers, the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Burundi and the political opposition reported a climate of repression, censorship and multiple irregularities. On 14 June, President Ndayishimiye defended the integrity of the process and accused the Church of interference. On 25 July, the electoral commission announced CNDD-FDD's victory in indirect Senate elections, winning all 10 seats; the Constitutional Court confirmed the results, turning Burundi into a de facto one-party state. Following complaints of irregularities that the main opposition coalition, Burundi Bwa Bose, lodged with the AU, the EAC and the UN, the president accused the opposition of colluding with the former colonial powers. In August, the president appointed a new government composed of his inner circle, anticipating potential power struggles within the CNDD-FDD ahead of his eventual succession in the 2027 presidential election. In September, several UN experts, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi, expressed concern over the rise in serious human rights violations in the country, including attacks on members of civil society and the political opposition and electoral violence.³¹ Between January 2024 and May 2025, Burundian civil society organisations documented at least 200 cases of sexual

30. ACLED, [ACLED Explorer](#) [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

31. OHCHR, *Burundi: UN experts alarmed by increase in serious human rights violations during election period*, OHCHR, 1 September de 2025.

violence –including the rape of minors– 58 enforced disappearances, 62 acts of torture, 892 arbitrary arrests and 605 extrajudicial killings. The rapes were reportedly committed by state agents or individuals acting with their complicity, including intelligence services and the Imbonerakure, in an atmosphere of widespread impunity.

Nevertheless, the main issue during 2025 stemmed from Burundi's growing involvement in the neighbouring DRC conflict and its potential consequences.³² The advance of the Rwanda-backed armed group M23 in eastern DRC, within kilometres of the Burundian border, became a new source of tension and violence. Following the capture of Goma, the capital of North Kivu, in January 2025, and despite repeated calls for a ceasefire and diplomatic initiatives led by the United States and Qatar, the M23 and Rwanda continued to push into South Kivu, taking its capital Bukavu and subsequently Kamanyola, a town near the tri-border area between the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. In December, they captured the strategic town of Uvira, Burundi's gateway to the DRC and vice versa. Although the Burundian security forces' initially entered Congolese territory to pursue Burundian insurgents, primarily RED-Tabara, their role has expanded in recent years and they now provide growing support to the FARDC against the M23, including involvement in direct combat. RED-Tabara is active on both sides of the border and is made up of former soldiers, police and rebels who opposed former President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial bid for a third term in 2015. Analysts suggested possible collaboration between RED-Tabara and the M23. In February, the M23's capture of the Congolese airport at Kavumu, near Bukavu, turned the airport of Bujumbura (Burundi's main city and former capital) into a logistical hub for troops and weapons bound for the DRC. There were also reports of Congolese drones being launched from Burundi to strike M23 positions. Analysts noted that this involvement could make Burundi a military target for the M23 and Rwanda. The border between Burundi and Rwanda has been closed since January 2024; the Gatumba crossing point between Burundi and the DRC is the only intermittently open post through which military support passes and through which thousands of Congolese refugees fled to Burundi during the year (84,000 since the fall of Uvira in December, according to the UN), making the situation a humanitarian catastrophe. The M23 and the Burundian Armed Forces exchanged prisoners of war during the year. Meetings to ease tension between Rwanda and Burundi took place in the first quarter of the year, but strain and mutual accusations intensified in the second half. There was also growing tension within the Burundian Armed Forces over their deployment in the DRC, troop disgruntlement over unpaid wages and the local Congolese population's protest against the Burundian intervention, particularly by the Banyamulenge community, linked to the M23.

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)

Start:	2018
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	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
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

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

The armed conflict between state security forces and secessionist political-military movements in Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces in the southwest continued throughout the year, compounded by a serious crisis arising from the re-election of 92-year-old President Paul Biya to an eighth term of office amid high tension, demonstrations and post-electoral repression.³³ Insecurity and high levels of violence

32. See the summary on DRC (east) in this chapter.

33. See the summary on Cameroon in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

persisted in both regions, with separatist armed groups carrying out violent attacks, kidnappings and extortion. According to ACLED, 1,171 people died in 3,721 violent events in the two English-speaking provinces in 2025.³⁴ In 2024, ACLED reported 1,380 deaths from nearly 2,000 violent events, including battles, acts of violence against civilians and the detonation of improvised explosive devices.

Insurgent groups in Cameroon's English-speaking regions continued to attack civilians and carry out kidnappings to fund their activities

The first part of the year witnessed an escalation of violence, ambushes and attacks by the secessionist insurgency against the state's civilian administration and security force detachments and military posts in the English-speaking provinces. In January, in Bamenda, suspected separatist fighters set fire to the home of Capo Daniel, a former senior AGovC official and deputy commander of the Ambazonian Defence Forces (ADF) until 2023, who had since called for a peaceful solution. In February, Cameroonian forces reported that they had killed Christopher Funwi, also known as "General JC", a commander of the armed group ADF. Attacks subsided in June, which according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) may reflect a strategy to intensify attacks during the presidential election period. Following the July announcement of Paul Biya's candidacy and the scheduling of the presidential election for 12 October, secessionist political-military movements announced that they would call for a boycott of the election, rejecting pleas from the Francophone political opposition to allow it to proceed as a mechanism to oust Biya. Instead, one secessionist leader, Chris Anu, demanded the release of English-speaking prisoners, a ceasefire and the start of dialogue with the central government as preconditions for holding the election. Finally, on 26 August, movements in both provinces announced a total shutdown of economic activity, schools and road travel between 6 September and 14 October, coinciding with the campaign period and election day. Security forces strengthened their deployment in both provinces to try to foil their plans. However, **the secessionist armed groups prevailed, enforcing the closure of both provinces and the total shutdown as announced, issuing threats against and repressing civilians** who failed to comply. Following the election, they announced that they would not participate in post-election protests. They ended the six-week blockade and shutdown on 14 October, though attacks against security forces continued. In November, insurgent violence rose to pre-election levels again.

According to UNHCR, over 2.22 million people were forcibly displaced in the country by late 2025, including

408,617 refugees.³⁵ The number of internally displaced persons stood at 493,402 in the English-speaking provinces and 510,000 in the Extreme North region. A total of 790,000 internally displaced people had returned to their communities. Insurgent groups continued to attack civilians and engage in illicit activities to fund their operations, including kidnapping civilians for ransom. The severity of the country's humanitarian situation was underscored by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which announced in June that Cameroon had become the world's most neglected displacement crisis, surpassing Burkina Faso, which had held that position for the previous two years.³⁶

CAR	
Start:	2006
Type:	Government, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	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), opposition armed coalition Siriri, ethnic militia AAKG, Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militias, other local and foreign armed groups, France, MINUSCA, Rwanda, Russia, Wagner Group ³⁷
Intensity:	2
Trend:	=
Summary:	
Since independence in 1960, the situation in the Central African Republic has been characterised by continued political instability, which has resulted in several coups and military dictatorships. The keys to the situation are of an internal and external nature. Internal, because there is a confrontation between political elites from northern and southern ethnic groups who are competing for power and minorities that have been excluded from it. A number of leaders have attempted to establish a system of patronage to ensure their political survival. And external, due to the role played by its neighbours Chad and Libya; due to its natural resources (diamonds, uranium, gold, hardwoods) and the awarding of mining contracts in which these countries compete alongside China and the former colonial power, France, which controls uranium. Conflicts in the region have led to the accumulation of weaponry and combatants who have turned the country into regional sanctuary. This situation has been compounded by a religious dimension due to the fact that the Séléka coalition, which is a Muslim faith organisation formed by a number of historically marginalised groups from the north and which counts foreign fighters amongst its ranks, took power in	

34. ACLED [viewed on 10 January 2026]. ACLED acknowledged that the data on fatalities and events in Cameroon's English-speaking regions during part of the year may be higher than the available figure. See ACLED, [Data Update: Enhanced coverage in Cameroon using local information networks](#), 6 October 2025.

35. Cameroon, [Operational Data Portal](#), UNHCR, 31 December 2025.

36. Norwegian Refugee Council, ["Cameroon: the world's most neglected displacement crisis"](#), 3 June 2025.

37. In the case of CAR, the private company Wagner has not been replaced by Africa Corps, despite pressure from Russia on CAR to accept the change, and Wagner has continued to operate autonomously in this country, which is a source of tension between CAR and Russia. See ADF-magazine, [Russia Pushes CAR to Choose Africa Corps Over Wagner Mercenaries](#), 28 October 2025.

March 2013 after toppling the former leader, François Bozizé. This provoked the rise of Christian (“anti-balaka”) militias. 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, ECCAS and the UN intervened militarily to reduce the clashes and facilitate the process of dialogue and promote a peace agreement in 2019. However, some groups pulled out of the agreement in late 2020 and started a new rebellion, the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC). The government’s inability to deal with the situation prompted it to request bilateral support from Rwanda and the Russian security company Wagner, which increased the complexity of the situation due to the proliferation of armed actors in the country.

Violence continued to cast a shadow over the CAR in 2025, characterised by the gradual weakening of rebel groups, the growing importance of pro-government armed actors, a formally active but politically stalled peace process and a turbulent election period that consolidated executive control without resolving the conflict’s structural causes. In 2025, the armed conflict upheld levels similar to those observed since 2022. Violence was waged primarily in localised incidents, sporadic attacks and ambushes. It also took multiple forms against civilians, particularly in rural areas far from major urban centres. According to ACLED, 966 violent events were reported in the region during 2025, claiming 1,132 lives.³⁸

Armed groups within the **Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC)** continued to show **structural weakening** as a result of sustained military pressure from the government, the reinforcement of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), the involvement of private Russian combatants and instructors belonging to the Wagner Group and the activity of pro-government local militias. However, this weakening did not lead the armed actors to disappear. Factions of groups such as the **3R, UPC, MPC and dissident anti-balaka** groups retained their combat capacity, particularly through attacks on civilians, extortion, informal control of routes and illicit economies.³⁹

Throughout the year, **the pattern of violence shifted clearly from direct armed confrontation towards predatory violence against civilians**, reflecting the transformation of many armed groups into essentially criminal actors. Abuses against civilians, including looting, kidnapping, forced labour, sexual violence and targeted killing, remained constant, generating an atmosphere of chronic insecurity and vulnerability.⁴⁰ In

many regions, civilians were caught between remnants of rebel groups and pro-government forces, without effective and sustained protection. **Violence increased in the northeast**, in Vakaga prefecture, largely due to the **influence of the armed conflict in Sudan**.⁴¹ The activity of Rapid Support Forces (RSF) personnel led to clashes with the FACA and local self-defence groups. The indirect effects of the Sudan conflict also negatively affected the prefectures of Bamingui-Bangoran and Haut Kotto, where there were increased reports of extortion committed by Sudanese militias along major roads and mining sites.

A central feature of the conflict in 2025 was the **consolidation of state territorial control**, sustained not only by the FACA, but also by a network of allied forces, Africa Corps and local militias. This control enabled the government to secure major urban centres and strategic lines, but it also entailed serious human rights violations. Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, sexual violence and collective punishment were documented throughout the year, particularly in areas considered sympathetic to or collaborating with armed groups. These practices became integrated into a system of deterrence

The year 2025 was marked by a weakening of the insurgency in the CAR, the centrality of pro-government armed actors, a stalled peace process and a turbulent electoral process

and control, reinforcing a climate of fear and a widespread perception of impunity. In addition to the armed conflict, the year 2025 was marked by the persistence of community violence and armed criminality. Disputes over access to land, grazing routes and natural resources sparked recurrent clashes, particularly in areas shared by farmers and herders. Likewise, the control of illicit economies, including gold, diamond and timber extraction, remained a structural factor driving violence. Though the state strengthened its activity in some mining areas, many enclaves remained under the informal control of armed and criminal networks, often linked to local authorities.

This situation of insecurity and violence influenced the elections held on 28 December 2025, which took place amid the **growing shrinking of the political space, restrictions on the opposition and institutional control by the executive branch**. The legislative and local elections were organised under a widely contested legal and administrative framework. **Intimidation, detentions and administrative obstacles** were documented against opposition figures, activists and journalists throughout the year. Restrictions were also imposed on freedom of assembly and expression, strengthening a dynamic of political exclusion.

Persistent insecurity in large rural areas directly affected the elections. Broad swathes of the population, including

38. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [viewed on 10 January 2026].

39. UN Security Council, *Central African Republic. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2025/383, 13 June 2025.

40. UN Security Council, *Central African Republic. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2025/383, 13 June 2025.

41. See the summary on Sudan in this chapter.

internally displaced persons and rural communities, were de facto excluded from them. The results consolidated the control of President Touadéra's ruling party and its allies, reinforcing its continuity based on coercion and dominance and entrenching political polarisation. On 5 January 2026, the electoral commission announced President Touadéra's re-election to a third term with 76.15% of the vote. However, low turnout, allegations of irregularities and the exclusion of key opposition groups called the legitimacy of the elections into question. His two main contenders, Anicet-Georges Dolengué and Henri-Marie Dondra, complained of widespread irregularities and electoral fraud.

The humanitarian impact remained very high. OCHA highlighted that the CAR is one of the countries with the greatest humanitarian needs per capita globally, with 50% of the population dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive.⁴² Thousands of people were internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, with limited numbers returning. Access to basic services, such as healthcare, education and potable water, continued to be extremely unequal, particularly in rural areas affected by gnawing insecurity. According to UNHCR, there were **428,314 internally displaced persons** in the country in late November, in addition to **55,414 refugees from neighbouring countries**, especially Sudan, by the end of 2025. There were also **729,229 Central African refugees and asylum-seekers** in neighbouring countries, most of them in Cameroon and the DRC, and to a lesser extent in Chad.⁴³

Nevertheless, some progress was made on the peace process during 2025. **In April, the government reached an agreement with two of the main active groups** – Return, Recovery and Rehabilitation (3R) and Unity for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC)– with Chad mediating. Both groups were predominantly Fulani. Their reintegration into the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR gave new impetus to the implementation of this agreement. However, its practical impact was limited and uneven, as it did not translate into a generalised reduction in violence or a structural relaunch of the peace process. Key provisions on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), decentralisation and reconciliation only made limited progress, primarily through ad hoc initiatives and local agreements, according to the UN.⁴⁴

DRC (east)	
Start:	1998
Type:	Government, Identity, Resources International
Main parties:	DRC, Burundi, Angola, SAMIDRC (regional force of the SADC, composed of troops from South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania), MONUSCO, pro-government militias Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP, composed of dozens of former Mai Mai militias and other armed groups from North Kivu and South Kivu, like APCLS, PARECO-FF, Nyatura, Raia Mutomboki, and other pro-government militias known as Wazalendo), FDLR, FDLR splinter groups (CNRD-Ubwiyunge, RUD-Urunana), private security companies (Agemira RDC and Congo Protection), March 23 Movement (M23), Twirwaneho, Rwanda, other armed groups not part of Wazalendo, Burundian armed groups, armed group of Ugandan origin LRA, Ituri groups and community militias (including, CODECO/URDPC, FPIC, FRPI, MAPI, Zaïre-FPAC), AFC coalition and allies
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The current conflict has its origins in the coup d'état carried out by Laurent Desiré Kabila in 1996 against Mobutu Sese Seko, which culminated with him handing over power in 1997. Later, in 1998, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, together with various armed groups, tried to overthrow Kabila, who received the support of Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan and Zimbabwe, in a war that has caused around five million fatalities. The control and exploitation of the natural resources has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict and to the presence of foreign armed forces. The signing of a ceasefire in 1999, and of several peace agreements between 2002 and 2003, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops, the setting up of a transitional government and later an elected government, in 2006. However, did not mean the end of violence in this country, due to the role played by Rwanda and the presence of factions of non-demobilised groups and of the FDLR, responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The breach of the 2009 peace accords led to the 2012 desertion of soldiers of the former armed group CNDP, forming part of the Congolese army, who organised a new rebellion, known as the M23, supported by Rwanda. In December 2013 the said rebellion was defeated and part of its combatants took refuge in Rwanda and Uganda. However, the M23 reorganised in 2022, causing an escalation of violence with the support of Rwanda, which worsened relations between the DRC and Rwanda. Rwanda sent military contingents to support the rebellion and to help the M23 offensive to conquer territory, promote its occupation and the exploitation of its resources, as well as to secure its security objectives.

The situation in the eastern DRC in 2025 was marked by the intensifying offensive prosecuted by the armed

42. NRC, "NRC's operations in the Central African Republic", NRC, February 2025.

43. UNHCR, Operational Data Portal – CAR Situation [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

44. UN Security Council, *Central African Republic. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2025/383, 13 June 2025.

group M23 and Rwanda into Congolese territory that began in late 2021, and by Burundi's growing involvement in support of the DRC, which risked regional escalation of the conflict. Moreover, Uganda's involvement in the DRC became evident, serving Ugandan interests that extended beyond pursuing the ADF and implied tacit Ugandan support for M23 and Rwanda.⁴⁵ According to ACLED, the death toll in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri as a result of the conflict rose to 6,818.⁴⁶ In early 2025, the M23 and Rwanda captured Goma and Bukavu, the capitals of North Kivu and South Kivu, respectively. Over the course of the year, this coalition expanded its control in both provinces, consolidating a parallel administration that revealed ambitions of long-term occupation, subjecting civilians to all manner of abuses from forced labour and extrajudicial killings to land confiscations and deportations, according to the UN Group of Experts and other analysts. Finally, **Ituri province remained engulfed in persistent inter-community violence** between CODECO/URDPC and the armed group Zaïre. Uganda's unilateral deployment of military contingents to the territories of Mahagi and Yugu in Ituri exacerbated tensions and inter-community violence. Sanctioned individuals Thomas Lubanga and Innocent Kaina each created political-military movements with the stated objective of opposing the DRC government. Both remained based in Kampala, where their ongoing presence and activities enjoyed the support of the Ugandan authorities.

Despite mediation attempts by the United States and Qatar, the M23 and Rwanda's offensive in eastern DRC intensified

As they expanded their territorial control, the M23 and the Rwandan Armed Forces (RDF) focused on neutralising the armed group FDLR,⁴⁷ conducting operations characterised by intense clashes and widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, particularly around Bwito and Bwisha. These two areas are inhabited by members of the Hutu community, which is linked to the FDLR. By year's end, the M23 and the Rwandan Army held a high degree of control over part of North Kivu province, including the territories of Lubero, Rutshuru, Masisi and part of Walikale. They also held sway over much of South Kivu, operating in and controlling parts of the territories of Kalehe, Kabare, Walungu, Mwenga and Uvira, with the exception of Shabunda.⁴⁸

Across this territory, the M23 and Rwanda sought to secure control of logistics corridors and key population centres, aiming to take the cities of Walikale (in the east) and Uvira (in the south), and gradually seizing strategic lines and mining areas. Coordinated multi-front deployments enabled the M23 and Rwanda to continue expanding the territory under their control. According to the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, the M23 and Rwandan security forces consolidated their access to mineral resources in South Kivu, capturing the strategic mining town of Nzibira and the Twangiza industrial gold mine in Luhwindja. As a result, they came to control nearly half of South Kivu's cassiterite and coltan production and more than two thirds of its wolframite production.⁴⁹ The Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and Wazalendo groups continued to try to halt the M23 and Rwanda's advances, though they suffered territorial losses and lost control of supply routes. Moreover, this coalition of convenience between the FARDC and Wazalendo groups experienced internal tensions and outbreaks of violence, highlighting the weakness of the Congolese government front. Evidence of Burundi's growing involvement was also revealed during the year.⁵⁰ Although the Burundian security forces had initially aimed to pursue Burundian insurgents, primarily RED-Tabara, their role has expanded to include growing support for the FARDC against the M23 since 2024, including involvement in direct combat and logistical support.

The fall of Goma and Bukavu in early 2025 underscored the failure of previous regional diplomatic initiatives to end the conflict, led by the AU and the EAC. These initiatives were accompanied by regional military operations in support of the Congolese Armed Forces (the EAC Regional Force and SAMIDRC, the SADC regional force) alongside the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) in attempts to promote a ceasefire and separate the opposing forces. The failure of these two operations contributed to the power vacuum that M23 and Rwanda exploited to expand their territorial control, as did the structural discrediting of MONUSCO, since it had been conducting a phased, agreed withdrawal since early 2024 and had already left South Kivu. **Qatar and the United States initiated talks and opened dialogue channels during the year with Rwanda, the DRC and M23 to halt the hostilities, though these failed** due to mistrust between the parties and the lack of implementation mechanisms on the ground.

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

46. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

47. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) is an armed group with some members who participated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Rwanda views its existence and activities as a threat that justifies its support for the M23 and its unilateral intervention in the DRC in violation of international law.

48. Conclusions derived from the analysis of the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, ACLED, ICG and IPIS, *Mapping the M23's territorial influence in eastern DRC*, 1-12 December 2025 [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

49. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 30 December 2025 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2025/858, 30 December 2025.

50. See the summary on Burundi in this chapter.

On 18 March 2025, Presidents Félix Tshisekedi and Paul Kagame signed a joint declaration in Doha calling for an immediate ceasefire under Qatari mediation. It was the first direct contact between both presidents in three years. Shortly thereafter, on 25 April, the two countries' foreign ministers signed a "declaration of principles" in Washington under US auspices, committing to draft a peace agreement by 2 May, though this deadline passed without an agreement. Meanwhile, clashes and violence continued, as did displacement and sexual violence. An agreement was finally signed on 27 June between the foreign ministers of Rwanda and the DRC before US President Donald Trump. However, the agreement did not directly include the M23, limiting its reach as fighting continued on the ground. In July, the Congolese government and the M23 signed a declaration of principles in Doha to establish a ceasefire, though the violence persisted. In November, the United States announced that Kinshasa and Kigali had begun drafting a framework for regional economic integration, but its implementation remained stalled, as the Concept of Operations (CONOPS)⁵¹ had to be activated first. The CONOPS had been agreed in Luanda in October 2024 and was part of the framework agreement signed in June 2025. Finally, the Congolese and Rwandan presidents met with Trump in Washington on 4 December to ratify the June agreement, known as the Washington Agreement.

Days after the agreement between the presidents of the DRC and Rwanda was signed with Trump's support, over 200,000 people fled serious clashes raging in South Kivu, particularly in Kamanyola and subsequently in Uvira, an important city near the tri-border area between the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi that eventually fell to the M23. The M23 announced its withdrawal from Uvira days later following US mediation, but clashes continued in surrounding towns. At the end of the year, the Congolese government put the death toll at 1,500 and the number of displaced persons at 500,000 as a result of violence in towns around Uvira and southward (the territory of Fizi in South Kivu province and in Kalemie in neighbouring Tanganyika province). Though these figures were not confirmed by independent sources, they forecasted a negative trend of the situation in later months. Around 100,000 people fled to Burundi, according to UNHCR. Burundi's growing involvement in support of the DRC to halt the M23's advances also became evident. Various analysts noted that Burundi's involvement and the DRC's

Burundi's growing involvement in support of the DRC risks regional escalation of the conflict

accusations that Rwanda had sent new battalions in support of the M23 pointed to a dangerous escalating spiral of violence with regional dimensions. The fall of Goma and Bukavu deprived the Congolese government of military air access to the region, which Burundi compensated by providing access via Bujumbura, near the Burundian border town of Uvira.

Around 27.7 million people (more than a quarter of the population) required humanitarian assistance between January and June 2025 due to food insecurity caused by the disruption of food production, trade and market access as a result of the war, compounded by the country's high vulnerability to climate change, according to ACAPS. Violence and insecurity drove the number of internally displaced people in the DRC **above 7.3 million in April 2025 –the highest figure ever recorded**

in the country.⁵² By the end of 2025, over 1.2 million people were refugees and asylum-seekers in neighbouring countries,⁵³ especially in Uganda, whilst the DRC hosted more than half a million refugees and a further 100,000 asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries, particularly the CAR, Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, South Sudan and Burundi.⁵⁴

The conflict continued to produce serious problems in protecting civilians, including gender-based violence, child recruitment, kidnapping and widespread displacement. Verified grave violations against children doubled in early 2025 compared with the same period in 2024. Cholera and measles epidemics continued to spread in conflict-affected areas, exacerbated by damage to infrastructure and limited access to healthcare. The M23 and Rwanda conducted a systematic campaign of repression in occupied areas, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture, enforced disappearances and night attacks on hospitals. Meanwhile, retreating Wazalendo and FARDC fighters engaged in looting, sexual violence and murder. The reintegration of FARDC soldiers accused of serious violations further entrenched impunity within FARDC ranks.

According to the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, illegal mining in M23-controlled territories, the smuggling of non-compliant minerals to Rwanda, the mixing of these minerals with Rwandan production and their subsequent export to downstream supply chain actors reached unprecedented levels. This posed a serious threat to the integrity and credibility of mineral traceability and endangered trade in "3T" minerals (tin, tantalum and tungsten).⁵⁵

51. US State Department, *Concept of Operations (CONOPS)*, 27 June 2025.

52. ACAPS, *Country analysis DRC*. [Viewed on 31 January 2026].

53. UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal – DRC*, 30 November 2025.

54. UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal – DRC*, 30 November 2025.

55. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 3 July 2025 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2025/446, 3 July 2025.

DRC (east – ADF)	
Start:	2014
Type:	System, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	DRC, Uganda, Mai-Mai militias, armed opposition group ISCAP-ADF, CODECO, M23, MONUSCO
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) is an Islamist rebel group operating in the northwest of the Rwenzori massif (North Kivu, between DR Congo and Uganda) with between 1,200 and 1,500 Ugandan and Congolese militiamen recruited mainly in both countries as well as in Tanzania, Kenya and Burundi. It is the only group in the area considered a terrorist organisation and is included on the US list of terrorist groups. It was created in 1995 from the merger of other Ugandan armed groups taking refuge in DR Congo (Rwenzururu, ADF), later adopted the name ADF and follows the ideology of the former ADF, which originated in marginalised Islamist movements in Uganda linked to the conservative Islamist movement Salaf Tabliq. In its early years it was used by Zaire under Mobutu (and later by DR Congo under Kabila) to pressure Uganda, but it also received backing from Kenya and Sudan and strong underground support in Uganda. At first it wanted to establish an Islamic state in Uganda, but in the 2000s it entrenched in the communities that welcomed it in DR Congo and became a local threat to the administration and the Congolese population, though its activity was limited. In early 2013 the group began a wave of recruitment and kidnappings and an escalation of attacks against the civilian population. 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. In 2019, its leader, Musa Baluku, swore allegiance to Islamic State and renamed his group Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP).

Insurgent activity carried out by Islamic State Central Africa Province-Allied Democratic Forces (ISCAP-ADF)⁵⁶ against civilians increased and expanded in northern North Kivu province –the region known as Grand Nord– and in Ituri province. This activity came despite military operations conducted by the Ugandan Armed Forces (UPDF) in their solo offensive in Congolese territory and in support of the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) against the ADF as part of Operation Shujaa.⁵⁷ According to analyses conducted by ACLED, as the M23 expanded its activities in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces in January 2025, it drew greater attention from the

Uganda tacitly provided support to the M23 and Rwanda

FARDC and allied militias, potentially affording the Islamic State affiliate in the region more opportunities and territory to launch attacks. Although the M23 and the ADF have long been active in North Kivu province, each group used to focus its attacks in geographically distinct areas. These areas have gradually converged, however, leading to an escalation of insecurity through overlapping violence.⁵⁸

In response to the M23's advance in February, the UPDF deployed an additional 1,000 troops as part of Operation Shujaa. **Total deployments in 2025 involved at least 3,000 additional personnel, bringing the overall UPDF presence in the DRC since 2024 to more than 6,000 troops, thereby doubling its footprint in the country.** By contrast, the Congolese government had only officially been notified of 2,000 UPDF troops operating under Operation Shujaa since its inception. Uganda maintained that the UPDF deployment fell within the broader context of Operation Shujaa.

Various issues revealed Uganda's involvement in the DRC in service of interests that exceeded the agreement between both countries, and in tacit support for the M23 and Rwanda.⁵⁹ First, the FARDC and UPDF's joint Operation Shujaa did not curb ADF violence against civilians during the year. The additional UPDF deployment to southern Lubero territory was not directed against active ADF cells in the area, nor did it result in any operational advances against the ADF. **The Congolese government confirmed that this new UPDF deployment had been carried out without its prior authorisation and that the UPDF were undertaking unilateral initiatives outside the framework of joint operations with the FARDC.** According to the Group of Experts, this intervention elevated Uganda to the status of a prominent interested party in the ongoing conflict.⁶⁰ The proximity of UPDF forces to positions held by the M23 and the Rwandan Armed Forces (RDF) in southern Lubero territory (North Kivu) raised concerns about the impartiality of the UPDF presence, given documented support by some UPDF elements for M23 operations in previous years.

The UPDF prevented the M23 from advancing toward Kisangani through negotiation rather than direct confrontation, in line with Uganda's stated objective of protecting its national interests whilst avoiding armed confrontation with the M23. Whilst the FARDC regional headquarters regrouped in Beni (North Kivu),

56. Although its official name is Islamic State Central Africa Province-Allied Democratic Forces (ISCAP-ADF), this report continues to use the name ADF.
57. Operation Shujaa is a military offensive conducted by the Ugandan Armed Forces (UPDF) in coordination with the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) on Congolese soil. It targets the armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in retaliation for the bomb attacks in Kampala on 16 November 2021, for which the ADF claimed responsibility.
58. Serwat, Ladd, "As M23 rebels take hold of eastern Congo, the Islamic State is capitalizing on the chaos", *ACLED*, 18 June 2025.
59. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 3 July 2025 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2025/446, 3 July 2025..
60. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 3 July 2025 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2025/446, 3 July 2025.

the UPDF presence acted as an obstacle to the FARDC on the northern front, which is where the M23 and the RDF were most militarily vulnerable, according to the Group of Experts. This positioning provided a significant tactical advantage to the M23 –secure in the knowledge that it would not be attacked from the north, the armed group could concentrate its operational capacity westward, thereby facilitating offensives toward Walikale. Repeated incendiary public statements by UPDF commander General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, in which he expressed admiration for Rwandan President Kagame and emphasised close cooperation between the UPDF and the RDF, raised questions about the underlying objectives of Uganda’s involvement in the region.

The success of the offensive by the M23 and the Rwandan Armed Forces and the prospect of further advances towards Lubero prompted swift military reinforcement by the UPDF to create a strategic buffer along the northern front lines of North Kivu. Uganda publicly justified this “forward defensive stance” as necessary to protect its security and economic interests. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said that the UPDF’s activity was not related to “fighting the M23 rebels” and was instead aimed at combating the ADF and protecting the construction of the Kasindi-Beni-Butembo road.

Meanwhile, the UN Group of Experts report published in late December 2024 stated that persistent rumours throughout 2024 of contacts between the M23 and the ADF⁶¹ intensified when the M23 advanced towards the ADF’s area of operations in Lubero in February 2025. According to the report, multiple sources confirm that the M23 sought a non-aggression pact with the ADF, requesting safe passage, including for recruits transiting from Ituri into M23 territory, and urging the ADF to limit attacks on FARDC soldiers. According to the Group of Experts, ADF leader Musa Baluku refused, saying that he did not trust the M23 and reaffirming his commitment to continue attacking “infidel” civilians. In March, Ugandan military intelligence claimed that the ADF had forged a new alliance with the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO), the Lendu militant insurgent coalition in the Ituri region. Finally, contacts **between ISIS and the ADF continued. As highlighted by the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia in November 2025, ISIS-Somalia is estimated to be raising around 4 million USD annually and using extortion money** to fund affiliated terrorist cells in other countries, including Mozambique and the DRC, in reference to the ADF.

DRC (west)	
Start:	2023
Type:	Identity, Resources, Territory Internal
Main parties:	DRC, Teke community militias, Yaka and Suku community militias (including the armed group Mobondo) and other allied community militias
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Summary:	The origin of the conflict in the province of Mai-Ndombe (west) dates back to mid-2022 from a disagreement over a traditional tax (as part of customary law) on agricultural products established by the “native” ⁶² Teke community (considered the traditional landowners) who settled in the area before the “non-native” communities, mostly Yaka, but also Suku, Mbala and Songe (originally from the provinces of Kwango and Kwilu). These communities came to work as farmers on the Bateke plateau more than five decades ago. The farmers who arrived leased the land from the Teke chiefs in exchange for payment of this customary tax. Until recently, the communities lived together normally and bonds had been created between them. According to local sources collected by the UN, the first disagreements arose in 2021 and intensified in early 2022, when “non-native” communities refused to pay the increased tax. The Teke attempted to collect the tax by force, with the support of some local members of the Congolese National Police (PNC) and members of the FARDC, and Teke chiefs began telling farmers who did not want to pay to abandon their lands. In mid-2022, the first inter-community clashes broke out, which increased throughout 2023. The tax payment issue was soon transformed into one of land control and farmers, mainly from the Yaka community, began to claim the lands owned by the Teke. Another complaint from the Yaka farmers was that the Teke landowners had been selling the land to investors, even though it already belonged to the Yaka. ⁶³ The Teke attacks against what they considered “non-native” communities provoked violent reprisals by the Yaka, who began to organise the armed group Mobondo, which was joined by members of other allied communities. During 2023, Mobondo raised its level of organisation, increased its military capabilities and carried out armed attacks. Since 2024, the fighting has intensified with the entry of the Congolese Armed Forces, provoking widespread insecurity and displacing thousands of people living in the region.

Intercommunal fighting raged between militias of the Teke and Yaka communities throughout the year, alongside some government military actions against the Yaka Mobondo group. In this context, the violence that began in mid-2022 in Kwamouth territory, Mai-Ndombe province (western DRC), remained active but subsided in the surrounding territories of the other four provinces. Various organisations noted that more than 5,000 people have died in this intercommunal conflict since 2022, which has received little attention from either national authorities or international actors despite being located

61. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 27 December 2024 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2024/969, 27 December 2024.

62. The terms “natives” and “non-natives” are used in the same way as the UN Group of Experts in its last two reports on the subject, S/2023/431 of 13 June 2023 and especially to Annex 2 of the report S/2023/990 of 30 December 2023.

63. See Annex 2 of the report of the UN Group of Experts. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 15 December 2023 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2023/990 of 30 December 2023.

only 75 kilometres northeast of the capital, Kinshasa.⁶⁴ The fighting has intensified further since 2024 with the entry of government armed forces, causing widespread insecurity and displacing thousands of people living in the region.

According to ACLED,⁶⁵ 231 people were killed in 2025 across the five affected provinces –Mai-Ndombe, the epicentre of the conflict, as well as Kinshasa, Kwango, Kwilu and Kongo-Central–compared to 246 deaths in 2024. These figures reflect a slight drop in violence, with half of them (117) occurring in Mai-Ndombe, whilst intercommunal attacks and clashes declined in the surrounding territories of the other four provinces. There was no news about the peace initiatives launched during 2024. In its report, IPIS and other organisations stated that the main causes of the conflict included territorial disputes, the collapse of customary institutions, socioeconomic marginalisation, the absence of state authority and political exploitation.⁶⁶ Arising from a territorial dispute and exacerbated by political manipulation and the collapse of governance, the conflict threatens coexistence between the Teke and Yaka communities, which previously lived together peacefully. Marginalisation, competition for resources, land scarcity, the establishment of armed groups and economic predation threaten to entrench this crisis in a lasting cycle of violence, according to IPIS.

At least 22 civilians from the Teke ethnic group died in late November when militiamen attacked the town of Nkana, located in Kwamouth territory. The attack was reportedly carried out by Mobondo militia fighters. Human Rights Watch,⁶⁷ which documented the attack in a report published in December, stated that fighters armed with firearms and machetes killed mostly Teke people in their homes as they attempted to flee. In September, 280,619 people remained displaced as a result of the conflict, 69% of them women. Compounded by frequent localised violent incidents, the figure had increased by 43% since IOM's most recent analysis.⁶⁸

Eastern Africa

Ethiopia (Amhara)	
Start:	2023
Type:	Government, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of Ethiopia, regional government of Amhara, Amhara Fano militia, Oromo armed group OLA
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

During the demonstrations between 2015 and 2018 that brought Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Oromo community, to power, there was a resurgence of nationalism among the Amhara, groups within it denounced their marginalisation during this stage of the country's transformation and lives mostly in the Amhara region, though it can also be found in other parts of the country. The escalation of violence and repression in 2023 dates back to the peace agreement signed in 2022 by the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to end the war (2020-2022). The agreement raised concerns among the Amhara community, which had been excluded from the talks even though the nationalist Fano militias and the Amhara special forces (a paramilitary group linked to the regional government) fought on the side of the Ethiopian Army, as did Eritrea, which was also shut out of the agreement. All the actors involved committed crimes against humanity against the population of the Tigray community during the conflict in Tigray. Perceptions of betrayal spread throughout the Amhara region, especially after Abiy announced plans to dismantle the special forces in each of Ethiopia's 11 ethnic regions. The prime minister proposed integrating the tens of thousands of special forces combatants into the Ethiopian Army and police to promote interethnic unity and prevent regional forces from being used as political tools and from getting drawn into conflicts, as was the case in Tigray. However, many Amhara regarded his plan with alarm, arguing that it would leave them vulnerable to attacks from neighbouring Tigray, their historical rivals in Ethiopia, as well as from the Oromo community, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, followed by the Amhara. The Oromo armed group OLA has also been accused of committing widespread atrocities against Amhara people in Oromia, raising fears that it wants to drive them out of the region. Although some Amhara special force soldiers did agree to join the Ethiopian Army and police, many deserted and joined the Fano militias. Furthermore, this Amhara nationalist movement took advantage of the war in the Tigray region, using these paramilitary militias to regain and occupy two historically disputed territories that are part of Tigray (Western and Southern Tigray, called Welkait-Tsegede and Raya by Amhara nationalists, respectively), where a provisional Amhara administration was established that the federal government of Ethiopia banned after the conflict ended.

During 2025, the armed conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara region transformed into a chronic and fragmented

64. Caritas International Belgique, CDJP Kinshasa, DIIS, IPIS, *The weight of silence: How the Mobondo revolt is shaking western DRC*, IPIS, 20 November 2025.

65. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 20 January 2026].

66. Caritas International Belgique, CDJP Kinshasa, DIIS, IPIS, op. cit.

67. Human Rights Watch, *DR Congo: Militia Massacres Civilians Near Kinshasa*, HRW, 16 December 2025.

68. IOM, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Rapid Displacement Analysis, Western Region (22-29 September 2025)*, 24 October 2025.

insurgency, characterised by periodic spikes in violence, the state's intensified use of drones and serious abuses against the civilian population. **One of the defining features of 2025 was the growing interconnection between the Amhara conflict and the political crisis in Tigray**,⁶⁹ marked by the internal division of the TPLF and the deteriorating relationship between the federal government and the Tigrayan authorities. Mutual accusations of collaboration between TPLF factions, Eritrea and the Amhara Fano militias added a regional dimension to the conflict, increasing the risk of wider escalation. However, a year-end **agreement between the Amhara regional government and one faction of the Fano militias could lead to de-escalation**. According to ACLED data, 1,555 violent events were reported in the region during 2025, claiming 4,476 lives.⁷⁰ In 2024, a death toll of 6,386 was reported as a result of the conflict in the region.

The war in Ethiopia's Amhara region transformed into a chronic and fragmented conflict, characterised by periodic spikes in violence and the state's intensified use of drones

The year 2025 began with the Amhara region fully immersed in a high-intensity armed conflict that had turned it into one of the main epicentres of violence in Ethiopia. Far from being resolved, the confrontation between the Ethiopian federal government and the Amhara nationalist Fano militias transformed into a protracted conflict during the year, marked by cycles of attacks and counter-attacks, with neither side achieving a decisive advantage. Unlike in 2024, when violence reached exceptional levels both in the number of victims and the territorial scope, 2025 was marked by a more irregular dynamic, with moments of relative decline in fighting followed by abrupt upsurges associated with specific military operations, political announcements and regional events. This trend consolidated a scenario of structural insecurity, with a severe humanitarian impact and the progressive erosion of state control over wide rural areas.

In addition to deaths from combat and airstrikes, a sustained rise in kidnappings was reported, both in Amhara and neighbouring regions such as Oromia

The opening months of 2025 were dominated by the continuation of armed fighting that had broken out the previous year. The Fano militias maintained their ability to harass the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) and regional security forces, particularly in the zones of West and East Gojjam, North and South Wollo and North Shewa. Analysts observed efforts by some Fano factions to merge or coordinate in attempts to overcome the internal fragmentation that had weakened the movement. In response to the ongoing insurgency, **the federal government intensified its use of airstrikes and**

armed drones, a tactic in use since 2023 that became a central part of its counterinsurgency strategy in 2025. Officially justified as operations targeting insurgent positions, these strikes caused many civilian casualties, fuelling local resentment and strengthening the narrative of persecution against the Amhara community.

A turning point occurred in March 2025, when several Fano factions announced the launch of a coordinated operation named "Andinet" ("Unity"), targeting security force bases and positions across the region.⁷¹ The operation provoked one of the most intense spikes in violence of the year, with dozens of clashes in a matter of weeks, particularly in the zones of West Gojjam, East Gojjam and South Gondar. Although the government declared that it had neutralised the operation, the scale of the fighting demonstrated that the Fano militias retained significant operational capacity and enjoyed deep territorial penetration. At the same time, Operation Andinet highlighted the structural limitations of the Fano movement, including its lack of unified command and the competing rivalries among local leaders.

Following the operation in March, the federal authorities responded with intensified military activity that combined ground deployments with airstrikes. One of the year's most serious episodes occurred in April when a government drone strike on the town of Gedeb, in East Gojjam, caused the deaths of more than 100 people, according to local witnesses.⁷² Although the government claimed that the strike had targeted Fano fighters, multiple sources indicated that the victims were civilians. This episode is part of a broader pattern of indiscriminate violence in which schools, markets and residential areas were hit by airstrikes or ground operations.

There was an observable relative decline in the number of clashes in May and June, particularly following the upsurge in violence in March and April. This decline was not due to any formal negotiating process, but rather owed to a combination of factors: military attrition, internal tensions and the restructuring of Fano factions, the killing of insurgent leaders and informal contacts between international representatives and some Amhara groups. In this context, an attempt emerged during this period to create an umbrella structure called the Amhara Fano

69. See the summary on Ethiopia (Tigray) in chapter 2 (Socio-political crisis).

70. ACLED, [ACLED Explorer](#) [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

71. ACLED, *Ethiopia situation update (2 April 2025)*, ACLED, 2 April 2025.

72. Tsegaye, Getahun, "Ethiopia: Over 100 Killed in Drone Strike Near School in Amhara region", *Borkena*, 23 April 2025.

National Force aimed at coordinating the insurgency.⁷³ However, the project quickly revealed deep internal divisions, with some factions refusing to submit to a central authority. These fractures limited the militias' capacity to capitalise on popular discontent and gradually undermined social support in certain areas.

Continued fragmentation and tactical reorganisation of the insurgent forces were observed in the second half of the year. In November, some Fano factions resumed joint operations in areas such as Gojjam and Gondar. Ambushes and targeted attacks against ENDF convoys were also reported, suggesting that the militias continued to operate, albeit with more dispersed and adaptive tactics following months of sustained fighting. Although the fighting was less intense than during the most critical moments of 2024, violence remained deeply entrenched. The Ethiopian government failed to re-establish effective control over large areas of the region, whilst the weakened but resilient Fano militias remained a potentially destabilising force. At the close of 2025, the armed conflict in Amhara showed no clear signs of resolution. Throughout 2025, civilians continued to be one of the main victims of the conflict. In addition to deaths caused by combat and airstrikes, a sustained increase in kidnappings was reported, both in Amhara and in neighbouring regions such as Oromia. Various armed actors carried out these kidnappings for different motivations, including financing, political pressure and reprisals against officials and community leaders.

However, a relevant development occurred that could lead to de-escalation. **A peace agreement was signed between the Amhara regional government and a faction of the Fano militias on 4 December**, mediated by the AU and the IGAD.⁷⁴ This agreement may represent a **significant step towards de-escalation**. It included formal commitments to cease hostilities, reintegrate combatants into official security structures under certain conditions and open channels for political dialogue.

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
Start:	2022
Type:	Self-Government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government of Ethiopia, regional government of Oromia, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Amhara Fano militias
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
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.

In 2025, **the armed conflict in Ethiopia's Oromia region festered into a crisis of ongoing fragmented violence**, featuring the interaction of the insurgent activity of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA, which the federal government calls OLF-Shane), state counterinsurgency operations and intercommunal conflicts. Despite partial agreements reached at the end of 2024 and an initial reduction in direct clashes, violence continued to batter the civilian population severely, causing mass displacement, deteriorating basic services and producing structural insecurity that persisted throughout the year. According to ACLED data, 807 violent events were recorded in the region during 2025, claiming 1,399 lives.⁷⁵ A decline was observed in direct clashes between the OLA and federal forces in the first few months of 2025, particularly compared to the upticks in violence reported in 2023 and 2024.⁷⁶ However, this reduction –linked to the partial agreements reached in 2024– did not apply to the entire insurgent group, and parts of the OLA that had not signed the peace agreement remained active, carrying out sporadic attacks, ambushes and acts

73. Borkena, "Amhara Fano National Force (AFNF) organization announced", *Borkena*, 9 Mai 2025.

74. FANA, "Ethiopia's Amhara Regional Gov't, Amhara Fano Popular Organization Sign Permanent Peace Deal", *FANA*, 4 December 2025.

75. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

76. ACLED, *Ethiopia situation update: February 2025*, February 2025.

of intimidation, particularly in rural parts of Wollega and West Shewa.

Despite the lower intensity of fighting compared to 2024, the humanitarian impact remained significant. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) warned that residual violence, combined with movement restrictions and the activity of armed actors, continued to severely strain civilian livelihood, access to health services and food security.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the ongoing insecurity hindered the delivery of humanitarian assistance, particularly in remote areas where access depended on the security situation.

The conflict in Oromia became more diffuse in the second half of 2025. Large-scale battles gave way to irregular violence characterised by targeted attacks, low-intensity clashes and localised security operations that continued to claim many lives. This pattern helped to maintain a constant atmosphere of insecurity, even in areas where direct fighting was less frequent. One of the most significant developments of the second half of the year was the resurgence of intercommunal conflicts, particularly along the border areas between Oromia and the Ogaden region. According to OCHA, clashes between Oromo and Somali communities displaced approximately 288,000 people in just three months, between July and October 2025. Such levels of violence had not been seen since 2018.⁷⁸ These episodes demonstrated that violence in Oromia is not limited to the war between the insurgents and the state, but also includes local disputes over land, resources and territorial administration, amplified by the availability of weapons and institutional weakness.

In December 2025, Ethiopian authorities announced the surrender of more than 200 OLA armed combatants in the zone of East Wollega, following negotiations with regional and federal authorities. This development was presented as a success of the federal government's strategy of combining military pressure with incentives for dialogue.⁷⁹

Somalia	
Start:	1988
Type:	Government, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Federal government, regional pro-government forces, Somaliland, Puntland, clan militias and warlords, Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, USA, France, Ethiopia, Türkiye, UAE, AUSSOM, EUNAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta), Combined Task Force 151, al-Shabaab, Islamic State in Somalia (ISS or ISIS-Somalia)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a coalition of opposing groups rebelled against the dictatorial power of Siad Barre and three years later managed to overthrow him. This situation led to a new fight within this coalition to occupy the power vacuum, which had led to the destruction of the country and the death of more than 300,000 people since 1991, despite the failed international intervention at the beginning of the 1990s. The diverse peace processes to try and establish a central authority came across numerous difficulties, including the affronts between the different clans and sub clans of which the Somalia and social structure was made up, the interference of Ethiopia and Eritrea and the power of the various warlords. The last peace initiative was in 2004 by the GFT, which found support in Ethiopia to try to recover control of the country, partially in the hands of the ICU (Islamic Courts Union) The moderate faction of the ICU has joined the GFT and together they confront the militias of the radical faction of the ICU which control part of the southern area of the country. In 2012 the transition that began in 2004 was completed and a new Parliament was formed which elected its first president since 1967. The AU mission, AMISOM (which has been drawing down, transformed into AUSSOM in 2025); EAU, Türkiye and USA through air operations). In 2012, a faction of al-Shabaab broke away, giving rise to the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS), based in the mountainous areas of Puntland, which al-Shabaab has pursued to maintain its preeminence.

The armed conflict in Somalia remained one of the deadliest in Africa, compounded by an atmosphere of internal polarisation linked to the electoral process and constitutional review, as well as growing regional geopolitical competition, particularly concerning the Somaliland dispute. According to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS),⁸⁰ the death toll related to the armed conflict with al-Shabaab rose to 6,224 in 2025. This figure was twice that of 2022 and markedly higher than the 4,482 fatalities reported in 2024. It is similar to the body counts before 2022, when the federal government launched a major offensive against al-Shabaab that escalated the conflict. According to

77. AFP, "Civilians face 'devastating' impact of Ethiopia's Oromia conflict: ICRC", *Ahram*, 1 August 2025.

78. OCHA, *Ethiopia: Renewed violence in districts bordering Oromia and Somali regions (As of 1 October 2025)*, OCHA, 8 October 2025.

79. Kedir, Sadik, "Ethiopian army says over 200 armed fighters surrender in western Oromia", *Anadolu*, 21 December 2025.

80. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Militant Islamist Groups in Africa Sustain High Pace of Lethality", 18 February 2025.

ACLED, overall violence in the country caused 9,916 fatalities in 2025.⁸¹

The south-central regions continued to be those most affected by armed violence (Galguduud, Mudug, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Hiraan and Banadir), although the country as a whole suffered from the conflict, with the exception of Somaliland. The armed group al-Shabaab remained active across large parts of southern and central Somalia, occupying major supply routes. Its de facto capital is in Jilib, in Middle Juba. Two of the most notable attacks of the year occurred in March. Al-Shabaab launched an attack on the Qahira Hotel in Beledweyne (Hiraan), which left at least 21 dead and wounded many. On the day of the attack, the hotel was hosting community leaders and Somali Army officers who were coordinating the government's fight against the group. Security forces responded by launching airstrikes against al-Shabaab targets in Hirshabelle, killing 50 members of the group. Separately, an improvised explosive device was detonated at a house near Villa Somalia, the presidential residence, targeting President Mohamud's convoy. The explosion struck the last two vehicles of the convoy, causing 15 fatalities. Al-Shabaab continued to increase its use of improvised explosive devices; according to the UN Group of Experts on Somalia, an estimated 600 incidents involving such devices occurred between January and September 2025, killing between 1,400 and 1,500 people.⁸²

Developments involving Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) helped to make the armed conflict worse.

ISS already had around 1,000 fighters in 2025, over 60% of them foreign nationals, according to the UN Panel of Experts. ISS has established a global administrative and financial hub for ISIS in Somalia. There was an unprecedented rise in ISS attacks in Puntland in 2025, with an estimated death toll of 1,065, according to the ACSS. ACLED put the body count linked to the conflict with ISS in the Bari region (Puntland) at 1,664.⁸³ In previous years, there were fewer than 100 ISS-related fatalities. Most of this activity was linked to operations by Puntland security forces against ISS in the Cal-Miskaad mountains, with airstrike support from the UAE, Türkiye and the United States. According to the UN Panel of Experts, Puntland forces launched an offensive in December 2024 that

The armed conflict in Somalia remained one of the deadliest in Africa, compounded by internal polarisation and regional geopolitical competition over Somaliland

Al-Shabaab's growing threat in Somalia included sophisticated methods of extortion, forced recruitment and propaganda, in addition to armed attacks

considerably degraded ISS capabilities throughout 2025. During these operations, 241 soldiers were killed and over 900 were reportedly wounded. By October 2025, around 900 fighters had perished as a result of the offensive against ISS, prompting Puntland to announce that ISS had been eliminated.

Al-Shabaab is estimated to have between 7,000 and 12,000 combatants and diverse financing mechanisms that generate at least 150 million USD annually, according to the UN Panel of Experts. The Panel of Experts reported that the insurgents maintain a solid financial base through highly sophisticated commercial strategies, exploiting both licit and illicit sources of revenue for its operations, including checkpoints, methods of extortion and forced taxation, as well as businesses and third-party accounts, forced recruitment (of Somali clans, including in Kenya and Ethiopia) and an effective propaganda machine. The influence that al-Shabaab casts over the population and its revenue-generating capacity also extend beyond the areas of its operations. Propagandistic news of its activities and messaging against the government and Western involvement are a fundamental pillar of this influence, operating through thousands of accounts across various social media platforms and in multiple languages.

Various analysts indicated that al-Shabaab was gradually creeping closer to the capital, Mogadishu, and captured strategic towns in the first half of 2025. A rise in violence linked to the group has been identified since 2023, related to the offensive launched by Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud following his electoral victory in 2022.⁸⁴ In 2023, this offensive reportedly prompted a strategic withdrawal by the armed group in 2023. It is now reversing this withdrawal and trying to consolidate its presence in towns after carrying out attacks there. Moreover, al-Shabaab's strength reflects the weakness of the Somali state, according to analysts: in a November 2025 speech to the Somali Parliament, the Chief of Defence Force, General Odowaa Yusuf Raage, revealed that between 10,000 and 15,000 soldiers had been killed or wounded in combat over the past three years.⁸⁵ According to these analyses, the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF) suffers from many problems, including poor leadership, corruption, uneven levels of training and a reliance on clans considered loyal to the

81. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

82. UN Security Council, *Carta Letter dated 28 November 2025 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023) concerning Al-Shabaab addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2025/777, 25 November 2025.

83. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

84. Müller, Quentin, "En Somalie, les Chabab profitent de la crise et s'approchent de Mogadiscio", *Afrique XXI*, 5 May 2025; SomaliGuardian, "Fall of Mogadiscio "real possibility" as militants encroach on its limits", *SomaliGuardian*, 16 March 2025.

85. Bryden, Matt, "Somalia at Risk of Becoming a Jihadist State", *ACSS*, 17 November 2025.

incumbent president, even though they are supposed to have a genuinely national character. This has left the federal government's ability to safeguard security heavily dependent on the AU mission, which was drawing down. In early 2025, the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) was transformed into the AU Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) and its mandate was extended in December.

Meanwhile, the **ACSS research centre highlighted that al-Shabaab's capabilities expanded in 2025 due to an increasingly cooperative relationship with the Houthis in Yemen.**⁸⁶ This cooperation has taken the form of improved equipment, including drones and ballistic missiles, and the travel of dozens of al-Shabaab fighters to Yemen for training. This cooperation has contributed to the success of al-Shabaab's operations in central and southern Somalia. Since November 2023, 47 piracy-related incidents have occurred in the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean. In addition to Houthi missile attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, piracy organised by al-Shabaab has severely affected commercial maritime traffic through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, causing billions of dollars in economic losses and increased costs.

Over 300,000 people were displaced as a result of the war between February and October 2025. In December, the UN warned of worsening food insecurity due to drought during 2025, prompting the government to declare a drought emergency in November. That same month, UNHCR reported that it was assisting 3.68 million people in the country, mainly 3.5 million internally displaced people. The organisation estimated that over 4.4 million people would suffer from acute food insecurity through December, whilst 1.85 million children would experience acute malnutrition until July 2026. UNHCR stressed at the end of 2025 that it had received only 19% of the funding requested for the whole year.⁸⁷ Finally, widespread sexual violence continued, committed primarily by al-Shabaab. Authorities received nearly 15,000 reports of sexual and gender-based violence between March and August 2025.

Al-Shabaab's current offensive also exploits the weaknesses of the federal government and internal polarisation linked to tensions arising from the electoral process and preparations for the district, state and national representative elections. President Mohamud promoted various plans to amend electoral laws, but they were opposed by the political opposition and federal member states, such as Puntland and Jubaland, which upheld their boycott, accusing him of seeking re-election. At certain times during the year, tensions between the federal government and Jubaland escalated into armed clashes, as in February. The government organised the

National Consultative Forum in Mogadishu from 16 to 19 June, a platform bringing together members of the political and social opposition to discuss elections and constitutional reform, although some did not participate. After delays, municipal elections finally commenced in December for the first time in more than five decades. A pilot test was conducted in Mogadishu under the one-person-one-vote formula and enjoyed 25% voter turnout. The elections were rejected by the opposition National Salvation Forum (NSF), a coalition of political associations and former presidents and prime ministers, which argued that the conditions for free elections were not met. The government and opposition parties remained at odds during the electoral cycle, which is scheduled to culminate in June 2026.

Somalia (Somaliland – SSC-Khatumo)	
Start:	2023
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory Internal
Main parties:	Republic of Somaliland, SSC-Khatumo administration (Khatumo State), Puntland State, al-Shabaab
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Summary:	In early 2023, fighting intensified between the security forces of Somaliland and militias from the regions of Sool, Sannag and Cayn, which form part of Somaliland and call themselves SSC-Khatumo. Somaliland and Puntland are involved in a historical dispute over control of these border regions that dates back to 1998, when Puntland was established as an autonomous republic. The dispute has devolved into an armed conflict between the militias of these regions and Somaliland. The three regions of Sool, Sannag and Cayn are geographically located within the borders of Somaliland, though most clans in Sool, Sannag and Cayn (called SSC, by their initials) are associated with those of Puntland, so the SSC militias are allies of Puntland. Since the 1990s, there have been sporadic clashes and attempts at mediation between Puntland and Somaliland and between Somaliland and the SSC militias. In 2012, Khatumo State was created, including part of the regions of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn, calling itself SSC-Khatumo, which added more complexity to the situation. SSC-Khatumo is located within Somaliland, which claims to be independent, yet is opposed by these regions, which have gradually expressed their desire to become a new state of Somalia. In 2016, the SSC-Khatumo administration and Somaliland began peace talks. However, tensions simmered and sporadic clashes continued intermittently between the security forces of Somaliland and the SSC-Khatumo militias until 2023, when the situation escalated, leaving hundreds of people dead, which fell in later years.

Sporadic clashes and irregular hostilities continued between Somaliland security forces and local SSC-Khatumo militias, primarily from the Dhulbahante clan. Having broken out in 2023, their intensity decreased

86. See the summary on Yemen in this chapter.

87. UNHCR, *UNHCR Somalia Operational Update - November 2025*, 21 December 2025.

during the year. In January, Somaliland forces launched an operation in Jiidali (Sanaag region), repelling SSC-Khatumo fighters and capturing the town as part of efforts to consolidate their gains and check the influx of opposition forces. Clashes between Somaliland forces and militias were reported in several locations in Sool, including Guumays and Buq Dharkayn. This fighting resulted in casualties, though figures remain unverified.

The internationally supported offensive launched by the Puntland authorities against ISS during the year, which severely weakened it,⁸⁸ prompted al-Shabaab to attempt to expand its influence into the vacuum left by ISS in parts of North-East state. Although armed violence overall decreased in 2025, political tension linked to this conflict escalated during the year as a result of the creation of North-East state, formed from parts of the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn-Khatumo regions. This new state is the successor to the self-proclaimed SCC-Khatumo state, created in October 2023 by local clans in the region and recognised as an interim administration by the federal government.

In 2025, the Somali federal government formally recognised SSC-Khatumo as a federal member state (North-East state of Somalia), thereby increasing the complexity of the territorial conflict with Somaliland, which rejects this inclusion and claim to sovereignty.⁸⁹ In this regard, in April the federal government's prime minister announced that SSC-Khatumo would be recognised as a new federal state. On 13 July, the conference for the formation of the state of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn-Khatumo commenced in Laascaanood (Sool region), under the authority of Somalia's Federal Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, despite strong opposition from influential traditional clan leaders. The conference concluded on 30 July with the proclamation of North-East state of Somalia and the approval of its flag, corresponding constitution and assembly or parliament.⁹⁰ The assembly then elected the chamber's president and vice presidents, as well as the state's president and vice president. On 30 July, the Puntland state assembly publicly condemned the Somali federal government's "unconstitutional interference" in Sool and Sanaag. This proclamation, which analysts viewed as a significant political milestone, also intensified tensions with Puntland, which rejected certain constitutional decisions related to the new state's borders. Its security forces even clashed with SSC-Khatumo activists in Dhahar district in mid-July, causing four deaths. On 2 August, the Council of Ministers of the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland censured the Somali federal government, asserting that Sool, Sanaag and Togdheer form part of Somaliland's sovereign territories.

South Sudan	
Start:	2009
Type:	Government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government (SPLM/A); armed group SPLA-in Opposition (Riek Machar faction); SPLA-IO dissident Kitgwang factions led by Peter Gatdet, Simon Gatwech Dual and Johnson Olony ("Agwalek"); SPLM-FD; SSLA; SSDM/A; SSDM-CF; SSNLM; REMNASA; NAS (Cirillo), NAS (Loburon); SSUF (Paul Malong); SSOA; community militias (SSPPF, TFN, White Army, Shilluk Agwalek); armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N); Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously known as the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance, SSOMA), which includes the rebel organisations NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC); Sudan; Uganda; UNMISS
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Summary:	The peace agreement reached in 2005, which put an end to the Sudanese conflict, recognised the right to self-determination of the south through a referendum. However, the end of the war with the North and the later independence for South Sudan in 2011 did not manage to offer stability to the southern region. The disputes for the control of the territory, livestock and political power increased between the multiple communities that inhabit South Sudan, increasing the number, the gravity and the intensity of the confrontations between them. The situation became even worse after the general elections in April 2010, when several military officials who had presented their candidature or had supported political opponents to the incumbent party, the SPLM, did not win the elections. These military officers refused to recognise the results of the elections and decided to take up arms to vindicate their access to the institutions, condemn the Dinka dominance over the institutions and the under representation of other communities within them while branding the South Sudan government as corrupt. Juba's offerings of amnesty did not manage to put an end to insurgence groups, accused of receiving funding and logistical support from Sudan. In parallel, there was an escalation of violence in late 2013 between supporters of the government of Salva Kiir and those of former Vice President Riek Machar (SPLA-IO), unleashing a new round of violence that continues to this day. In 2015, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the SPLA-IO, which was ratified in 2018. However, the signatory parties' reluctance to implement it, as well as the emergence of other armed groups and community militias, have kept the war raging in the country.

88. See the summary on Somalia in this chapter.

89. Somali Dialogue Platform, *SSC-Khatumo: Perspectives on the significance and implications of its formation*, Rift Valley Institute, 12 December 2025.

90. UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia*, S/2025/613, 30 September 2025.

South Sudan experienced critical backsliding in 2025, marked by the de facto collapse of the 2018 Revitalised Peace Agreement (R-ARCSS) and a return to widespread armed violence that brought the country to the brink of a new civil war. According to data collected by ACLED, there were 3,277 violent deaths across 2,032 events during the year, with the northern states of Jonglei, Warrap and Upper Nile most affected.⁹¹ These figures confirm the trend towards escalating violence in the country that had resumed the previous year, when 2,024 deaths were recorded, compared to 1,262 in 2023. The armed conflict exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country and Oxfam warned that nearly six million people (half the population) were suffering from acute hunger at the end of the year.⁹² The NGO also reported that over two million people were displaced during the year due to the conflict and widespread flooding, and over one million more had fled the civil war to seek refuge in neighbouring Sudan, which is itself embroiled in war. Faced with the crisis, the country's emergency Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, valued at 1.7 billion USD for 2025, had received less than 41% of its planned funding by the end of the year, due in part to US funding cuts since the closure of USAID.

South Sudan experienced critical backsliding in 2025, marked by the de facto collapse of the 2018 peace agreement and a return to widespread armed violence

Throughout the year, **the power struggle between President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar (SPLA-IO) intensified, resulting in Machar's house arrest, treason trials and military fragmentation that undermined regional stability.** Instability began to manifest in March 2025, when President Kiir attempted to deploy military forces to Nasir, in Upper Nile state, Machar's historical stronghold. On 4 March, a Nuer ethnic militia known as the "White Army", linked to the opposition group SPLA-IO, captured a South Sudanese People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) base in Nasir. More than 30 soldiers died in the assault, including General Majur Duk. In retaliation, on 26 March Kiir's government ordered the arrest of Riek Machar and his wife, Minister of the Interior Angelina Teny, on charges of carrying out subversive activities. Machar was placed under formal house arrest, which his party described as an unconstitutional breach of the peace agreement. The arrest sparked immediate fighting near the capital, Juba, and the deployment of Ugandan troops to protect Kiir's government. Following Machar's arrest, the conflict expanded geographically. During the second quarter of the year, the SSPDF launched a series of coordinated offensives against opposition strongholds in the states of Unity, Jonglei, Upper Nile, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria and Western Equatoria with Ugandan air and ground support. Military pressure and Machar's captivity triggered a wave of defections

within the SPLA-IO. In April alone, more than 3,000 opposition fighters deserted in Central Equatoria. Additionally, an opposition faction named Stephen Par Kuol as the interim party president to replace Machar, intensifying the internal fracture within the SPLA-IO. In September, the SSPDF announced the capture of the city of Tonga and the Wunkur border area, significantly weakening opposition logistics in the northern part of the country.

In September, the government stepped up political pressure by filing formal charges of treason, murder and crimes against humanity against Riek Machar and seven other Nuer community officials. The SPLA-IO declared the government "illegitimate" and urged its forces to mobilise fully for "regime change". President Kiir reshuffled his administration intensively throughout the year to consolidate his family's power and secure his succession. Benjamin Bol Mel, who had been appointed first deputy chairman of the ruling party in May, positioning him as the chosen heir, was abruptly dismissed by Kiir in November and placed under house arrest following a trip to the United Arab Emirates. After Bol Mel was purged, the president's daughter, Adut Salva Kiir, began to assume high-level diplomatic and political roles, travelling to South Africa to build "strategic alliances" and raising concerns about the dynastic concentration of state power.

Later the year, amid the political crisis, President Kiir announced that the presidency and senior government officials, including the SPLM-IO faction led by Stephen Par Kuol, had agreed to hold elections before December 2026, despite the lack of progress on key preparatory steps, including the approval of a new constitution and a national census. The main SPLM-IO faction, loyal to Machar, rejected the announcement. In this context, the UN and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) repeatedly warned that without genuine dialogue, the country was inevitably sliding towards large-scale conflict in 2026.

Finally, **South Sudan's economy and security were ravaged by the prolonged civil war in neighbouring Sudan.** Oil infrastructure, the backbone of Juba's revenue, became a strategic target of the war. Late in the year, the Heglig area in South Kordofan state (Sudan), which houses key facilities for South Sudanese crude oil exports, was briefly captured by Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This area has been subjected to constant drone attacks blamed on the RSF. The attacks damaged pipelines and processing centres, potentially dealing a major blow to the South Sudanese government and economy.

91. ACLED, [ACLED Explorer](#) [Viewed on 26 January 2026].

92. Oxfam, "[Millions stranded as conflict and aid cuts in South Sudan drive surge in suffering](#)", 26 Novembre 2025.

Sudan	
Start:	2023
Type:	Government, Self-government, Resources, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	National: Government (Sudan Armed Forces), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), mercenaries (Russia, Colombia) Darfur: Government, janjaweed, RSF, armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, composed of JEM, SLA-AW, SLA-MM and SPLM-N), various SLA factions and other armed groups, community-based militias South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government, SPLM-N, armed coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), pro-government militias PDF, RSF, South Sudan East: Government, RSF, Eastern Sudan Liberation Forces, United Popular Front for Liberation and Justice, Beja National Congress, Beja Armed Congress
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

After 30 years in power, Omar al-Bashir's regime fell in April 2019 after massive popular demonstrations that security forces used to carry out a coup d'état. After months of administration by the military junta and significant national tensions, a transitional civilian-military government was formed in late 2019. However, on 25 October 2021, a new military coup carried out by the military wing of the transitional government ended the political transition. It was followed by a period of widespread public protests against the military junta (Transitional Sovereignty Council) chaired by the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and deputy-chaired by the leader of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Lieutenant General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, popularly known as "Hemedti". In late 2022, after a year of negotiations, a framework agreement was reached in which the military promised to relinquish much of its political power and return it to civilian actors. However, disagreements between the SAF and RSF during the negotiations over security sector reform, especially regarding deadlines for integrating the RSF into the unified national Sudanese Armed Forces and the establishment of the security structure command, ended up unleashing a new armed conflict in the country on 15 April 2023. This new outbreak of violence was initially concentrated in the capital, Khartoum, but over the months that followed it intensified and expanded over much of the country, affecting the dynamics of the pre-existing armed conflict in the regions of Darfur and the Two Areas South Kordofan and Blue Nile) and reaching eastern Sudan. In the Darfur region, the armed conflict dates back to 2003 and is rooted in demands made by various insurgent groups, primarily the SLA and JEM, for greater decentralisation and development of the region. The Sudanese government responded to the armed uprising in Darfur using the Sudanese Armed Forces and Arab Janjaweed

militias. The reconfiguration of the state of Sudan following the secession of South Sudan in July 2011 aggravated tensions between the Sudanese government and both border regions (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), which had supported the southern SPLA insurgency during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005). After the secession of South Sudan, the SPLA-North was formed in the Two Areas, beginning an armed conflict based on the insurgents' demand for recognition of ethnic and political plurality.

The year marked a critical turning point in Sudan's civil war, giving rise to a de facto partition of national territory.

Pitting the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, allied with a range of Islamist militias and rebel groups, against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo, backed by other insurgent groups and backed by foreign mercenaries, **the war has become even bloodier with the use of drones, triggering the most severe humanitarian and forced displacement crisis in the world.**⁹³ The war had a devastating impact on civilians during the year, reaching record levels of displacement and violence. According to the UN, by the end of the year, 12.8 million people had been displaced by the fighting, of whom more than 4.3 million had fled across borders, primarily to Egypt, Chad and South Sudan. Furthermore, an estimated 21 million people were suffering from acute food insecurity, with areas of famine across the country as both conflict sides actively blocked humanitarian aid.⁹⁴ According to data collected by ACLED, violence in the country caused 17,853 deaths during 2025, making the war the first deadliest in the continent.⁹⁵

The year 2025 was kicked off by a strategic and symbolic victory for the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). After months of advances backed by aviation and drones, the SAF **succeeded in recapturing large parts of Khartoum in March, securing key sites such as the presidential palace, the international airport and the Yarmuk military complex.** General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan declared the capital "free" after landing at the airport in the first such flight since the war began in 2023. However, the RSF paramilitaries' defeat did not spell their end, as they shifted their strategy and focused westward. During the rest of the year, the RSF concentrated their efforts on consolidating their dominance in the Darfur region. The most significant milestone occurred in October 2025 with the RSF's capture of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur and the SAF's last bastion in the region. Following a siege that left thousands dead, the RSF seized the headquarters of the Sixth Infantry Division, consolidating their near-total control over Darfur and securing critical supply routes to Libya and Chad.⁹⁶

93. Johnson, Daniel, "Sudan: After 1,000 days of war, millions of civilians still bearing brunt", *UN News*, 9 January 2026.

94. ACLED, "Fighting moves to Kordofan as Sudan's east-west divide solidifies", 11 December 2025.

95. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 26 January 2026]

96. Townsend, Mark, "RSF massacres left Sudanese city 'a slaughterhouse', satellite images show", *The Guardian*, 5 December 2025.

The capture of El Fasher led to documented mass atrocities, widespread sexual violence and ethnically motivated attacks against the Zaghawa, Masalit and Fur communities. Over 7,000 people are estimated to have been killed, with evidence of summary executions filmed by the attacking forces. These events prompted the International Criminal Court to announce that it was taking steps to gather evidence for use in future prosecutions on 3 November.⁹⁷ With Darfur under the RSF's control, the war's centre of gravity drifted in the final months of the year towards the Kordofan region. The RSF made significant advances in December, capturing the town of Babanusa and the strategic Heglig oil fields, which are vital for the economy and crude oil exports.

The war in Sudan was the deadliest in the continent

The military developments and the country's de facto partition led to the emergence of two parallel government structures. The SAF bloc, led by al-Burhan, re-established a government in Port Sudan in the eastern part of the country, appointing Kamil Idris as prime minister in May. In June, a 22-member government cabinet was formed to gain international legitimacy and consolidate its administration in areas under its control in the north, east and centre of the country. Meanwhile, the RSF promoted their own administrative structure. After signing a "transitional charter" in Nairobi for a secular state in February, they established the "Tasees" coalition,⁹⁸ which gathered support from various Sudanese political groups, civil society organisations and some allied armed movements, including but not limited to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu. In August, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as "Hemedti", was sworn in as the head of the parallel government based in Nyala, South Darfur. He appointed Mohamed Hassan al-Taishi as his prime minister and designated the interior and foreign affairs portfolios. In response, many states and supranational bodies, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan, Somalia, Qatar, the UN and the AU, among others, expressed concern and rejected the parallel government. The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) also strongly condemned it, warning that it could lead to the country's partition, and urged all AU member states and the international community to withhold recognition.

Sudan has become the scene of a proxy war fuelled by foreign interests, in which the RSF's use of drones has decisively eroded the SAF's air superiority.⁹⁹ In May 2025, the war spread to the far east for the first time, when the RSF attacked Port Sudan with

drones, striking airports and naval bases. This attack prompted al-Burhan's government to break diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as it accused it of supplying the advanced weaponry to the paramilitaries. Whilst Egypt and Saudi Arabia have traditionally backed the SAF, the UAE is considered the main supporter of the RSF, although Russian and Colombian mercenaries have also been detected among the paramilitaries' ranks. The RSF are also believed to receive support from the CAR, Chad, Libya, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda. This situation has complicated peace efforts by the Quad (the United States, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt), whose meetings have often been stalled by disagreements over joint statements.¹⁰⁰

Maghreb – North Africa

Libya	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, Resources, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government of National Unity (GNU) with headquarters in Tripoli, National Stability Government (NSG) with headquarters in Tobruk, armed groups including the Libyan National Army (LNA, also called Arab Libyan Armed Forces, ALAF), Stability Support Apparatus (SSA), 444 Combat Brigade, Special Deterrence Force (Al-Rada), ISIS, mercenaries, Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group), among others, Russia, Türkiye
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=
Summary:	In the context of the uprisings in North Africa, popular protests against the government of Muammar Gaddafi began in February 2011. In power since 1969, his regime was characterized by an authoritarian stance repression of dissent, corruption and serious shortcomings at the institutional level. Internal conflict degenerated into an escalation of violence leading to a civil war and an international military intervention by NATO forces. After months of fighting and the capture and execution of Gaddafi in late October, the rebels announced the liberation of Libya. However, the country remains affected by high levels of violence derived from multiple factors, including the inability of the new authorities to control the country and ensure a secure environment; the high

97. Swissinfo, "Fiscalía de CPI teme que presuntas atrocidades en El Fasher puedan ser crímenes de guerra", 3 November 2025.

98. Sudan Tribune "RSF to lead Sudan's parallel government presidential council", 25 March 2025.

99. ADF, "Drones Take on Growing Role in Sudan's Conflict as Technology Advances", 14 October 2025.

100. For more information, see the summary on Sudan in chapter 2 (Peace negotiations in Africa) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2025: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

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

The situation in Libya continued to be characterised by simmering violence that resulted in death tolls below those observed in the worst years of the armed conflict, when between 3,000 and 5,000 people lost their lives (in 2011, then between 2014 and 2016). According to data gathered by ACLED, **violent events in the country caused at least 280 deaths in 2025 – a figure similar to, though slightly higher than, those of the recent period following the 2020 ceasefire:** 146 in 2024, 95 in 2023, 159 in 2022 and 115 in 2021. The situation in the North African country continued to be shaped by a deep political and institutional divide, power struggles and fights for influence among many armed groups, as well as the blocking of UN-led initiatives to address the crisis. During 2025, the division was evident in the continuity of two power centres: the internationally recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) in the west, led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohamed Dbeibah; and the Government of National Stability (GNS) in the east, headed by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and supported by Commander Khalifa Haftar (the leader of the Libyan National Army). Active in Libya through the UNSMIL support mission, the United Nations noted in a September report that competition among armed groups in the western part of the country over territory, resources, the control of illicit activities and institutional influence has fuelled recurrent violence that often affects civilians. Parallel administrative and military structures have consolidated in the east, posing a challenge to any future institutional unification. In the south, the situation remained marked by tribal divisions and complex security dynamics, influenced by the presence of foreign fighters, mercenaries and cross-border illicit activities. Though degraded, ISIS remained active in Libya. Against this backdrop, **the decision by foreign governments to engage with one or both sides and to prioritise their own interests over collective diplomacy has helped to entrench the status quo, dimming prospects for a political solution to the crisis.** Economic difficulties, demonstrated by a

youth unemployment rate nearing 50%, made young men particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.¹⁰¹

One of the most serious episodes of violence in 2025 occurred in May, following the killing of Abdel Ghani al-Kikli (also known as “Ghnewa” or “Ghaniwa”) in uncertain circumstances. The leader of the armed group Stability Support Apparatus (SSA), one of the capital's most powerful militias, al-Kikli was accused of abuse against asylum-seekers and crimes against humanity and was involved in disputes with other armed groups and critical of Dbeibah. He was reportedly killed at the hands of an armed unit (the 444 Combat Brigade) linked to the Libyan Defence Ministry and loyal to the GNU prime minister.¹⁰² Dbeibah then declared that the era of parallel security systems had ended. His statement was reportedly interpreted as a threat by other armed groups, particularly the Special Deterrence Forces (Al-Rada), which, like the SSA, operates under the umbrella of Libya's Presidential Council (PC). This triggered clashes involving artillery fire and an undetermined number of deaths. Some estimates suggest that over 50 people were killed, including at least a dozen civilians, and that dozens were wounded over three days of fighting.¹⁰³ Demonstrations were also staged against Dbeibah. **Fighting between rival groups supposedly aligned with the GNU affected security in the Libyan capital for several months and highlighted the authorities' difficulties in controlling the militias and para-state security bodies and in imposing a centralised command.** Türkiye, which supports the GNU, secured a fragile truce in September, but instability persisted at the end of the year.

Additionally, **some reports released during 2025 pointed to the consolidation of Russian activity in the eastern part of Libya controlled by Haftar**, where Moscow reportedly redirected part of its forces following the fall of Bashar Assad's regime in Syria. Throughout the year, Haftar's family, particularly his sons Saddam, Khaled and Belqasim, made efforts to consolidate their power and international ties and secure their influence over the country's future. The Sudanese government also accused Haftar of being implicated in the Sudanese conflict and of coordinating attacks with militias allied to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).¹⁰⁴ At the close of 2025, **the Turkish Parliament approved a two-year extension of its military forces' deployment in Libya** until 2028. The death of the Libyan Army's commander-in-chief, Mohamed Hadad, and seven others in a plane crash whilst returning from Türkiye raised concerns in political and military circles about its impact on stability in the western part of the

101. UN Security Council, *Strategic review of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2025/611, 30 May 2025.

102. Lorenzo Tondo, “Six killed in Tripoli clashes after killing of militia leader”, *The Guardian*, 13 May 2025.

103. EFE, “Over 50 dead in Tripoli militia clashes, Libyan rights group says”, *EFE*, 17 May 2025; Libya Crimes Watch (LCW), *Report: Human Rights Violations in Libya During May 2025*, 5 June 2025.

104. See the summary on Sudan in this chapter.

country. In new protests against Dbeibah's government, held responsible for deteriorating living conditions, corruption and foreign interference, demonstrators demanded a transparent investigation into Haddad's death. **The UN attempted to launch new initiatives to address the conflict in Libya in 2025.**¹⁰⁵ In January, former Ghanaian Foreign Minister Hanna Tetteh assumed the post of new special envoy in an attempt to overcome the impasse in the political process. She proposed a new roadmap in August. Faced with difficulties and resistance to her proposal, the UN promoted an alternative dialogue channel in December with Qatar's backing, which was met with scepticism by the Libyan population. Meanwhile, Haftar launched a campaign to discredit the UN proposal and convince groups in the west to seek alternative ways to resolve the conflict. Finally, as in previous years, the situation of the migrant and refugee population in Libya remained a source of concern, particularly following the discovery in February of mass graves containing dozens of people with gunshot wounds in Jakharrah and Kufra.

Southern Africa

Mozambique (north)	
Start:	2017
Type:	System, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) or Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP)-formerly Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)-, al-Qaeda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, "Naparama" local militias
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

Since late 2017, the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique has suffered an armed conflict led by Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ). The armed jihadist organisation made its first appearance in October 2017 when it attacked three police posts in the Mocímboa da Praia district in Cabo Delgado province. Since that time, Cabo Delgado has been the epicentre of rising violent activity in the country. While some reports claim that ASWJ fighters have received training in Tanzania and Somalia, which has led locals to call them al-Shabaab, alluding to the Somali jihadist group, no significant links to international jihadist networks have been established. The causes of the outbreak of violence refer

rather to factors linked to the grievances and marginalisation of the Muslim minority in Mozambique (one fifth 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, leading to the deployment of international forces from Rwanda and the SADC Standby Force Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) in the country to help the government to combat the insurgency in mid-2021.

The year 2025 was critical for Mozambique, marked by the resurgence and expansion of the jihadist insurgent group Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) in the north and by an entrenched post-electoral political crisis that actors are seeking to resolve through a national dialogue.¹⁰⁶ Cabo Delgado province remained the epicentre of the armed conflict throughout the year, but violence spilled over significantly into the neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula as the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate. According to data collected by ACLED, 512 people lost their lives in Cabo Delgado during the year, plus 82 in Nampula and 12 in Niassa, bringing the total to 606 violent deaths caused by the conflict.¹⁰⁷ This is significantly more than the 401 deaths reported the previous year and the 261 in 2023, though far below the 2,076 deaths ACLED recorded in 2021.¹⁰⁸ The deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and Rwandan security forces in 2021 helped to reduce the ISMP threat in the region; however, with the SADC mission ending in July 2024, violence spiked again and spread to neighbouring provinces. Meanwhile, according to UNHCR data, the conflict has internally displaced around 1.3 million people since 2017, including more than 250,000 in 2025 alone due to the escalation of violence.¹⁰⁹

After the ISMP insurgents were pushed back by a joint Rwandan-Mozambican offensive in 2024, **they regrouped and launched a counter-offensive in 2025.** ISMP activity was relatively low in the first quarter, owing to the impact of Cyclone Chido and military pressure. Instead, the group focused on resupply by stealing food and supplies in districts such as Macomia. Facing reduced funding from alleged foreign branches,

105. For more information on Libya, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2025. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona, Icaria, 2026.

106. See the summary on Mozambique in Chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

107. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 26 January 2026].

108. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Africa Surpasses 150,000 Deaths Linked to Militant Islamist Groups in Past Decade", 28 July 2025.

109. UNHCR, "Mozambique Country Brief - 5 December 2025".

including the one in Somalia,¹¹⁰ ISMP intensified its extortion practices, including roadblocks to demand money from civilians and traders, as well as raids on mining areas in the districts of Ancuabe, Balama and Montepuez to extract funds from gold and precious stones. Starting in late July, ISMP demonstrated a renewed offensive capacity with an incursion into southern districts of Cabo Delgado (Chiúre and Ancuabe) that displaced around 55,000 people. Several attacks were reported in the city of Mocímboa da Praia in September and November, despite the heavy Rwandan military presence. In October, ISMP launched its first attack on the city of Palma in more than four years, killing civilians and jeopardising the stability of nearby gas projects. Earlier, in May, the French company TotalEnergies had announced its intention to restart a 20 billion USD liquefied natural gas (LNG) project on the Afungi peninsula that had been suspended in 2021 following the insurgent takeover of Palma.¹¹¹

A shift in ISMP's military strategy was also observed during the year, with the group expanding its radius of operation into the provinces of Niassa and Nampula. In May, ISMP made its greatest advance into Niassa since 2021, attacking conservation projects and ambushing security forces in Mecula district. Starting in September, various attacks were reported in the districts of Memba and Eráti in Nampula province, displacing thousands of people. Historically a recruitment zone for the insurgency, Nampula became an active combat theatre, suggesting that the group intends to establish permanent bases further south.

ISMP's change in strategy was also evident in its approach to local populations. During 2025, many incidents were reported in villages in Macomia, Quissanga and Mocímboa da Praia, where insurgents urged the population to reject the government and the FRELIMO party, presenting themselves as the only legitimate authority in an effort to secure local support.

Finally, towards the end of the year, **the Mozambican government showed signs of a possible paradigm shift in its peace strategy.** On several occasions, President Daniel Chapo and authorities such as the governor of Cabo Delgado province said that they did not rule out exploring dialogue with the insurgency as a complement to military action to resolve the conflict, despite having rejected the idea since the outbreak of violence.¹¹² In the meantime, a counter-terrorism centre was established alongside a new national strategy seeking to address the socio-economic grievances fuelling the insurgency.

West Africa

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

Summary:

The insurgent group Boko Haram (BH), which started out as a jihadist sect, 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; Islamic State West Africa Province or Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP or ISWA), 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. ISWAP's killing of the leader of BH in 2021 sparked an escalation in the fighting between both groups for supremacy in the area.

During the year, there was a resurgence of activity by the two main Boko Haram factions (JAS¹¹³ and Islamic State West Africa Province, ISWAP) and by counterinsurgency

110. According to a report by the Group of Experts on Somalia, the Islamic State's affiliate in Somalia (ISIL-Somalia) was estimated to collect four million dollars annually and use the extortion money to finance its affiliated terrorist cells in other countries, such as Mozambique and the DRC. UN Security Council, *Letter dated 28 November 2025 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023) concerning Al-Shabaab addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2025/777, Novembre 2025.

111. EFE, "TotalEnergies mantiene su proyecto en Mozambique pese a la retirada de R. Unido y P. Bajos", *SWI*, 2 December 2025.

112. DW, "Cabo Delgado: Insurgentes convidados ao diálogo político", *DW*, 10 October 2025.

113. The armed group JAS, which stands for Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram), is the faction of BH's historic leader, and is therefore commonly referred to as BH. Hereafter, the term BH is used to refer to JAS.

operations in the Lake Chad Basin region, which encompasses northeastern Nigeria (mainly Borno state), Cameroon's Extreme North region, the Diffa region in Niger and Chad's Lac province. **An uptick in violence was also experienced in northwestern Nigeria, progressively linked to the Islamist insurgency.** According to the Africa Center of Strategic Studies (ACSS),¹¹⁴ the Lake Chad Basin reported a 7% rise in deaths (3,982) related to militant Islamist violence during 2025, demonstrating the continued resilience of BH and ISWAP. However, despite this increase, viewed in perspective, annual deaths in the region fell by 50% from levels reported between 2014 and 2016. By late 2024, military operations against the insurgency had led the Borno state governor to assert that they had reduced BH by 90%, but insurgent staying power was demonstrated by the growing number of BH attacks in 2025.¹¹⁵ In similar terms, ACLED noted that Borno continued to be the Nigerian region with the highest number of fatalities as a result of attacks by Boko Haram factions, followed by Cameroon's Extreme North region, where 3,529 and 441 fatalities occurred, respectively. If the body count caused by insurgent violence in Niger's Diffa region (159) and Chad's Lac province (33) is added to these figures, the total number of fatalities across the Lake Chad Basin region rose to 4,162 in 2025.¹¹⁶

Insurgent activity increased in the Lake Chad Basin region and criminal violence escalated in northwestern Nigeria, increasingly linked to the Islamist insurgency in the northeast

In recent years, analysts have **noted the spread of militant Islamist cells into northwestern Nigeria. This area had previously been primarily the domain of organised criminal gangs** dedicated to kidnapping for ransom, extortion and the seizure of farms and mines. Operating mainly in the states of Sokoto and Kebbi, the armed group Lakurawa was initially recruited by local communities to combat banditry in the area, but it ended up cooperating with those same criminal groups and operating in a similar fashion. Lakurawa is also suspected of having established links with militant Islamist groups in the region, such as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and ISWAP. With an estimated 200 fighters, Lakurawa is well equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance and satellite communication equipment, in addition to other technologies, according to the ACSS. The armed group Mahmuda settled in Kainji Lake National Park (between the west-central states of Niger and Kebbi) in 2020 after storming it and expelling its rangers. It had initially been a religious organisation, according to local

In response to the gravity of the situation and the rise in mass kidnappings, Nigeria declared a national security emergency

sources. The Nigerian Army described Mahmuda as a BH faction.

Given the increasing instability in northwestern Nigeria, there is also growing concern over links between militant groups in the Sahel – particularly ISGS– and Lakurawa and Mahmuda, as well as with ISWAP in the northeast. Criminal gangs operating in northwestern Nigeria, often conflated with militant Islamist groups, are estimated to be responsible for roughly the same number of fatalities as BH and ISWAP, leaving a death toll of 4,000.

In response to the gravity of the situation across the entire northern part of the country and the rise in mass kidnappings, Nigerian

President Bola Tinubu declared a “national security emergency” on 26 November 2025. In November alone, armed groups kidnapped over 500 people across several states, primarily in the northwestern and north-central regions, including 303 pupils and 12 teachers abducted on 21 November from a Catholic school in the Agwara area of Niger state. With this declaration, President Tinubu ordered an increase in recruitment by security forces, including 20,000 additional police officers, and the deployment of new forest ranger units to combat insurgents hiding in forests and national parks. He also urged the Nigerian Parliament to review laws to allow states to establish their own police forces. His decision was shaped by **mounting pressure from the United States, which on 31 October designated Nigeria a “Country of Particular Concern” over alleged religious freedom violations.** On 1 November, US President Donald Trump ordered the US Department of

Defense to prepare for possible action in Nigeria if its president did not halt what Trump described as a “massive massacre” of Christians by Islamist groups. Tinubu rejected accusations that there was an inter-religious conflict in the country, but stepped up his engagement and contacts with the US administration. Finally, **on 25 December, Trump announced that he had ordered airstrikes against the Lakurawa group** in the far northwestern state of Sokoto.¹¹⁷ Later, the Nigerian government announced that these strikes were carried out with the approval of its president and that the Nigerian intelligence services had shared relevant information with the United States. However, analysts noted that there is no credible evidence that Islamic State and its local allies maintain an operational presence in Sokoto state, nor that the airstrikes destroyed

114. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Africa Surpasses 150,000 Deaths Linked to Militant Islamist Groups in Past Decade”, ACSS, 28 July 2025.

115. Samuel, Malik; Stoddard, Ed, “Resurgent jihadist violence in northeast Nigeria part of a worrying regional trend”, *The New Humanitarian*, 2 June 2025.

116. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 10 January 2026].

117. Lawal, Shola, “US bombs target ISIL in Nigeria: What’s really going on?”, *Al-Jazeera*, 26 December 2025.

the announced targets. The actual number of fighters killed in the attack also remains unknown. Patterns of violence in the area further show that the overwhelming majority of victims of criminal and insurgent groups are Muslims from the same rural communities, affected by banditry, widespread killings, sexual violence, forced displacement, the destruction of livelihoods, mass kidnappings and systematic extortion.¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, BH and ISWAP have maintained ongoing rivalries and changes of leadership since ISWAP split off in 2015. Both groups are now flexibly organised around multiple cells, operating primarily in northeastern Nigeria and, to a lesser extent, in surrounding areas of Cameroon, Niger and Chad. BH and ISWAP have frequently used the porous Cameroon–Nigeria border to conduct hit-and-run attacks from one side to the other. Although the regional MNJTF mission helped to improve collaboration on counterinsurgency and reduce combat actions in neighbouring countries, Niger’s withdrawal from the mission in March 2025 and Chad’s threat to follow suit could affect the evolving situation, according to ACLED.¹¹⁹

Both BH and ISWAP seem to be increasingly better organised and equipped, according to the ACSS. BH is estimated to have between 1,500 and 2,000 fighters, whilst ISWAP has between 4,000 and 7,000. Both groups were held responsible for a similar number of fatalities. In the first months of 2025, ISWAP attacked up to 15 Nigerian military bases, forcing the withdrawal of some contingents.¹²⁰ The rebel group also used night-vision technology to launch attacks against these bases. Notable for its scale was an attack carried out by a contingent of 500 ISWAP militants on the Kukawa naval base in June. The group has also acquired the operational expertise necessary to deploy armed and surveillance drones. The Lake Chad Basin region experienced a 32% rise in deaths related to militant Islamist violence against civilians between 2024 and 2025. This trend has held steady since 2023. The 880 deaths reported by the ACSS between mid-2024 and mid-2025 reflect the highest level of violence against civilians since 2016. Some analysts also highlighted the fragmentation of these groups, as well as their lack of popular support.

Mali	
Start:	2012
Type:	System, Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for the Defence of the People of Azawad (CSP-DPA), Azawad Liberation Front, The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen) (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Katiba Macina, Africa Corps (previously Wagner Group), Alliance of Sahel States (AES)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

The Tuareg community that inhabits northern Mali has lived in a situation of marginalisation and underdevelopment since colonial times which has fuelled revolts and led to the establishment of armed fronts against the central government. In the 1990s, 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).

The armed conflict in Mali underwent a profound and alarming transformation in 2025 alongside the total consolidation of the military junta in power, the collapse of the multiparty democratic system and a radical reconfiguration of international alliances within the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). Despite the military junta’s security promises, internal stability in the country steadily deteriorated, with a severe impact on the population. ACLED reported 3,889 violent deaths in the country, nearly half of them in the central region

118. Samuel, Malik, “Did the US military strikes in Nigeria hit the right target?”, *The New Humanitarian*, 12 January 2026.

119. ACLED, *Q&A | The Islamic State’s pivot to Africa*, 4 September 2025.

120. Samuel, Malik; Stoddard, Ed, “Resurgent jihadist violence in northeast Nigeria part of a worrying regional trend”, *The New Humanitarian*, 2 June 2025.

(Ségou and Mopti).¹²¹ UNHCR estimated by mid-year that 376,725 people remained refugees due to violence and 402,167 were internally displaced.¹²² These figures again demonstrate broad continuity with the dynamics of violence experienced in previous years.

One notable development observed during the year was a tactical change in the strategy of the jihadist groups organised under the Group for Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), affiliated with al-Qaeda and led by Iyad Ag Ghali, which was characterised by a shift from direct clashes to a large-scale siege strategy. Unlike in previous attempts to seize cities, **the insurgents focused on consolidating control over the routes supplying the capital**, disrupting the flow of fuel, food and essential goods from Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. In this regard, perhaps the most significant event of the year was the JNIM's partial blockade of Bamako from September onward, which triggered an economic crisis in the capital, involving power cuts and dizzying inflation. The blockade was part of a deliberate effort to paralyse the economy, undermine government authority and destabilise the military junta.¹²³

Against this backdrop, **the military and political alliances were reconfigured during the year, with Mali breaking definitively from its traditional partners**. Early in the year, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) formally recognised Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger's withdrawal. Simultaneously, and in response to the ineffectiveness of previous international missions, the three AES countries announced the creation of a "unified force" of 5,000 troops to combat insecurity. In the face of Western isolation, Mali strengthened its relationship with Russia, shifting from the informal presence of Wagner Group mercenaries to direct state cooperation through Africa Corps, controlled by the Russian Ministry of Defence. In January 2025, Russia delivered more than 100 military vehicles and pieces of surveillance equipment. Moreover, seeking to finance the war effort and compensate for the lack of international aid, the military junta took drastic measures, including the seizure of approximately 245 million USD in gold from the Canadian company Barrick Gold early in the year, which led to the suspension of operations at the Loulou-Gounkoto mines. French companies such as TotalEnergies have also left the country, leaving a vacuum that the government is attempting to fill with partners from Russia and China.

Finally, **in 2025 the military junta decided to definitively terminate the agreement on the "transition" to a civilian government**. Led by Colonel Assimi Goïta, who has held power since the coups d'état of 2020 and 2021, the

junta institutionalised its permanence through a series of decrees and political manoeuvres that eliminated any vestige of formal opposition, dissolving political parties and arresting two former prime ministers.¹²⁴ It also extended its transitional mandate until 2030 in a move suggesting that the military leaders have no intention of relinquishing power. However, in August, an alleged coup attempt followed by purges suggested friction within the Malian Army.¹²⁵

Western Sahel Region	
Start:	2018
Type:	System, Resources, Identity International
Main parties:	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Côte D'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Alliance of Sahel States (AES), Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM or GSIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) –also known as Islamic State in the Province of West Africa (ISWAP)–, Katiba Macina, Ansaroul Islam, other jihadist groups and community militias, Russia, Africa Corps (previously Wagner Group)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

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 2011.²¹ Meanwhile, the armed groups of Mali have expanded their activities to the Liptako-Gourma region. This expansion is related to the instability stemming from the spread of the jihadist insurgency of Algerian origin AQIM, its fragmentation and configuration into other similar types of armed groups, some aligned with al-Qaeda and others with ISIS, which currently operate and have expanded throughout the region, also affecting the countries of the Gulf of Guinea (Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin).. 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.

121. ACLED, [ACLED Explorer](#) [Viewed on 26 January 2026].

122. UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#) [Viewed on 28 January 2026].

123. Foreign Policy, "Mali's Junta Is the Architect of Its Own Disasters", *FP*, 3 Decembre 2025.

124. Njie, Paul, "Military rulers in Mali dissolve all political parties", *BBC*, 14 May 2025.

125. Al Jazeera, "Mali soldiers arrested over coup allegations: What we know", *Al Jazeera*, 12 August 2025.

For yet another year, the security situation in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region continued to deteriorate. This region encompasses Mali, Burkina Faso and the Tillabéri, Dosso and Tahoua regions in southwestern Niger. Following the consolidation of military juntas in all three Sahelian states and their formal withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the armed conflict has entered a stage of “economic warfare” and territorial expansion. Jihadist armed groups, primarily the Group for Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), affiliated with al-Qaeda, and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) or Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP), have challenged state sovereignty through blockades, sieges of provincial capitals and a bloody new list of attacks. Political violence caused more than 10,000 deaths in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in 2025. ACLED reported a body count of 5,065 in Burkina Faso, concentrated mainly in the regions of Est, Boucle du Mouhoun and Sahel; 3,889 violent deaths in Mali, nearly half of them in the central region (Ségou and Mopti); and just over 1,500 fatalities in western Niger, more than 90% of them in Tillabéri.¹²⁶ For yet another year, Burkina Faso held its position as the country most affected by jihadist violence in the region, accounting for 55% of all conflict-related deaths in the Sahel. These annual death tolls in the region are now seven times higher than those reported in 2019, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS).¹²⁷ The JNIM remained responsible for 83% of deaths, led by the Macina Liberation Front and Ansar Dine. Both groups are part of the JNIM and their estimated 6,000–7,000 fighters operate primarily in northern, central and southern Mali and southern Burkina Faso. ISGS is the other main jihadist organisation in the area, with an estimated 2,000–3,000 fighters concentrated mainly in northern Burkina Faso and western Niger. In addition to the deadly violence, a record number of foreign kidnappings was also reported, with the JNIM targeting industrial and mining workers (economic warfare) and ISGS seeking high-value hostages to fund its activities.

According to the ACSS, **state security forces and their allies –principally from Russia– were responsible for many of the deaths inflicted on civilians.** In Mali, they were responsible for 82% of all civilian deaths over the past year, and in Burkina Faso they caused 41%. This pattern of violence against civilians waged by Malian, Burkinabe and Russian forces is a key factor driving the JNIM’s recruitment. Most of the civilians were members of the Fulani ethnic group accused of supplying fighters to the JNIM.¹²⁸

The high toll of violence in the Western Sahel region, fuelled in large part by violence committed by state forces and their Russian allies, was a factor key driving jihadist recruitment

Due to the growing instability, over 3.5 million people had been forcibly displaced by violence in the region, according to UNHCR data, though this figure is likely much higher given the lack of independent reporting and updates by military authorities in Burkina Faso since 2023.

Mali’s internal security was critically threatened during the year when the JNIM, led by Iyad Ag Ghali, shifted its military strategy towards the economic strangulation of urban centres. From September 2025, the jihadist insurgents imposed a partial blockade on the capital, Bamako, disrupting fuel supplies and controlling road routes to Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, which are vital for the trade of this landlocked country. The transport embargo in the western regions of Kayes and Niolo caused fuel shortages and nationwide price hikes. Although the Malian Army and Russian forces attempted to protect convoys, JNIM militants destroyed dozens of tanker trucks in ambushes.

The government of Burkina Faso failed to regain its lost territory for yet another year, with estimates that it merely controls approximately 40% of national territory. During 2025, the JNIM demonstrated renewed military capacity, briefly capturing provincial capitals such as Djibo and Diapaga in May. In September, an ambush against a military convoy in Koubel-Alpha claimed the lives of 90 soldiers in one of the deadliest incidents reported in the country’s recent history. In response, the military junta led by Ibrahim Traoré intensified the use of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP), militias composed of armed civilians. However, this strategy has contributed to a sharp rise in fatalities, leaving many communities vulnerable to massacres in retaliation for aligning with the government.

Although the death toll in Niger did not reach those of its neighbours, there was a worrying expansion of jihadist group activity into previously safe areas during the year. Violence spread towards the southern Dosso region and northern Agadez. ISSP intensified its attacks against the Benin-Niger oil pipeline, a critical piece of economic infrastructure for the military junta since it was slapped with international sanctions.

Neighbouring Gulf of Guinea countries also continued to suffer from violent episodes due to the spillover effect. In this regard, **Benin has become a key battleground for jihadist groups seeking to expand their operations toward the West African coast.** Since the first attack in Benin in 2019, the security threat has increased, causing an estimated 575 deaths in 2025.¹²⁹

126. ACLED, [ACLED Explorer](#) [Viewed on 26 January 2026].

127. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Africa Surpasses 150,000 Deaths Linked to Militant Islamist Groups in Past Decade”, ACSS, 28 July 2025.

128. The Washington Post, “A powerful, opaque al-Qaeda affiliate is rampaging across West Africa”, 8 June 2025.

129. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Adapting Benin’s Battle with Violent Militant Groups”, 26 January 2026.

Meanwhile, in 2025, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger deepened their international isolation and mutual cooperation through the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). In January, **ECOWAS formally recognised the withdrawal of all three countries, marking the end of decades of regional integration in West Africa.** In response, the military juntas announced the creation of a “unified force” of 5,000 personnel and a joint military battalion to combat insurgents and secure borders. The year also marked the transformation of the Russian mercenary outfit Wagner Group into Africa Corps, putting it under the direct control of the Kremlin. Though its military impact on territorial recovery in the region has been limited, by year’s end it focused on securing supply routes in Mali in an attempt to alleviate pressure on the Malian government. Finally, all three countries have decided to prolong their military transitions. Mali and Niger have established five-year transition periods that would allow current leaders to remain in power until the end of the decade, in an environment where political parties have been dissolved and civil society faces increasing repression.

America

Central America and the Caribbean

Haiti	
Start:	2024
Type:	Government, Territory, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti (MSS), Gang Suppression Force (GSF), armed gangs (including Viv Ansanm, an alliance between two coalitions of armed groups –GPèp and Revolutionary Forces of the G9 Family and Allies), vigilante and self-defense groups (Bwa Kale movement), private military company Vectus Global
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑
Summary:	The serious multidimensional crisis that Haiti is facing –with high levels of violence, massive displacement, institutional paralysis, economic fragility, sociopolitical and humanitarian crisis, control of significant areas of the country by armed bands– worsened after the assassination of president Jovenel Moïse in 2021 and the strengthening and alliance of the numerous armed groups. However, the socio-political and institutional fragility of the country goes back to the dictatorship of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier (1957-86), the coup d’état against Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1991 after the first democratic elections in the

history of the country, the autocratic drift of Aristide after his reinstatement in power (1994) and his abrupt and forced departure from the country in 2004, which avoided an armed confrontation with a rebel group that had taken over much of the country. Since then, the deployment of several international forces and missions –Multinational Interim Force (2004), MINUSTAH (2004), MINUJUSTH (2017,) BINUH (2019), Multinational Security Support Mission (2023), Gang Suppression Force (GSF)–, the imposition of several sanctions and arms embargoes by the United Nations, or the disbursement of enormous resources by international cooperation have not been able to reverse the political, social and economic instability, reduce high levels of corruption, poverty, social exclusion and crime, or eliminate the control that armed bands exert in certain urban areas of the country.

Faced with the drastic deterioration of the multidimensional political, humanitarian and security crisis gripping the country in 2025, **the UN Security Council authorised transforming the Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) into the Gang Suppression Force (GSF),** which will have greater military strength, territorial coverage, funding and operational autonomy from the Haitian authorities. According to data from the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), **more than 8,100 murders were recorded between January and November 2025,** though the UN estimates that the real figure is significantly higher due to difficulties accessing gang-controlled areas.¹³⁰ **From early 2022 to November 2025, more than 12,500 people were wounded and 20,637 people were killed in the country,** with the death toll clearly mounting year by year (2,183 in 2022, 4,789 in 2023, 5,601 in 2024 and over 8,100 in 2025, though this last figure could rise to around 9,000 if the monthly average of killings for the year were maintained in December). By the close of 2025, around 300 armed gangs, many of them integrated into the armed group coalition Viv Ansanm, controlled 90% of the capital, more than 50% of the Artibonite department (Haiti’s largest) and a significant proportion of the Centre and West departments and other regions of the country. In the Artibonite and Centre departments, killings soared by 210% in 2025. According to estimates by the International Crisis Group, Viv Ansanm alone could have between 12,000 and 20,000 members.¹³¹

In addition to the mortality associated with the conflict between national and international security forces and armed gangs, by the end of 2025 around 1.4 million people (12% of the total population, double the figure in September 2024) were in a situation of forced displacement¹³² and 6.4 million people (more than half the population) faced severe food insecurity, with around two million at emergency levels of acute food

130. Swissinfo, “Haïti registró más de 8.100 asesinatos entre enero y noviembre de 2025”, *Swissinfo*, 22 January 2026.

131. International Crisis Group, *Acabar con la letal alianza de pandillas en Haití*, ICG, 15 December 2025.

132. OIM, “Displacement in Haiti Reaches Record High as 1.4 Million People Flee Violence”, *IOM*, 15 October 2025.

insecurity.¹³³ An estimated 1,600 schools remained closed,¹³⁴ many others were occupied by armed gangs and several hundred had been destroyed (284 in 2024 alone), disrupting the school year for hundreds of thousands of children (and according to some estimates, one million) across the country. An estimated 70% of health centres and hospitals in Port-au-Prince were closed or inoperative, causing serious restrictions on the healthcare system in the metropolitan region. UNICEF believes that approximately half of all armed gang members are minors. Whilst child recruitment had already increased significantly in 2024 (by 70% compared to the previous year), the involvement of minors in gang activities skyrocketed in 2025 (by 700%, according to mid-year data).¹³⁵ The United Nations warned of a rise in gang rapes and reported that cases of sexual violence had risen by 40% in 2025.¹³⁶ Sexual violence almost entirely targeted women and girls and was overwhelmingly committed by armed gangs as a strategy to assert control, sow terror and exact revenge against people accused of collaborating with the state. In early 2025, the UN had already indicated that sexual violence against minors had exploded by 1,000% compared to the previous year.¹³⁷

As the MSS was unable to confront or contain the widespread violence or ease the humanitarian crisis, and in light of recurrent attacks on the mission by armed gangs, on 30 September 2025 the UN Security Council approved Resolution 2793, presented by the United States and Panama, to transform the MSS into the Gang Suppression Force (GSF). This mission is expected to be more robust, with up to 5,500 military personnel, far exceeding the approximately 1,000 MSS troops deployed in late 2025. It is also planned to have greater offensive capacity, territorial coverage, funding and operational autonomy from the Haitian authorities, as well as an enhanced ability to address some of the country's main security challenges, such as crime, drug trafficking and the illegal circulation of weapons. Both the OAS and the United Nations publicly committed to becoming much more decisively involved in the mission's performance through the creation of a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH) to provide logistical and operational support to the GSF and the Haitian government, as well as a Standing Group of Partners to mobilise troops and funds for the mission. Member countries of the Standing Group of Partners were to include the Bahamas, Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kenya and the United States. In late December, it was estimated that the effective deployment of the GSF would begin around April 2026.

The number of state security operations proliferated in 2025. They also became much deadlier, to the point that, according to the United Nations, they caused 61% of all deaths and injuries linked to the armed conflict. Armed gang attacks were responsible for 30% of the remaining deaths and self-defence groups accounted for 9%.¹³⁸ To strengthen the operational capacity of the police (totalling around 13,400 officers) to check the growing activity of the armed gangs, the government authorised the deployment of the 2,000-member Haitian Armed Forces to support it. The Haitian government also hired the private security company Vectus Global to assist a combat unit against armed gangs under the coordination of the prime minister. Although the government provided no details about its contract, some maintained that Vectus deployed more than 200 personnel in the first few months of operations and intended to deploy hundreds more by 2026. It was also claimed that Vectus played a significant role in some of the most intense fighting of the year, such as the clashes around the presidential palace in August 2025. Following Vectus' intervention, the intensive use of explosive and kamikaze drones against armed gangs increased dramatically. By the end of the year, such drones were estimated to have caused the deaths of nearly 1,000 people, including around 40 civilians, 11 of which were minors. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk described these attacks as illegal under international law and lamented the rise in summary executions by specialised police units, which climbed to 174 between January and September 2025 alone. The United Nations, some governments and various human rights organisations also expressed concern about the growing activity and human rights violations of self-defence groups, which arose in a movement known as Bwa Kale, as well as attacks by spontaneous civilian mobs against alleged gang members, resulting in hundreds of deaths. According to some reports, the self-defence brigades operate with the collusion or even the collaboration of the security forces, possess a significant portion of the estimated 500,000 illegal weapons circulating in the country and have gained notable strength in the last two years, acquiring large-calibre weaponry and increasing coordination among themselves.

133. OCHA, *Haiti: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan*, OCHA, 15 December 2025.

134. Hauteville, Jean-Michel, "Gang violence deepens Haiti's educational crisis", *Le Monde*, 10 November 2025.

135. Swissinfo, "Unicef registra un alarmante aumento del 700% en reclutamiento forzado de menores en Haití", *Swissinfo*, 28 August 2025.

136. Reliefweb, "UNICEF Haiti Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8", 31 December 2025.

137. UNICEF, "Haiti's Children Under Siege: The staggering rise of child abuse and recruitment by armed groups", 7 February 2025.

138. Jorge Antonio Rocha, "1,247 killed in Haiti between July and September: UN report", *Anadolu Ajansi*, 12 November 2025.

South America

Colombia	
Start:	1964
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, ELN, Estado Mayor Central (EMC), Segunda Marquetalia, Estado Mayor de los Bloques y Frente (EMBF), National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Army (CNEB), narco-paramilitary groups
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The Colombian armed conflict continued to be characterised by high levels of violence throughout the year, with clashes between security forces and various insurgent armed groups, as well as among opposition groups themselves. The border with Venezuela remained one of the areas most affected by armed violence, with significant activity carried out by the parties to the conflict.

According to data collected by ACLED, over 2,000 people died nationwide as a result of armed violence in 2025. Meanwhile, the organisation Indepaz noted that 78 massacres occurred during 2025, resulting in 256 fatalities. These figures were very similar to those in 2024, when 76 massacres with 267 victims were reported. Furthermore, according to UN data, the number of people affected by the armed conflict and violence quadrupled in the first quarter of the year compared to the same period the previous year. OCHA indicated that the humanitarian situation deteriorated during the year. The number of forced displacements was the highest in 18 years, with 88,000 people subjected to mass displacements and another 103,150 to individual ones. In addition, over one million people

were subjected to confinement and mobility restrictions –triple the figure for 2024. The Ideas for Peace Foundation noted that the number of armed group members grew by more than 23% in 2025 compared to the previous year, exceeding 27,000 people (nearly 14,000 combatants and more than 13,000 in support networks).¹³⁹ According to the organisation, armed clashes in the country increased, as did attacks against security forces and against civilian infrastructure and property.

The main flashpoint of the armed conflict during the year was the Catatumbo region, in Norte de Santander department. The scene of intense clashes between the ELN and Frente 33 del Estado Mayor de los Bloques y Frentes (a group that emerged as a dissident faction of the demobilised FARC-EP), the region was also gripped by a serious humanitarian crisis as a consequence of forced displacement and the confinement of the civilian population. On 16 January, the ELN launched an offensive against Frente 33 following the massacre of a family. The massacre triggered a large-scale operation causing 50 deaths in the first few days, including six former FARC combatants who had signed the 2016 peace agreement. One year later, it had killed 166, including some social leaders. The offensive also displaced between 90,000 and 100,000 people and confined nearly 4,000 residents. Around 8,000 people received direct death threats from armed actors. The strategic Catatumbo region is disputed by armed organisations as a corridor for drug trafficking and other illegal economies linked to the control of natural resources and because of its proximity to Venezuela. Coca crops in the area are a significant source of funding for the ELN. Recurring at different times during the year, the clashes scuttled the peace negotiations between the ELN and the Colombian government. Alongside the fighting between insurgent groups, they were also involved in firefights against security forces that mobilised following the ELN's initial offensive. In February, bomb attacks took

place in the city of Cúcuta, and in April, clashes between security forces and armed groups caused significant population displacements. Warning was given of the growing use of drones and anti-personnel mines, with serious impacts on the safety of the population. Sexual violence was also reported. Tension between Venezuela and the United States impacted the armed conflict in the region. Various sources indicated that this tension could lead to more clashes and a greater concentration of ELN fighters on Colombian soil, many of

which were located in Venezuela until the end of the year. Although security forces claimed to have regained control over 70% of the affected territory by the end of the year, the insecurity and violence persisted.

The Catatumbo region was one of the main scenarios of the armed conflict in Colombia, with clashes between the ELN and Frente 33 del Estado Mayor de los Bloques y Frentes

139. Cajiao, Andrés, Arias, Gerson and Tobo, Paula, *27.000 combatientes y récord en disputas: el deterioro de la seguridad marca el inicio de 2026*, Fundación Ideas para la Paz, January 2026.

The armed conflict also had other focal points, with significant clashes reported between the ELN and the Clan del Golfo or Gaitanista Army of Colombia, particularly in the department of Chocó, where violence forced thousands to flee. The Cauca region was also severely affected by violence. The armed group EMC launched a wave of attacks in June, which recurred at different times during the year, such as in August and December, and also perpetrated acts of violence in the departments of Guaviare and Arauca.

In June, Miguel Uribe Turbay, a senator and presidential candidate for the Democratic Centre party, was shot by a hitman. He died months later. No armed group claimed responsibility for his assassination, though various hypotheses were put forward, including the possible culpability of the armed group Segunda Marquetalia.

1.3.3. Asia and the Pacific

South Asia

Afghanistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), ISIS-KP, Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)
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. Since 2014, the regional branch of ISIS, known as ISIS-KP, has been active in the country, whose activity has been on the rise over the last decade.

Afghanistan remained mired in armed conflict, though the intensity of the violence and the number of conflict-related casualties decreased. According to figures collected by ACLED, 915 people died in the country during 2025 as a result of armed violence, though some of these deaths¹⁴⁰ resulted from armed clashes between Pakistani and Afghan security forces rather than from fighting between opposition armed groups and Taliban security forces. As many as 100 people may have lost their lives in the armed tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islamabad’s accusations that Afghanistan was serving as a refuge and base for the Pakistani Taliban insurgency led to firefights between both countries. The armed activity of the National Resistance Front (NRF) was particularly notable, as it continued to lead the armed opposition against the Taliban government. Concentrated in the provinces of Panjshir, Baghlan and Takhar, the group’s operations included targeted attacks, ambushes and guerrilla activity against Taliban security forces. However, the NRF’s capacity to escalate its armed opposition was highly limited and at no point did it manage to weaken Taliban control over territory and the country as a whole. ISIS-KP also remained active, with some sporadic attacks reported that not only impacted Taliban security forces, but also caused civilian casualties. However, the group was also weakened by the Taliban’s growing operational capacity. In February, an ISIS-KP attack in Kunduz province caused the deaths of five people, including several members of the Taliban. Taliban security forces later indicated that clashes had occurred with members of the armed group in which two people were reportedly killed. In September, an NRF commander may have died as a result of armed clashes with Taliban forces in Baghlan province after Taliban soldiers attacked the armed group’s positions. Four Taliban may have been killed in the fighting.

Since the Taliban’s return to power, Afghanistan has suffered from international isolation. In July, Russia broke this isolation by becoming the first country to officially recognise the Taliban government. Kabul stated that it hoped this recognition would set an example for others and continued to strengthen diplomatic relations, especially with regional neighbours such as Uzbekistan and Pakistan, though relations with Islamabad were shaped by the effects of the border

140. See the summary on Afghanistan-Pakistan in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

clashes. The humanitarian situation remained critical, as OCHA noted when pointing out that Afghanistan was experiencing one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world, with nearly 22 million people (45% of the entire Afghan population) in need. The situation of women was particularly severe, as they had been deprived of all their human rights.

India (CPI-M)	
Start:	1967
Type:	System Internal
Main parties:	Government, CPI-M (naxalites)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

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

The armed conflict between the Indian security forces and the Naxalite CPI-M insurgency escalated at various points during the year, with Indian military operations intensifying against the Maoist armed opposition and a rise in the number of people killed as a result of the armed conflict. According to figures compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 477 people lost their lives during 2025. This was an increase over the 397 fatalities in 2024 and the 148 in 2023, consolidating an upward trend in the conflict. According to the research centre's data, 390 insurgents, 54 civilians and 33 members of the Indian security forces died in 2025. The Indian security forces stepped up counterinsurgency operations to degrade the insurgents' capacity for retaliation. More CPI-M members surrendered, including some high-profile figures, and in late 2025 the Indian Interior Minister said that 2,167 insurgents had turned themselves in during the year.

The Indian security forces stepped up their operations against Naxalite insurgents and hundreds of CPI-M members surrendered, including several leaders

The Deputy Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh –the state most affected by the Naxalite insurgency in recent years– said that the insurgency had been eradicated from 80% of the state. Security forces also killed several leaders of the armed group at different times during the year, which increased speculation about the group's ability to reorganise and address the leadership vacuums left by deaths and defections. Some media outlets also reported that the armed group had lost political and military power in areas that had previously been under its control. The Indian government predicted that the Naxalite problem would be resolved by March 2026.

The year began with major military operations against the CPI-M, primarily in Chhattisgarh state, which claimed the lives of 50 insurgents, including Shubhomoy Sikdar, a member of the armed group's Central Committee. The Naxalites also carried out an attack in Bijapur district in which eight police officers and one civilian died, making it the deadliest attack against security forces in the state in the past two years. Clashes, security operations and attacks persisted throughout the year and caused many fatalities. In March and April, thousands of Indian military and police personnel increased pressure on the Naxalite insurgents with a large-scale operation in the border area between the states of Chhattisgarh and Telangana, resulting in multiple surrenders and weapons handovers by CPI-M fighters.

In response to this pressure, the CPI-M indicated that it was willing to agree to a ceasefire to begin talks with the government, although its appeal did not halt the security operations against it. Media outlets later reported that the armed group had sent a letter to the government offering to lay down its arms under certain conditions, though some CPI-M members indicated that this was the personal choice of their leader Sonnu, whom they branded a traitor. International Crisis Group noted that this could be indicative of a rift within the armed group.¹⁴¹ In the following months, at least four more CPI-M leaders announced that they were laying down their arms: Politburo member Mallojula Venugopal, also known as Bhupathi and Sonu Dada; Central Committee member Rupesh, also known as Satish; Central Committee member Pulluri Prasad Rao, alias Chandranna; and Bandi Prakash, also known as Prabhat. They were then joined by several hundred more insurgents in the largest collective surrender in the armed group's history. According to some media outlets, at least nine additional Central Committee members died during the year as a result of clashes with security forces.

141. International Crisis Group, "India", *Crisiswatch*, September 2025.

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

Summary:

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

Although the intensity of the armed conflict in the Indian-administered territory of Jammu and Kashmir subsided overall during the year, extremely serious violent events in April and May triggered a four-day war between India and Pakistan, with each country launching security force operations against the other.¹⁴² The South Asia Terrorism Portal reported a death toll of 92 due to the conflict during 2025, which was a drop from the 127 people who died in 2024 and the lowest figure in 25 years.¹⁴³ This is consistent with the uninterrupted trend of falling casualties and violent events since 2018. Forty-six of the 92 people killed were members of opposition armed groups, 28 were civilians and 17 were members of the Indian security forces, according to the research centre.

Though armed clashes, sporadic attacks and operations by Indian security forces occurred throughout the year, the most significant events took place in April. On 22 April, The Resistance Front (TRF) carried out the deadliest attack in Kashmiri territory in 25 years in the town of Pahalgam, one of the main tourist hubs in the region. Twenty-six men died as a result of an attack carried out by the armed group, almost all of them Hindu tourists from other parts of India, and more than a dozen people were wounded. The Resistance Front (TRF) is an offshoot of the Lashkar-e-Taiba group, a Pakistani-origin armed group operating in Kashmir that emerged in 2019 following Jammu and Kashmir's loss

of statehood. TRF claimed responsibility for the attack via a Telegram message, though it later denied it in a statement on its website.

Various diplomatic and military actions unfolded after the attack, leading to a four-day war between India and Pakistan in May. As a consequence of the additional deployment of security forces in Kashmir after the April attack, insurgent activity decreased in subsequent months, although some infiltration attempts occurred across the Line of Control (the de facto border separating India and Pakistan), such as the one that took place in Samba district involving between 40 and 50 insurgents in May. In June, 42,000 members of the security forces were deployed during the annual Amarnath Hindu pilgrimage. Security operations were repeated in the following months, particularly in areas near the border, and intensified in November with the detention of more than 1,500 people accused of “reorganising” insurgent organisations. In November, an attack near the Red Fort in New Delhi that killed 12 civilians was blamed on the Pakistani-origin insurgent organisation Jaish-e-Mohammed. Following the attack, several individuals suspected of being linked were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir.

In addition to these security incidents, political and social demands were made repeatedly throughout the year for the restoration of statehood to the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, though no significant progress was made with the Indian government on the issue. The Indian Supreme Court began related hearings in November and the government again indicated that the restoration of statehood would take place “in due course”, though it did not commit to any timeline.

India – Pakistan	
Start:	2025
Type:	Territory International
Main parties:	India, Pakistan
Intensity:	1
Trend:	End

Summary:

The rivalry between India and Pakistan originated with India's independence from the British Empire and the partition of the territory into two independent states in 1947: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. The partition triggered mass displacement, sectarian violence and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Millions crossed the new borders in one of the largest migratory movements in history. The partition also gave rise to the dispute over the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir, whose territory was divided. On four occasions (1947–1948, 1965, 1971 and 2025), the two countries have faced off in armed conflict,

142. See the summary on India-Pakistan in this chapter.

143. The SATP has been keeping a running body count in the armed conflict since 2000.

both claiming sovereignty over this region, which is divided between India, Pakistan and China. The 1947 conflict resulted in the current division and de facto borders. Starting in 1989, the armed conflict moved inside the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. After both countries carried out nuclear tests in 1999, the tension nearly boiled over into another armed conflict that was ultimately prevented by US mediation. A peace process began in 2004. Though no substantive progress was made in resolving the Kashmir dispute, significant rapprochements were achieved in economic relations. However, India has continued to accuse Pakistan of supporting the insurgency operating in Jammu and Kashmir and sporadic episodes of violence have broken out repeatedly along their shared de facto border. Both countries engaged in a four-day armed conflict in 2025.

India and Pakistan waged an armed conflict against each other for four days in 2025. Known as the 88-Hours War, it brought the two nuclear powers into military confrontation.

Although the death toll resulting from their respective military operations is unclear, some analysts suggest that around 200 people may have died. Both India and Pakistan carried out airstrikes against each other's military installations. Direct clashes between the two countries began on 7 May, when India launched Operation Sindoor, but the event that triggered the conflict was an attack conducted in the Kashmiri tourist town of Pahalgam by the armed group The Resistance Front (TRF) on 22 April. Twenty-six men died in the attack, almost all of them Hindu tourists from other parts of India. TRF claimed responsibility for the attack. The armed group emerged in 2019 as an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba following Jammu and Kashmir's loss of statehood.¹⁴⁴ The Indian government initially responded through diplomatic channels, such as by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, expelling Pakistani diplomats, ordering Pakistani visitors with certain visas to leave the country within 48 hours, closing the Wagah land border crossing and halting trade between the two countries. Pakistan reciprocated several of these measures and closed its airspace to India, prompting New Delhi to do the same. An exchange of fire also took place in various areas along the Line of Control, the de facto border separating the two countries.

India and Pakistan waged an open armed conflict against each other for four days

However, following this initial response, India intensified its reaction and launched Operation Sindoor, which included airstrikes against nine targets in Pakistan identified as bases of the armed groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Pakistan described these bombings as an act of war and claimed that they had killed 31 people, including women and children. In retaliation, it announced that it had shot down several fighter jets over the Indian state of Punjab. Pakistani drone attacks also occurred in various Indian cities. India argued that its military action was a response to the Pahalgam attack and was fully backed by the United Nations, alluding to the statement issued by the

UN Security Council following the 22 April attack. The conflict escalated significantly when India launched new airstrikes against military installations in Pakistan, including the city of Rawalpindi, located 15 km from Islamabad and housing both the headquarters of the Pakistani Armed Forces and a military airfield. The targets included the Nur Khan airbase, located near the headquarters of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division, which is responsible for overseeing and protecting the nuclear arsenal, although the warheads are distributed across various locations in the country. India justified these attacks as a response to previous attacks by Pakistan.

On 10 May, the Pakistani government launched Operation Buryan ul Marsoos, attacking several Indian military installations. The Indian government later acknowledged these attacks. During the four days of war, India reported the deaths of 21 civilians and five military personnel, whilst Pakistan cited a body count of 40 civilians and 11 military personnel. Despite the risks and the unprecedented escalation between the two countries, a ceasefire was eventually reached, which held for the remainder of the year, though with mutual accusations of violations. Communication channels between Indian and Pakistani military authorities and security advisors remained open, although no progress

was made public beyond matters related to the cessation of hostilities. The escalation and the risk posed to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal prompted multiple diplomatic calls demanding a ceasefire, particularly from the United States. Although US Vice President J.D. Vance had initially ruled out involvement, the nuclear threat prompted a shift in Washington's stance. On 10 May, both parties announced a ceasefire effective immediately. Shortly beforehand, US President Donald Trump had previewed the agreement on his Truth Social platform, though neither India nor Pakistan mentioned the US administration in their official statements. The US State Department stated that the ceasefire had been facilitated by the United States. Since the beginning of the conflict, the governments of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Türkiye had held conversations with Indian and Pakistani representatives in an attempt to ease the tensions.

Pakistan	
Start:	2001
Type:	System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Armed Forces, intelligence services, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-KP
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

144. See the summary on India (Jammu and Kashmir) in this chapter.

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. Following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the armed conflict in Pakistan intensified.

Pakistan experienced its worst security situation in recent years, with the highest death toll as a result of the armed conflict in a decade. According to data from Pakistan's Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the overall body count as a result of armed violence in the country was 3,417 throughout 2025, with more than 2,100 wounded. Meanwhile, ACLED reported 5,273 total fatalities. The region most affected by the armed violence was Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which is also the epicentre of the armed conflict with the TTP Taliban insurgency, as nearly 70% of the deaths (2,331 people) associated with the armed conflict and 63% of all violent incidents in the country were reported there, according to CRSS. According to CRSS, these figures represented a 44% increase in violence in the province compared to the previous year. Though the upward trend had been evident in recent years, it spiked notably in 2025. The violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was exacerbated by the deterioration of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as Islamabad accused its neighbour of supporting and serving as a base for the Pakistani Taliban insurgency. This situation has only deteriorated in recent years since the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan. The tension between both countries worsened throughout 2025 with episodes of violence,

The deterioration of the security situation in Pakistan brought the country the highest death toll in a decade as a result of the armed conflict

although the ebb in fighting at the end of the year helped to mitigate the armed conflict between Pakistani security forces and the Pakistani Taliban insurgency.¹⁴⁵ Armed clashes and attacks recurred throughout the year, with certain areas particularly affected, such as the districts of North Waziristan, South Waziristan and Bannu. The TTP Taliban concentrated its activity in the area of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which were formally integrated into the administrative structure of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2018. However, the group reportedly expanded its radius of operation to other areas of the province, having increased its operational capacity by absorbing over 100 small local armed groups into its ranks, mostly from different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The attacks were concentrated in border areas adjacent to territories in Afghanistan where the armed group has established its training camps and from where it conducts infiltrations and launches violent attacks.¹⁴⁶ The TTP also reinforced its internal structure with new military commanders who will oversee new areas of operation. It also announced the creation of an Air Force Unit, in the first official acknowledgment that it possesses quadcopter drones, with which it carried out multiple attacks against police stations, military convoys, checkpoints and military barracks.¹⁴⁷ The centralised internal structure model, similar to that of the Afghan Taliban, has strengthened the group in recent years and partly explains its consolidation and expansion. The Pakistani security forces focused their efforts on territorially restricted small-scale operations to avoid increasing social support for the Taliban insurgency, rather than large-scale operations such as those carried out years earlier. A primary example of such large-scale operations was Operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched in 2014, which succeeded considerably in weakening the TTP.¹⁴⁸

The most notable events of the year included an operation carried out on 18 February, during which Pakistani security forces claimed to have killed 30 Taliban insurgents in South Waziristan, in the Sararogha area. In March, a TTP suicide attack against military installations in Bannu caused the deaths of 12 civilians and left multiple people wounded. In April, Pakistani security forces indicated that a new operation had been carried out against an infiltration of insurgents from Afghanistan, in which they had killed 54 TTP members in North Waziristan. In this same district, a TTP attack in June claimed the lives of 13 soldiers. The TTP continued to carry out bomb attacks throughout the year, targeting police and military installations and causing dozens of civilian and military deaths.

145. See the chapter Socio-political crises.

146. Pandya, Pearl, *The battle for the borderlands: The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan challenges the state's control*, ACLED, 6 October 2025.

147. Basit, Abdul, "Pakistan's Worsening Threat Landscape in 2025", *The Diplomat*, 31 December 2025.

148. Pandya, Pearl, op. cit.

Pakistan (Balochistan)	
Start:	2005
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, BLA, BNA, BLF, BLT, LeJ, TTP, ISIS-KP
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

Since the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, Balochistan, the richest province in terms of natural resources, but with some of the highest levels of poverty in the country, has suffered from four periods of armed violence (1948, 1958, 1963-69 and 1973-77) in which the rebel forces stated their objective of obtaining greater autonomy and even independence. In 2005, the armed rebel forces reappeared on the scene, basically attacking infrastructures linked to the extraction of gas. The opposition armed group, BLA, became the main opposing force to the presence of the central government, which it accused of making the most of the wealth of the province without giving any of it back to the local population. As a result of the resurgence of the armed opposition, a military operation was started in 2005 in the province, causing displacement of the civilian population and armed confrontation. In parallel, a movement of the civilian population calls clarifying the disappearance of hundreds, if not thousands, of Baluchi at the hands of the security forces of the State.

The armed conflict in Balochistan escalated in 2025, in line with the trend observed in recent years. Balochistan was the second most affected province in Pakistan by armed violence. According to data compiled by Pakistan's Center for Research and Security Studies, 956 people died during 2025. This was a 22% increase in the death toll associated with the armed conflict over the previous year, when the centre counted 787 fatalities. These deaths accounted for 28% of all victims of armed violence across the country. Approximately 30% of the violent events reported in the country took place in Balochistan. The year was therefore marked by a rise in violent events, particularly attacks by Baloch insurgent groups (mainly committed by the BLA) and an intensification of military operations carried out by Pakistani security forces. The dynamics of violence included large-scale attacks, mass kidnappings, targeted killings and a state response characterised by extensive counterinsurgency operations and extraordinary security measures. Both security forces and insurgent groups continued to commit serious human rights violations.

The violent events included the hijacking of the Jaffar Express train on 11 March 2025, carried out by the Jeeyand faction of the BLA (BLAJ). The attack included detonations of explosives in tunnels and the kidnapping of hostages in the Bolan Pass. **Thirty-one passengers reportedly died during the attack, in addition to the 33 BLA militants killed during the security forces' response,** known as Operation Green Bolan. The train was carrying 400 people, including many members of the security

forces, and 18 of the passengers killed by the BLA were soldiers. The hijacked train was travelling between Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which is also severely affected by armed violence, primarily from Taliban insurgent groups. Although the BLA claimed that its militants had escaped the area after killing 214 passengers before the security forces' operation, they presented no such evidence. Pakistani military sources accused India of being behind the attack.

Other violent events took place during the year in addition to the hijacking of the Jaffar Express, such as the BLA attack and subsequent security forces operation in the district of Kalat in February, in which 18 Pakistani military personnel and 23 BLA fighters lost their lives. In April, another insurgent attack in Mastung district caused the deaths of three police officers and left 16 others wounded. Violent events were also reported in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, where insurgents killed eight Pakistanis of Punjabi origin. The armed group BNA claimed responsibility for the attack. Three months later, in Loralai district, BLA Baloch insurgents intercepted buses and killed at least nine passengers of Punjabi origin. **In May, a suicide bomb attack on a military school bus killed eight children and two adults. The security forces blamed the attack on the BLA, though no armed group claimed responsibility.** Insurgents attacked buses repeatedly at different times during the year, killing 12 civilians in Zhob district in July. In September, ISIS-KP claimed responsibility for an attack that killed 15 civilians near a political rally staged by the Balochistan National Party (BNP), where hundreds of people had gathered. Another attack in late September against the headquarters of the Frontier Corps security force in Quetta caused the deaths of 10 people, both civilians and military personnel.

South-east Asia

Indonesia (West Papua)	
Start:	2024
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Resources Internal
Main parties:	Government, OPM
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑

Summary:

Although Indonesia became independent from Holland in 1949, West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya) was administered for several years by the United Nations and did not formally become part of Indonesia until 1969, following a referendum considered fraudulent by many. Since then, a deep-rooted secessionist movement has existed in the region and an armed opposition group (OPM) has been involved in a low-intensity armed struggle. In addition to constant demands for self-determination, there are other sources of conflict in the region, such as community clashes between several

indigenous groups, tension between the local population (Papuan and mostly animist or Christian) and so-called transmigrants (mostly Muslim Javanese), protests against the Freeport transnational extractive corporation, the largest in the world, or accusations of human rights violations and unjust enrichment levelled at the armed forces.

The armed conflict worsened notably compared to the previous year, both in the number and the deadliness of the clashes and in the amount of people displaced internally by the violence. According to data collected by the research centre ACLED, over 200 people died in various episodes of political violence across the six provinces that make up the historical region of West Papua. This was more than double the death toll in 2024 and ACLED specifically recorded 178 fatalities linked to insurgent activities. Meanwhile, the Papua National Human Rights Commission announced that 132 people died in 85 cases of violence in Papua in the first eleven months of the year, a significant increase over the previous year, when 77 deaths were counted.¹⁴⁹ Out of 132 fatalities, 77 were civilians, and the rest were members of the National Police (10), soldiers (seven) and members of armed criminal groups (40). The six provinces of West Papua were affected by various dynamics of conflict, though virtually all episodes of violence were concentrated in the provinces of Central Papua and Highland Papua and particularly in the regencies of Yahukimo, Intan Jaya, Puncak Jaya, Puncak and Jayawijaya, as well as in the city of Jayapura. In addition to the death toll, over 20,000 people were forced to abandon their homes due to violence in 2025, bringing the total figure to 105,878 people.

Some leaders of the secessionist movement, such as Benny Wenda, the president of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), **warned that the violence in the region was increasingly resembling some of the most virulent periods of the conflict**, such as the counterinsurgency campaigns of 1977 and 1978 in the Baliem Valley (in which some sources indicate that around 11,000 people lost their lives) and the refugee crisis of 1984 (during which more than 10,000 people had to cross the border into Papua New Guinea). In addition to the mounting fatalities caused by the armed conflict, some organisations reported an increase in crackdowns on political demonstrations and protests, as well as a spike in episodes of violence between indigenous people and those of non-Papuan origin. Others claimed that some rice and sugar cane mega-plantations run by the government and private companies were causing degrees of deforestation and environmental degradation without precedent in Papua's recent history, particularly in the southern Merauke regency, affecting nearly two million hectares. The armed group OPM has described these agricultural projects as forms of ecocide. Not only do the mega-plantations harm the environment, but they also trample on the ancestral rights of the Papuan

peoples of the region and are one of the historical causes of armed and political conflict in Papua.

Several organisations lamented that Prabowo Subianto's government was militarising the region drastically. In August, Jakarta announced the creation of 500 new military battalions. Some sources estimated that at least 6,000 additional troops had been deployed to armed conflict zones. In March, the Indonesian Armed Forces launched a high-intensity counterinsurgency campaign in the Intan Jaya regency, which expanded to other regencies throughout the year such as Puncak, Puncak Jaya, Paniai, Lanny Jaya, Yahukimo and Pegunungan Bintang. According to some analysts, this campaign made intensive use of airstrikes, including with drones and even fighter jets, as well as artillery fire with mortars, shells and rockets. The OPM and some media outlets claimed that the military operations had killed dozens of civilians. In mid-May, for example, 18 people died during a military operation in Intan Jaya regency (Central Papua province). The Indonesian government claimed that the victims were criminals, but the OPM countered that all except three were civilians. Later, in mid-October, 15 people died in a military operation in the town of Soanggama. The Indonesian Armed Forces declared that all 15 were OPM fighters, but the OPM described them entirely as civilians. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch indicated that it was very difficult to verify whether the victims were combatants or civilians and called on both sides to respect international humanitarian law. Military operations in several provinces, especially Central Papua and Highland Papua, increased substantially after 17 people were killed by the OPM in Yahukimo district in early April. Jakarta asserted that the victims were illegal miners, whilst the OPM stated that they were military personnel or Indonesian Army informants.

Myanmar	
Start:	1948
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, armed groups ABSDF, ALP, CNF, DKBA, KNU, KNU/KNLA-PC, PNLO, RCSS, NMSP, LDU, KIA, NDAA, MNDAA, SSPP/SSA, TNLA, AA, UWSA, ARSA, KNPP, PDF
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↓
Summary:	Since 1948, dozens of armed insurgent groups of ethnic origin have confronted the government of Myanmar, demanding recognition of their particular ethnic and cultural features and calling for reforms in the territorial structure of the State or simply for independence. Since the start of the military dictatorship in 1962, the armed

149. Katingka, Nasrun, "Violence in Papua Continues to Escalate, with 132 Deaths Reported in 2025", *Kompas*, December 10 2025.

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. In February 2021, Myanmar's military leaders carried out a coup d'état that ended the transition to democracy in the country and led to an intensification of the armed conflict and the emergence of the People's Defence Force (PDF), an umbrella organisation that brings together dozens of armed groups opposed to the military regime, while clashes with ethnic insurgencies persisted.

Myanmar continued to suffer from one of the highest-intensity armed conflicts in the world and the most severe in Asia, although the death toll resulting from the armed violence in 2025 was lower than in previous years. According to data compiled by ACLED, 15,371 people died throughout the year as a result of fighting between the Burmese Armed Forces and the various armed insurgent groups active in the country, as well as security forces' violent repression of social and political opponents of the Burmese military regime. The death toll was less pronounced than in 2024, when 20,010 people died according to ACLED's records, and significantly lower than in 2022, when the highest levels of violence in recent decades were recorded and the body count reached 23,477. Constant fighting throughout the year had severe impacts on the civilian population, which is suffering from a humanitarian crisis in the parts of the country most affected by the armed conflict. More than three and a half million people are internally displaced in Myanmar and over one and a half million people have taken refuge outside the country, primarily in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand. In March, an earthquake struck various parts of the country, prompting armed actors to declare ceasefires to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims and rebuild affected areas. However, these agreements were scarcely respected and clashes, military operations and armed attacks persisted. The first elections in the country since the 2021 coup d'état began to be held in December and were planned to unfold in several phases until January 2026. An atmosphere of violence and insecurity prevented the elections from taking place in several towns. The military authorities were expected to commit fraud and avoid transparency in the elections in an attempt to promote regional and international normalisation of the regime to some extent.

The insurgent groups continued to prosecute their offensive against the Burmese security forces throughout

the year. The offensive had managed to challenge the military government in previous years, making significant territorial gains and capturing certain strategic areas. One of the main flashpoints of the armed conflict was the state of Rakhine, a significant part of which fell into the hands of the armed group Arakan Army (AA). Bombings and attacks occurred in the state from the beginning of the year, killing many. In early January, government forces were rolled back practically to the state capital, Sittwe. The AA mounted an assault on Sittwe, provoking an additional deployment of security forces. In May, the offensive expanded to the city of Kyaukphyu, an area important to Chinese economic interests and a host to Chinese energy infrastructure. Clashes in this western part of the country persisted throughout the year, and warnings were issued about the risk that the Rohingya insurgency, which was severely weakened and practically dismantled after the 2017 genocide, was reorganising from Bangladesh.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, complaints against the AA regarding events in 2024 were made public. Rohingya groups accused the AA of having committed a massacre against the Rohingya population and killing 600 people in the city of Buthidaung in May 2024.

Fighting also raged in other parts of the country. The Burmese regime managed to recapture the city of Lashio in Shan state after the MNDAA withdrew following Chinese pressure to reach an agreement that included handing the city over to Myanmar. Clashes were also recorded in Shan state, including between armed groups themselves. The Ta'ang group TNLA and the KIA clashed, and there was also fighting between the TNLA and government forces. China pressured the TNLA to reach an agreement with the Burmese Armed Forces. The KIA made some advances early in the year in Kachin state, then declared a unilateral ceasefire after the earthquake, but it collapsed in April. Fighting resumed around the city of Bhamo, where the KIA attempted to capture an important military base. However, the armed group suffered significant defeats at the hands of Burmese security forces in September.

Filipinas (Mindanao)	
Start:	1991
Type:	Self-government, Identity, System Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, Islamic State of Lanao/Dawlah Islamiyah/Maute Group, MILF and MNLF factions
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓
Summary:	The current situation of violence in Mindanao, where several armed groups are confronting the Government and, occasionally each other, is closely linked to the long-lasting armed conflict between Manila and the MNFL, and later the

150. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, "MYANMAR: La cronificación y regionalización del conflicto armado", *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz para 2026*. Escola de Cultura de Pau, January 2026.

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 addition to fighting between the Philippine Armed Forces and various armed groups in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), there were also reports of high levels of political violence during the mid-term general elections in May, many cases of community and clan violence (locally known as *rido*) and internal tensions within the MILF. **Fighting between the Philippine government and the MILF also escalated to its highest point since the peace agreement was signed in 2014.** Armed clashes continued throughout the year between the Philippine security forces and groups opposed to the peace process, such as the BIFF, Abu Sayyaf and the Maute Group (also known as Dawlah Islamiyah). According to the research centre ACLED,¹⁵¹ 134 people died from acts of political violence in the BARMM in 2025, but this figure rises to 214 when including neighbouring provinces where armed group activity has historically also been reported (such as the provinces of Zamboanga and Soccsksargen). ACLED documented the deaths of 74 people from acts of terrorism in the BARMM (120 when including the aforementioned border provinces). The Philippine government declared the “neutralisation” (meaning the capture, surrender or death) of 294 members of “local terrorist groups” in Mindanao, the vast majority through surrender or voluntary handover.¹⁵² According to Manila, 1,749 members of such Islamist-inspired armed groups had surrendered or turned themselves in from 2021 to the end of 2025. By late 2025, 928 of the 7,171 former combatants who had taken advantage of the amnesty decreed by the government in 2024 were members of the MILF and 396 were members of the MNLF.¹⁵³

At the end of the year, the Philippine government declared that the aforementioned armed groups were

severely weakened, estimating that they only had around 50 fighters, a sharp drop from the 1,200 they had been estimated to have in 2016. Manila asserted that Abu Sayyaf had no operational fronts or consolidated territorial bases in its historical areas of influence (Sulu archipelago). It also declared that the two main BIFF factions in Maguindanao, led by commanders Bongos and Karialan (who died in April 2024), were “in survival mode” and that the Maute Group, which operates primarily in Lanao del Sur, was seriously debilitated. Nevertheless, episodes of violence were repeatedly reported throughout the year. The Philippine government acknowledged that such armed groups were still able to recruit and coordinate and that they continued to pose a challenge to the country’s national security.

Meanwhile, **clashes also occurred between MILF factions during 2025, as well as between these factions and MNLF groups, primarily related to territorial disputes and the tense political atmosphere surrounding the March 2025 mid-term elections.** Recurrent fighting and *rido* episodes were recorded in the BARMM, killing dozens and forcibly displacing thousands of people. A battle between an MILF faction led by Commander Salidato Edris Langalen and an MNLF group between Matalam and Kidapawan (Cotabato province) in late November left seven people dead and many others wounded. The Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), which intervened in this and other violent episodes, acknowledged encountering difficulties in containing clashes when they involved private land disputes outside official MILF camps. Along the same lines, **the year 2025 witnessed one of the most serious ceasefire violations between the Philippine Armed Forces and the MILF since the peace agreement was signed in 2014.** In January, two soldiers died and 12 others were wounded following an attack against a military battalion escorting a UNDP team in Sumisip (Basilan province) by fighters from the MILF’s Base Command 114. The MILF argued that they had not been notified of the troop entry into their “temporary stay area”, whilst the Philippine Armed Forces maintained that the mission had indeed been coordinated and announced that criminal charges were being filed against the MILF members involved in the attack. In another serious incident, also in Basilan, in October, members of an MILF faction surrounded and took control of the town of Tipo-Tipo, one of the most important in Basilan. The MILF faction members occupied the town for several hours to demand the release of a fighter, disrupting activity in the town and the provoking the deployment of police officers and the Philippine Army.

Alongside these incidents, **tension between the Philippine government and the MILF mounted notably during the year. In July, the MILF ordered the suspension of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process**

151. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [retrieved 8 January 2026].

152. Sigales, Jason, “Over 2,300 alleged terrorists, supporters ‘neutralized’ in 2025 – AFP”, *Inquirer.net*, 6 January 2026.

153. Sarmiento, Bong S., “With deadline just 2 months away, NAC seeks for amnesty application”, *Mindanews*, 7 January 2026.

for around 14,000 combatants until Manila complied with several provisions of the 2014 peace agreement, including the provision of socio-economic assistance to the 26,000 combatants who had already begun the demobilisation process. The 2014 peace agreement provided for the demobilisation of 40,000 combatants. In August, the MILF prohibited its commanders and members from participating in any demobilisation-related activity organised by the government without prior written approval or authorisation from MILF leader Murad Ebrahim. Tension between the MILF and the Philippine government had spiked in early March after President Ferdinand Marcos appointed Abdulraof Macacua to lead the BARMM government, replacing Murad Ebrahim, the MILF leader since 2003 and Bangsamoro government chief since 2019. Macacua was the MILF's military chief at the time of the appointment and the governor of Maguindanao del Norte province. The MILF described Marcos' decision as unilaterally imposed, avoiding prior consultation with the MILF Central Committee, and was therefore in violation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. The armed group added that Macacua's appointment would have negative consequences for the implementation of the peace agreement and would erode trust between the parties. During the year, the Third Party Monitoring Team, which oversees the implementation of the peace agreement, warned that trust between the parties was at its lowest point since the agreement had been signed and said that the negotiating process had reached a dangerous juncture for the future of the region.

In addition to the serious decay of trust between the government and the MILF, some warned of the **risk of division and fragmentation within the MILF** and the danger this would pose to the region's stability. The factors driving such warnings included strain between Macacua and other historical MILF leaders, such as MILF chief negotiator and BARMM minister Mohaqber Iqbal, who was forced to vacate his government functions temporarily by Macacua over allegations of corruption, and split opinions over whether to once again delay the first BARMM elections, originally scheduled for 2022. Another factor generating tension was Murad Ebrahim's indefinite suspension of Ustadz Abdulwahid Tundok for violating MILF guidelines. Tundok is one of the MILF's main commanders and the head of Base Command 118, one of the group's largest camps.

The final source of tension was the mid-term elections held in May 2025. According to a report by the research centre Climate Conflict Action Asia (CCAA), **at least 244 people lost their lives and another 265 were wounded in the BARMM during the electoral process**, which started with the submission of candidacies in October 2024 and ended on election day in May 2025.¹⁵⁴ A total of

759 cases of violence were reported, 327 of which were directly election-related. According to CCAA, election-related violence episodes caused 103 deaths, making these elections the most violent in recent times.

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

Summary:

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

Although the government declared that it had won a strategic victory over the communist insurgent movement and claimed that the NPA no longer had any active fronts nationwide, clashes continued to be reported throughout the year. In early January 2026, the Philippine Armed Forces announced that they had "neutralised" 2,018 NPA members in 2025. One hundred and twenty-five of these NPA members had died in military operations, 93 had been arrested and 1,798 had surrendered or turned themselves in. During the same period, 1,134 firearms and 531 anti-personnel mines were seized and 149 group camps were captured.¹⁵⁵ Media reports documented several violent episodes causing deaths of civilians and military or police personnel, although no official figures were released. **According to the research centre ACLED, clashes between the NPA and the Philippine Army in the first half of 2025 subsided by around 30% compared to the first half of 2024.**¹⁵⁶ Whilst Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao had been the main focal points of NPA activity in recent years, the fighting in 2025 was more concentrated in Eastern Visayas and Caraga (accounting for 40% of all clashes nationwide).

154. Gomez, Herbie y Cabera, Ferdinandh, "Midterm polls in BARMM deadlier than 2023 barangay elections – watchdog", 23 June 2025.
 155. Nepomuceno, Priam, "2K Reds, allies neutralized in 2025", *Philippines News Agency*, 6 January 2026.
 156. ACLED, *Asia-Pacific Overview: July 2025*, 4 July 2025.

During his fourth State of the Nation address in July, President Ferdinand Marcos announced that all guerrilla groups in the country had been dismantled and promised that the government would prevent any new ones from emerging. Manila claimed that **the NPA's 89 fronts had been dismantled by the end of 2025 and that the group only had around 780 active members** – far fewer than the 25,000 it had in the 1980s and the approximately 2,000 it had in early 2024. Moreover, these 780 remaining members were scattered in remote areas and unable to make centralised plans or assume territorial control.¹⁵⁷ The NPA's fronts were self-sufficient political-military units capable of launching tactical offensives and generating clandestine popular support. The Philippine Armed Forces explained that it considered the NPA's fronts dismantled since the corresponding NPA units had been “neutralised” or had surrendered, their political-military infrastructure had collapsed, their base support had weakened and the full restoration of government services in the affected communities had been guaranteed. The government attributed the weakening, if not the defeat, of the communist movement to leadership losses following the death of its founder, José María Sison, and the “neutralisation” of key Central Committee members; the intensification of military and police operations; efforts to counter the communist movement’s recruitment, especially in schools and universities; legal and financial restrictions on the group; socioeconomic projects in affected communities; the focus on local peace talks; and amnesty programmes for fighters. Indeed, **the government indicated that 5,755 of the 7,171 amnesty applicants by the end of 2025 were former NPA members.**¹⁵⁸

The Philippine government declared that it had won a strategic victory over the NPA, claiming that the group's 89 fronts had been dismantled

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NPA acknowledged that the movement had weakened in recent years, but they rejected the Philippine Armed Forces’ figures on the neutralisation of fighters and fronts and categorically denied its strategic defeat, pointing out that Manila has mistakenly declared the group defeated many times since the 1990s. The CPP spokesperson offered no data on the insurgent movement’s membership and fronts, but he did say that it is currently taking an active defensive stance, conducting rapid guerrilla manoeuvres to evade army encirclements. The CPP blasted Marcos’ government for intensifying the counterinsurgency campaign, which has US support and makes heavy use of large-scale aerial bombing. Along the same lines, local human rights groups such as KARAPATAN reiterated that military operations with artillery and airstrikes in rural areas do not distinguish between armed targets and civilian communities. International human rights organisations such as **Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned human rights**

violations committed by state forces in their fight against the NPA, particularly the phenomenon known as “red-tagging”, which consists of harassing, arbitrarily arresting and even murdering activists, journalists and human rights defenders accused of being NPA members or sympathisers. Philippine government and security bodies deplored persistent human rights violations by the NPA, including the recruitment of child soldiers, the use of anti-personnel mines, the extortion and coercion of civilians and businesses and “revolutionary trials” and summary executions of civilians and former combatants accused of collaborating with the state.

The most significant military operations of the year included those resulting in the deaths of seven NPA members in Kabankalan (Negros Occidental) in February; another seven fighters in Negros Occidental in April; nine fighters in Surigao del Norte and Leyte in June; 15 NPA members in Masbate and Northern Samar in July; and five insurgents in Camarines Sur in December, shortly after two soldiers died when an anti-personnel mine exploded. At the end of December, the CPP ordered the NPA to observe a four-day ceasefire to celebrate the Christmas holidays and commemorate the party’s 57th anniversary. The government did not reciprocate the truce, describing it as a propaganda stunt.

Thailand (south)	
Start:	2004
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internal
Main parties:	Government, BRN and other pro-independence armed groups
Intensity:	1
Trend:	=

Summary:

The conflict in the south of Thailand dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the then Kingdom of Siam and the British colonial power on the Malaysian peninsula decided to split the Sultanate of Pattani, leaving some territories under the sovereignty of what is currently Malaysia and others (the southern provinces of Songkhla, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat) under Thai sovereignty. During the entire 20th century, there had been groups that had fought to resist the policies of political, cultural and religious homogenisation promoted by Bangkok or to demand the independence of these provinces, of Malay-Muslim majority. The conflict reached its moment of culmination in the 1960s and 70s and decreased in the following decades, thanks to the democratisation of the country. However, the coming into power of Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001, involved a drastic turn in the counterinsurgency policy and preceded a breakout of armed conflict from which the region has been suffering since 2004. The civil population, whether Buddhist or Muslim, is the main victim of the violence, which is not normally vindicated by any group.

157. Mendoza, John Eric , “NPA membership down to 780; over 5,000 seek amnesty – gov’t”, *Inquirer*, 5 December 2025.

158. Sarmiento, Bong S., “With deadline just 2 months away, NAC seeks for amnesty application”, *Mindanews*, 6 January 2026.

Despite the resumption of peace talks between the parties at the end of the year, after nearly two years of impasse, the armed conflict in Thailand was of a similar intensity as in the previous year, consistent with the slight upward trend in violence since 2020. According to data compiled by Deep South Watch,¹⁵⁹ 608 episodes of violence were reported in the southern Muslim-majority provinces in 2025, in which 116 people died and 409 were wounded. Since the armed conflict broke out in southern Thailand in 2004, a total of 23,613 episodes of violence have been reported in which 7,811 people have died and 15,318 have been wounded. Fifteen per cent of the victims in 2025 were women. Furthermore, 51% of the total victims were Buddhist, despite only representing around one-fifth of the population. The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), which reports to the Thai government, published lower conflict impact figures, although they did not include the number of fighters killed. According to the SBPAC, 150 security incidents were recorded in 2025 in which 48 people died (38 state officials and 10 civilians) and another 384 were wounded (219 state officials and 165 civilians). The government's official figures on the armed conflict since it began in 2004 are also lower, as they do not include the deaths of BRN members or the combatants of other armed groups. According to the SBPAC, there were 10,116 insurgency-related incidents from early 2004 to the end of 2025 in which 5,999 people died (3,661 civilians and 2,338 state officials) and another 13,519 were wounded (6,614 civilians and 6,905 state personnel).¹⁶⁰

A significant amount of the episodes of violence took place in the first half of the year. In fact, in late May, the Thai government announced that as many armed conflict events had occurred in the first five months of 2025 as in all of 2024. The rise in violence following a failed ceasefire attempt during the month of Ramadan was particularly notable, as the same initiative had been carried out with relative success on previous occasions. In early March, shortly after the Thai government rejected the BRN's demands for a cessation of hostilities, the armed group carried out a series of coordinated attacks with explosive devices in the provinces of Yala and Narathiwat in which five people died and another 14 were wounded. A few days later, in mid-March, 18 members of the state security forces were wounded in Narathiwat in a new series of attacks with remotely detonated explosives. High levels of violence were again reported in April, caused particularly by the BRN, with 57 attacks in which 18 people died and another 50 were wounded. In response, Bangkok indefinitely postponed its intention to lift martial law in three districts of the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. In early May, a few days after a prominent BRN leader was killed by Thai security forces, the BRN carried out several attacks in which five civilians died, including a minor. Civil

society groups and human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch condemned such attacks against civilians and described them as war crimes. The BRN issued a statement expressing regret for these deaths, claiming that it adheres to the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights and denying that its military targets include civilians.

One of the biggest news stories in the first half of the year was the discovery of explosive devices in some tourist destinations in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi. Although no details emerged about the discoveries and the arrests made, and despite the fact that the Thai government disassociated these events from the Malay-Muslim insurgency in the southern part of the country, various media outlets such as the Bangkok Post speculated that the BRN (or even another historical armed group, the PULO) may have intended to carry out attacks to undermine confidence in the tourism sector and damage the local economy. Since the conflict began in 2004, virtually no operations or violent episodes have been reported outside the southern Muslim-majority provinces.

The violence subsided in the second half of the year, coinciding with the inauguration of a new prime minister, Anutin Charnvirakul, and rapprochement between the parties. These conciliatory steps included the appointment of a new government negotiating panel, the prime minister's visit to the southern part of the country, statements supporting dialogue to resolve the conflict and an agreement to formally resume negotiations in December. Episodes of violence continued to occur, however, such as a wave of insurgent attacks over three consecutive days that included the theft of large amounts of gold, an attack on a bank and the coordinated detonation of 11 explosive devices in various locations in the country. Furthermore, **many human rights organisations continued to criticise the continued imposition of martial law and the emergency decree**, arguing that they encourage impunity for the Thai security forces and breed resentment and grievances among the local population.

Thailand – Cambodia	
Start:	2025
Type:	Territory International
Main parties:	Thailand, Cambodia
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↑
Summary:	The current conflict between both countries has historical roots linked to rivalries between the Khmer Empire and the Kingdom of Siam, as well as the geopolitical impact

159. Deep South Watch, [Conflict Incident Database](#) [retrieved 8 January 2026].

160. The Nation, "[Deep South insurgency marks 22 years: 10,116 attacks, 5,999 deaths](#)", *The Nation*, 4 January 2026.

of French colonial rule over much of Southeast Asia from the 17th century. However, its immediate origin lies in the divergent interpretation of the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1907, which sought to delimit the over 800-kilometer-long border between the two countries and restored several border regions previously controlled by Siam to Cambodia. In addition to the lack of agreement on defining the border, the conflict has also revolved around sovereignty and de facto control of several temples in the disputed border regions, particularly the 12th-century Hindu temple of Preah Vihear. In 1962, after Cambodia brought the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) following Thailand's military occupation of the temple in the 1950s, the ICJ ruled that the temple belonged to Cambodia, but did not clearly rule on the status of the land adjacent to it. Tensions resurfaced in 2008 when the Preah Vihear temple was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, triggering border clashes between 2008 and 2011. In 2013, a new ICJ ruling determined that both the temple and the surrounding disputed territory belonged to Cambodia and demanded the withdrawal of all troops from the area. Both countries created a joint commission to resolve the border dispute peacefully in 2000, but it has achieved no significant progress since.

The cross-border fighting in July and December between the armed forces of Thailand and Cambodia, considered one of the most intense interstate conflicts in Southeast Asia in recent decades, claimed around 150 lives (although some sources maintain the figure could be more than double), displaced around 1.5 million people, forced the closure of the border and led to the occupation of foreign and disputed territory by both countries.

According to official cumulative mortality data collected by both governments for the year, 149 people died in 2025, virtually all of them in clashes in July and December. Thailand acknowledged 105 deaths (43 military personnel and 62 civilians), whilst Cambodia recognised the deaths of 39 civilians and only five members of the military or police in July and provided no death toll for December. According to the Thai government and some other sources, Cambodian military casualties may have exceeded 165,¹⁶¹ pushing the total body count above 300, whilst the Thai Army claimed that in the first three days of fighting in December alone, 505 people were killed in Cambodia.¹⁶² Moreover, around 800 people were wounded in both countries, although the real figure could also be much higher. It is estimated that nearly 1.5 million people were forcibly displaced, including more than 310,000 in July and almost 1.2 million in December, with 510,000 fleeing in Thailand and close to 650,000 in Cambodia. Over 2,200 schools were closed –nearly 1,200 in Thailand and more than 1,000 in Cambodia.¹⁶³ Many other schools were adapted as temporary shelters for displaced persons, whilst hundreds of health centres and hospitals suspended

The cross-border clashes claimed the lives of around 150 people and forcibly displaced 1.5 million people, whilst both countries occupied foreign and disputed territory

their activities or were seriously affected by the clashes. The fighting took place primarily in 16 locations along the 800-kilometer border, affecting the Thai provinces of Sisaket, Surin, Buriram, Ubon Ratchathani, Sa Keo, Trat and Chanthaburi and the Cambodian provinces of Preah Vihear, Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, Koh Kong and Battambang.

The high-intensity clashes in late July were preceded by several months of tension and isolated episodes of violence. In late May, a Cambodian soldier died in a skirmish between the two armies in the “Emerald Triangle”, on the border between Cambodia's Preah Vihear province and Thailand's Ubon Ratchathani province. In mid-June, Hun Sen, the president of the Cambodian Senate and a former Cambodian prime minister for 25 years, leaked a private conversation with Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra in which she seemed to criticise the Thai Army, triggering a political crisis that led to her removal from office and drastically ballooned tension between the two countries at the same time. Shortly after this diplomatic incident, Bangkok temporarily closed all border crossings, citing a campaign against transnational crime. In the following weeks, several Thai soldiers were wounded by anti-personnel mines on the border whilst carrying out demining tasks. Thailand accused Cambodia of violating international law, closed several border crossings indefinitely, recalled its ambassador to Cambodia for consultations, expelled Cambodia's special envoy to Thailand and ordered its troops on the border to remain combat ready. On 24 July, both countries traded blame for initiating the high-intensity hostilities at various points along their shared border, which led to around 40 deaths and displaced around 300,000 people in five days. **On 28 July, Cambodia and Thailand signed an immediate and unconditional ceasefire**

agreement in which they pledged to freeze military movements and avoid advancing in disputed areas, withdraw heavy weapons from disputed border areas, restore direct channels between military commands to prevent misunderstandings, allow evacuated civilians to return to their homes and authorise the deployment of a Malaysian-led ASEAN observer team to verify compliance with the ceasefire. The agreement was reached following negotiations in Putrajaya (Malaysia) between Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and Thailand's acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai. It was facilitated by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim with the support, observation and diplomatic pressure of ASEAN, China and the United States, whose president, Donald Trump, threatened to increase tariffs on both countries. Later, on 26 October, **as part of the 47th**

161. Swissinfo, “Tailandia dice que hay al menos 165 bajas del lado camboyano y Camboya lo niega”, *Swissinfo*, 12 December 2025.

162. The Nation, “Thai Army says it has destroyed 82 Cambodian positions, 175 drones on day 8 of fighting”, *The Nation*, 15 December 2025.

163. Punreay, Hang, *Border conflict disrupts 2026 school year for students*, *Khmer Times*, 5 January 2026.

ASEAN Summit, both parties signed the Kuala Lumpur Peace Accord, primarily facilitated by Malaysia and the United States. In addition to elaborating, specifying and expanding on some of the commitments previously reached in the ceasefire in late July, the agreement also aimed to restore mutual trust and normalise diplomatic relations between both countries, initiate joint demining and transnational crime-fighting operations and establish a border committee to work on the definitive delineation of the border.

Despite these agreements, many truce violations were reported from late July onwards, including sporadic exchanges of gunfire and anti-personnel mine explosions in which some soldiers were wounded, incursions into the other country's territory, the construction of bunkers, the acquisition of military equipment, drone flights over disputed areas and belligerent rhetoric and mutual accusations. Bangkok unilaterally suspended the agreement on 10 November following a landmine explosion that wounded two Thai soldiers, prompting accusations that Cambodia had laid new mines in border areas. After several days of mounting tension, fighting resumed between the two countries on 7 December, first in Sisaket province and subsequently in at least 16 other locations, from the Gulf of Thailand to the triple border with Laos. **The fighting included many airstrikes with F-16 fighters and other aircraft, as well as with surveillance and combat drones, the use of hundreds of battle tanks, the deployment of rockets, missiles and long-range heavy artillery, the positioning of tens of thousands of soldiers along the border and even naval clashes in the Gulf of Thailand,** where Bangkok managed to impose a naval blockade against Cambodian military and logistical supply. In addition to the armed clashes, both countries accused each other of having occupied disputed territory and even of violating their territorial integrity.

In response to the escalation of the warlike situation and increased international pressure, both governments pledged to resume talks during an ASEAN meeting in December. **On 27 December, they announced a 72-hour ceasefire.** After this period elapsed without serious incidents, on 31 December, Bangkok released 18 Cambodian prisoners held since late July, and in the following days the foreign ministers of Cambodia and Thailand met in Yunnan (China) to consolidate the truce, under Chinese facilitation.

Europe

Eastern Europe

Russia – Ukraine	
Start:	2022 ¹⁶⁴
Type:	Government, Territory International
Main parties:	Russia, Donbas militias, Ukraine
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

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 Russian invasion of Ukraine was preceded by previous cycles of conflict and failed dialogue: 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 insecurity, a strained international order and greater militarisation in Europe. During US President Trump's second term, Washington scaled back its support for Ukraine and recast EU countries as adversaries, thereby transforming the strategic landscape of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Unleashed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the war between both countries intensified and escalated in 2025 alongside diplomatic initiatives that failed to reach any agreements.¹⁶⁵ The Russia-Ukraine war remained the armed conflict with the highest annual death toll in 2025. According to ACLED, 78,347 people died in Ukraine in 2025, compared to 73,570 in 2024, 39,762 in 2023 and 40,530 in 2022. ACLED reported 1,843 deaths from political violence in Russia (compared to 4,804 in 2024, 227 in 2023 and 97 in 2022), mostly related to the war with Ukraine. More than 1,300 died in 2025 in the Kursk region of Russia¹⁶⁶ after it was invaded by Ukraine in August 2024, with fighting continuing there until March 2025. Most of the casualties on both sides were soldiers. An investigation by the BBC and Mediazona reported that Russia recorded

164. Between 2014 and 2021 the war in eastern Ukraine was analysed as an internationalised internal conflict. See the summary on "Ukraine (east)" in pre-2022 editions of this report.

165. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2025. Analysis on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

166. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 19 January 2026].

80,000 missing or dead declaration lawsuits between January and November 2025. The joint journalistic project verified 153,171 Russian military deaths from 2022 until 4 December 2025.¹⁶⁷ The Ukrainian and Russian governments gave much higher figures for military casualties on the opposing side. Furthermore, at least 2,514 civilians died and no fewer than 12,142 were wounded in 2025, mostly in areas under Ukrainian control, according to OHCHR data.¹⁶⁸ This amounts to a 31% increase in civilian casualties compared to 2024 and 70% compared to 2023.

The war continued to have a severe impact on human security. OHCHR noted a serious deterioration in living conditions in frontline regions, with extensive damage to homes and other civilian infrastructure.¹⁶⁹ By December, 3.3 million people were internally displaced in Ukraine¹⁷⁰ and 5.8 million were refugees, 5.3 million of which were in European countries. Attacks on medical infrastructure rose by 12% compared to 2024.¹⁷¹ According to OCHA, 10.8 million people in Ukraine needed humanitarian assistance in 2026.¹⁷² Ukrainian men's attempts to avoid military registration increased. In the first few days of 2026, the new Ukrainian defence minister estimated that 2 million men were wanted for evading mobilization and that 200,000 military personnel were absent without official leave.

The hostilities intensified in 2025, although with few changes to the front lines. According to ACLED, 78,316 violent events took place in Ukraine between early 2025 and early 2026. This figure included 76,112 events of political violence, mostly explosions and remote violence (46,076) and battles (29,950).¹⁷³ In 2024, ACLED counted 51,647 events of organised violence. The combat dynamics were concentrated primarily on the eastern front in Ukraine, where Russia's priority objective remained to capture parts of the Donetsk region still under Ukrainian control. In Donetsk, Russian forces advanced towards Pokrovsk, a key transport and logistics hub, and by December they controlled around 67% of the city, according to the ISW. Moscow also announced the capture of Chasiv Yar in late July, after 16 months of fighting, took Toretsk in August and advanced towards Kostiantynivka. All three settlements had been severely devastated by indiscriminate bombing and combat. On the northern front, Russia completed the recovery of control over its Kursk region in March. Moscow maintained military pressure in the northern parts of

the Sumy and Kharkiv regions to establish buffer zones, but was unsuccessful. In the Kharkiv region, Russian forces captured Kupiansk, but Ukraine took it back in December. Russia also continued attacking on the Zaporizhzhia front in the south.

Russia captured an additional 4,831 km² in 2025 (3,604 km² in 2024), equivalent to 0.8% of Ukraine's entire territory, according to the ISW,¹⁷⁴ most of it in the Donetsk region. According to DeepState, a Ukrainian open-source data project, **at year's end Russia controlled 19% of Ukraine**, including close to 78% of the Donetsk region (10% more than in 2024), 75% of Zaporizhzhia (up from 73% in 2024), around 72% of Kherson and practically all of Luhansk. According to ACLED, Russia captured around 200 towns during the year, half of them small villages at the intersection of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk.¹⁷⁵ In general terms, the war continued to be one of attrition, with simultaneous fronts, slow advances for Russia and a high cost in military casualties. The ISW noted changes in Russian operational and assault methods that may have facilitated these limited advances.

The air war intensified in 2025. According to data compiled by the ISW, Russia launched 54,000 long-range drones and 1,900 missiles against Ukraine that year. According to ACLED, Russian attacks involving drones increased by around 150% annually and airstrikes resulting in civilian deaths or injuries rose by 30% due to the bombing of densely populated areas. In the last quarter of 2025, Russia launched large-scale coordinated attacks with missiles and drones against Ukraine's energy infrastructure, with severe impacts on civilians' access to electricity, heating and water. Some of these attacks targeted specific regions. According to ACLED data, Ukraine stepped up its attacks against oil and military infrastructure in Russia, as well as its acts of sabotage and assassination attempts in Russia and occupied Ukrainian areas. Analysts warned that this extrajudicial use of assassination could become normalised, as it was also practised by Russia.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, in 2025 the conflict was affected by the approach taken by the new Trump administration, which exerted diplomatic pressure and scaled back its military support for Ukraine, drew closer to Russia and shook Euro-Atlantic relations. Washington's new National Security Strategy was critical of EU policies and expressed disagreement with European representatives, arguing that they have

167. Mediazona, *Russian losses in the war with Ukraine* [Viewed on 19 December 2025]

168. OHCHR, *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – December 2025*, ACNUDH, 12 January 2026.

169. OHCHR, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 30 November 2025*, ACNUDH, 9 November 2025.

170. IOM, *Displacement Tracking Matrix. Ukraine* [Viewed on 26 January 2026].

171. World Health Organization, *Kherson maternity ward struck as attacks on Ukraine's health care escalate and the fourth winter of full-scale invasion sets in*, WHO, 5 December 2025.

172. OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. Ukraine*.

173. ACLED, *ACLED Explorer* [Viewed on 19 January 2026].

174. Institute for the Study of War, *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, December 31, 2025*, ISW, 31 December 2025.

175. Gurkov, Nichita, *Exhausted Ukraine faces military and diplomatic pressure to cede the Donbas*, ACLED, 11 December 2025.

176. Gurkov, Nichita, *Personal payback: Assassinations escalate in Ukraine and Russia's shadow war*, ACLED, 19 September 2025.

unrealistic expectations about the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia escalated its confrontation with various European countries, including NATO members, with practices such as drone violations of their airspace.¹⁷⁷

Southern Europe

Türkiye (PKK)	
Start:	1984
Type:	Self-government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, PKK, TAK, ISIS
Intensity:	1
Trend:	↓

Summary:

The PKK, created in 1978 as a political party of a Marxist-Leninist nature and led by Abdullah Öcalan, announced in 1984, an armed offensive against the government, undertaking a campaign of military rebellion to reclaim the independence of Kurdistan, which was heavily responded to by the government in defence of territorial integrity. The war that was unleashed between the PKK and the government particularly affected the Kurdish civil population in the southeast of Türkiye, 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 Türkiye. Since then, the conflict has shifted between periods of ceasefire and violence, coexisting alongside 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. Syrian Kurdish militias with links to the PKK established a pro-Kurdish autonomous administration in northeastern Syria, which Türkiye opposed both politically and militarily. In 2024, a new negotiating process began between the Turkish government and the PKK.

The armed conflict between Türkiye and the Kurdish armed group PKK de-escalated significantly in 2025, driven by the negotiating process that began in 2024.¹⁷⁸ However, analysts noted that the military mobilisation continued. The Turkish government and the leadership of the PKK (including both its top leader, Abdullah Öcalan, incarcerated since 1999, and leaders outside prison) were involved in the negotiations, which also included dialogue between political parties.¹⁷⁹ **The first phase of this new initiative focused on the military**

sphere and steered the armed conflict towards its possible future conclusion. Nevertheless, the process was beset by multiple internal and regional tensions¹⁸⁰ in a more turbulent international context. Lasting more than four decades, in recent years the armed conflict between Türkiye and the PKK had shifted primarily to northern Iraq, where most of the PKK's forces were located. Türkiye has also waged a political and military campaign against Kurdish forces in Iraq (the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) coalition, led by the YPG/YPJ Kurdish militias, with links to the PKK), which it considers an extension of the PKK.¹⁸¹

The armed conflict was marked by various military milestones in 2025. In a historic move in February, Öcalan called for an end to the armed struggle and urged the PKK to convene a congress, lay down its arms and voluntarily dissolve, citing changes in the historical context and an atmosphere favourable to the negotiating process.¹⁸² **The PKK announced a unilateral ceasefire on 1 March.** The SDF said that Öcalan's call did not apply to their group. The Turkish government warned that all groups linked to the PKK must dissolve, including its "extensions" in Syria. **Despite the unilateral ceasefire, Türkiye maintained military pressure on the group and affiliated militias.** The organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) counted 1,390 bombings and attacks by the Turkish Armed Forces in northern Iraq between 1 March and 30 June 2025.

Despite the attacks, **on 12 May the group announced its decision to dissolve its organisational structure and end the armed struggle,¹⁸³** explaining that it had reached a point where the Kurdish issue could be resolved through democratic politics. However, it noted that the implementation of its decision required recognition of Öcalan's right to participate in democratic politics, solid legal guarantees in the process, a responsible role for the Turkish Parliament in the process and other considerations. The Turkish president described the announcement as a key milestone in advancing towards a "country without terrorism" and said that he expected the dissolution to encompass all extensions of the group, especially in northern Iraq, Syria and Europe. Following its announcement, the PKK temporarily began using the name Kurdistan Freedom Movement.

Days after Öcalan released a video message, the first authorised since his imprisonment, **the PKK began its disarmament** in a symbolic act in which 30 fighters destroyed their weapons on 11 July in Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan. In subsequent months, pro-government media reported some further steps in the disarmament,

177. See chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

178. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2024. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

179. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2025. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

180. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz para 2026*, January 2026.

181. See the analysis on Syria in this chapter

182. See full text at "Call for Peace and Democratic Society".

183. Statement full text.

under the supervision of the Turkish intelligence services and the Turkish Army. However, no details emerged about the disarmament roadmap or about the amounts or types of weapons surrendered by the end of the year, nor was any substantial information disclosed about independent supervision or verification. In October, **the PKK announced the withdrawal of its forces from Türkiye and its retreat to northern Iraq.** In November, it moved its forces in northern Iraq areas even further from the border to avoid clashes and protect the peace process, according to the group.

The peace process was reflected in a marked reduction in hostilities, mainly from mid-year onwards. According to ACLED, in the northern Iraqi governorates of Erbil and Dohuk, the main theatre of the Türkiye-PKK conflict in recent years, there were 1,375 and 396 events related to foreign military involvement respectively in 2025, most of them taking the form of explosions or remote violence.¹⁸⁴ According to ACLED, these events increased until March and were scarce from August onwards. In October, the CPT warned of a “cold peace” situation in northern Iraq in which the Turkish Armed Forces expanded their military presence in the region despite having ceased their bombings in September. This alleged expansion included the construction of new military infrastructure (such as new roads to connect military bases and a new base) and restrictions on movement for civilians.¹⁸⁵ The CPT also claimed that the PKK increased its military mobilisation, expanding its network of tunnels, holding onto weapons and not participating in disarmament.¹⁸⁶ ACLED counted only 52 episodes of political violence in Türkiye. The death toll fell slightly below armed conflict thresholds. ACLED reported 70 deaths from events involving foreign military forces in the northern Iraq areas that are the usual theatre of the Türkiye-PKK conflict, and another 15 in Türkiye from political violence. At the end of the year, some analysts argued that it was still too early to consider the armed conflict concluded.¹⁸⁷

The PKK demanded that the Turkish government release Öcalan in 2025. It also called for a legal framework to resolve the situation of PKK members and political and constitutional reforms for democratisation that address the Kurdish issue. In August, a parliamentary commission was formed to address process-related issues, such as the future of PKK fighters, and was scheduled to issue a report with recommendations in early 2026. Tension rose at the end of the year, with more Turkish threats against Kurdish militias in Syria. In early 2026, military operations launched by Syrian pro-government factions and the Syrian Army against Kurdish forces raised concerns about an escalation of

violence in Syria¹⁸⁸ and the risk of negative impacts on the peace process in Türkiye.

Middle East

Mashreq

Iraq	
Start:	2003
Type:	System, Government, Identity, Resources Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, Iraqi military and security forces, Kurdish forces (peshmerga), Shia militias (including Harakat alNujaba, the Hashd al-Shaabi coalition, Kata'ib Hezbollah and the coalition/ platform Islamic Resistance in Iraq), ISIS, international anti-ISIS coalition led by USA, USA, Iran, Türkiye, Israel
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

Summary:

The invasion of Iraq by the international coalition led by the USA in March 2003 (using the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction as an argument and with the desire to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein due to his alleged link to the attacks of the 11th September 2001 in the USA) started an armed conflict in which numerous actors progressively became involved: international troops, the Iraqi armed forces, militias and rebel groups and Al Qaeda, among others. The new division of power between Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish groups within the institutional setting set up after the overthrow of Hussein led to discontent among numerous sectors. The violence has increased, with the armed opposition against the international presence in the country superimposing the internal fight for the control of power with a marked sectarian component since February 2006, mainly between Shiites and Sunnis. Following the withdrawal of the US forces in late 2011, the dynamics of violence have persisted, with a high impact on the civilian population. The armed conflict worsened in 2014 as a result of the rise of the armed group Islamic State (ISIS) and the Iraqi government's military response, backed by a new international coalition led by the United States. 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 and, since late 2023, by the repercussions of the crisis in Gaza across the entire region.

Levels of violence continued to fall in Iraq throughout 2025, consistent with recent trends, and reached their lowest point since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in

184. ACLED, [ACLED Explorer](#) [Viewed on 19 January 2026].

185. Community Peacemaker Teams, “A cold peace: a ceasefire without demobilization”, *CPT*, 15 October 2025.

186. Community Peacemaker Teams, “Turkish military attacks reduce by 97%, amid ongoing peace developments and new Turkish military operation”, *CPT*, 11 August 2025.

187. Arslan, Rojda, *One Year of “Peace Process”: Has the Forty Years of Armed Conflict Between the PKK and Turkey Ended Under International Law?*, *Opinio Juris*, 21 October 2025.

188. See Syria and Turkey at Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz para 2026*, January 2026.

2003. According to data collected by ACLED, 580 people died during the year in various episodes of violence, which primarily took the form of clashes between armed groups, attacks against civilians, explosions and acts of remote violence. Some of these episodes were related to the impact of regional tensions and dynamics on the country, particularly the struggle pitting Iran against Israel and the United States. The Iraqi government came under pressure from Washington throughout the year, with both the Biden administration and later the Trump administration urging it to neutralise the Iran-backed Shia militias operating in the country that are part of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Pressure to accelerate the disarmament of these groups intensified in March and the militias were warned not to react to the military campaign that Washington launched against the Houthis in Yemen.¹⁸⁹ Iraqi Shia groups aligned with Iran maintained a low profile until June, when the outbreak of the “Twelve-Day War” between Israel and Iran fuelled speculation about possible impacts on Iraq. The armed conflict affected Iraqi air traffic and air defences and several governorates were struck by missiles. The Iraqi government condemned Israel’s military aggression and defended Iran’s right to respond proportionally. In the following weeks, drone and missile attacks also targeted various pieces of infrastructure in the Kurdistan region, including airports and oil fields. Nobody claimed responsibility for these attacks. Moreover, incidents were reported between federal forces and Iran-aligned militias in Baghdad.

The armed group Islamic State (ISIS) also remained active in 2025, as it continued to carry out asymmetric attacks, mainly against Iraqi security forces. Around 20 of the attacks were reported between April and October. Some analysts indicate that the group may have shifted the focus of its activities in Iraq towards strengthening its networks in the border area with Syria to take advantage of the new scenario there following the overthrow of Bashar Assad in December 2024. In March, a joint operation by Iraqi and US forces resulted in the death of ISIS’ second-in-command. Northern Iraq remained the theatre of the struggle between Türkiye and the PKK, although hostilities decreased notably compared to previous years starting in late February following the Kurdish group’s announcement that it was laying down its arms.¹⁹⁰ **The year 2025 was also marked by the withdrawal of international troops from the country. On the one hand, the US-led global coalition against ISIS began its withdrawal from Iraq in September.** US personnel stationed in the country, which had totalled 200,000 troops at their peak, were reduced to a small contingent of military advisers who will continue to collaborate in coordinating the fight against the jihadist

armed group from a base in the Kurdistan Region. **On the other hand, the UN mission in Iraq, UNAMI, withdrew after 22 years** of supporting the transition process. In 2024, the Iraqi government had requested the closure of the mission, which progressively ceased its operations and concluded its mandate in December. UNAMI’s departure was considered a symbol of the beginning of a new phase in Iraq, whose government hoped to establish a new type of relationship with the UN.¹⁹¹

At the end of the year, attention was focused on the political process and the formation of a new government following the parliamentary elections in November, which had an unexpectedly high turnout rate (56%, higher than 41% in the 2021 elections). The coalition led by acting Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani obtained the best results, but no party secured a majority. Observers noted that the voting took place in a generally calm atmosphere, though some violent incidents did take place, including the assassination of a candidate. Some analysts warned that this relative calm reflected the consolidation of power and patronage networks of various groups and leaders along ethnic and sectarian lines rather than genuine stability. This was seen in Shia coalitions through their domination of state institutions and in the main Kurdish parties through their intimidation and arrest of political rivals, whilst Sunni blocs remained fragmented and marginalised.¹⁹²

Israel, USA – Iran ¹⁹³	
Start:	2025
Type:	System, Government International
Main parties:	Israel, USA, Iran
Intensity:	3
Trend:	↑

Summary:
Relations between Israel and Iran have historically had their highs and lows, but a hostile atmosphere has prevailed between them since the last few decades of the 20th century. In 1947, Iran was one of the countries that voted against the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine due to its potential consequences for the region and advocated an alternative proposal for a single federal state. Nevertheless, after the First Arab-Israeli War (1948), Iran was the second Muslim country (after Türkiye) to officially recognise Israel, during the rule of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Beginning in 1953, when a coup d’état supported by the United States and the United Kingdom reinstated pro-Western leadership in Iran, the two countries intensified their economic, military and security relations.

189. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, US, United Kingdom in this chapter.

190. See the summary on Türkiye (PKK) in this chapter.

191. Schaer, Cathrin, “Less UN, fewer soldiers – a new era for Iraq?”, *Deutsche Welle*, 12 July 2025; UN News, “In Baghdad, Guterres hails ‘new chapter’ in Iraq as UN mission draws to a close”, *UN News*, 13 December 2025.

192. Ezzeddine, Nancy and Rahman Taha, Abdel, *Leaders tighten control as repression shapes Iraq’s 2025 elections*, ACLED, 5 November 2025.

193. In the previous edition of *Alert!*, this case was analysed as a socio-political crisis under the heading “Israel–Iran”. The new designation of the case as an armed conflict includes the United States due to its prominent role in the events of 2025.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran led to a breakdown in those relations and a dynamic of confrontation. The Islamic Republic of Iran took a more active stance on the Palestinian issue and does not recognise Israel. Meanwhile, Israel considers Tehran as a threat. Since the mid-1980s, Iran and Israel have been engaged in a proxy conflict that has had repercussions throughout the region. They have engaged in a shadow war, exchanging attacks against each other's interests. Iran's nuclear programme has been one of the main targets of these attacks. Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons, despite not publicly acknowledging it, is determined to prevent Tehran from developing an atomic weapon. The conflict between Israel and Iran had primarily been waged through indirect attacks, but in 2024, amid escalating regional tensions stemming from the Gaza crisis, both countries crossed a red line and engaged in direct attacks on each other's soil. In 2025 hostilities escalated into an armed conflict in which the US was also involved.

After tensions between Israel and Iran mounted in 2024 in a regional context convulsed by the effects of the crisis in Gaza,¹⁹⁴ **a significant rise in violence in 2025 crystallised into a new open confrontation between Israel and Iran, joined by the United States, which left more than a thousand people dead.** The **"Twelve-Day War"** ended in a ceasefire agreement in June, but the situation remained highly volatile at the end of the year and new hostilities were not ruled out for 2026. The escalation in June 2025 was preceded in the first few months of the year by warnings from senior Israeli officials about an attack on Iran. After Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2026, his second administration repeatedly threatened Iran with a possible attack if it did not give up its atomic activities. Iran responded to these threats by warning of reciprocal action.

Despite this virulent rhetoric, Washington and Iran engaged in diplomatic dialogue during 2025. In the first half of the year, several rounds of direct and indirect meetings were held between representatives of the Trump administration and the Iranian regime under Qatari mediation.¹⁹⁵ Shortly before the sixth round of meetings between Washington and Tehran was to take place, Israel launched a wide-ranging offensive against the Iranian regime. **The unprecedented Israeli attacks began on 13 June** as part of a military campaign called "Rising Lion" and included **airstrikes against nuclear facilities, ballistic infrastructure and senior Iranian military officials and scientists involved in the nuclear programme.** The Israeli attacks also struck other targets, including energy infrastructure, ministries, government buildings, public radio and television stations and Evin prison in Tehran. The Iranian capital was the most affected, with thousands forced to flee, although the Israeli strikes hit targets in practically the entire country (27 of the 31 provinces).

Iran responded to the Israeli campaign by launching over a thousand projectiles and drones as part of what it called Operation True Promise III. Between 80% and 90% of the Iranian attacks were intercepted by the Israeli defence systems, but over 30 missiles hit Israel. In this context, **the United States joined the conflict on 22 June by conducting a series of large-scale airstrikes against the Iranian nuclear facilities at Isfahan, Natanz and Fordow.** The attacks made Trump the first US president to attack another country's nuclear programme and the first to explicitly join Israel in a military campaign against an adversary.¹⁹⁶ The day following the US airstrikes, the Iranian regime, which had announced reprisals, launched an attack against the US military base at Al Udeid in Qatar, but it was largely intercepted by Washington's forces and by Qatar. After these exchanges of fire, on 24 June Trump announced a "complete and total" ceasefire between Israel and Iran. Hostilities ceased after a few hours and the truce was implemented amid claims of victory by both Benjamin Netanyahu's government and the Iranian regime. The attacks left more than 1,100 people dead in Iran (40% of them civilians, according to estimates) and 28 dead in Israel (mostly civilians).¹⁹⁷

The Israeli attacks, which were later supported by the United States, violated international law and once again demonstrated the growing normalisation of the use of force in the international system.¹⁹⁸ Israel justified its campaign by arguing that Iran was on the verge of obtaining a nuclear weapon, but it presented no evidence for its claims and came under widespread criticism for attempting to present its attacks as "preventive". The Trump administration conducted its airstrikes without seeking a United Nations Security Council resolution or asking the US Congress for authorisation. Although on 12 June the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had criticised Iran for its nuclear activities and failure to comply with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the IAEA and the CIA had concluded that there was no indication that Iran had taken steps to militarise its nuclear capabilities. **The Iranian atomic programme's facilities had obviously been damaged after the "Twelve-Day War", but the extent of this damage was unclear and the whereabouts of the reserves of uranium enriched to 60%, estimated at around 400 kilos, remained unknown.** The attacks on the Iranian nuclear programme were considered a turning point that would decisively affect the international negotiations over it. After the war, Tehran limited the access of international inspectors to its facilities, and in September the UN announced that it would reimpose sanctions against Iran that had been in force prior to the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme signed in 2015.

194. See the summary on Israel-Iran in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) in the previous edition of this yearbook.

195. For more information, see the summary on Iran in chapter 6 (Peace negotiations in the Middle East) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2025: Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

196. Center for Preventive Action, *Iran's Conflict With Israel and the United States*, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), 5 January 2026.

197. ACLED, *Q&A/Twelve days that shook the region: Inside the Iran-Israel war*, 4 July 2025.

198. For more information, see "Ataque de Israel y EEUU a Irán culmina en una tregua frágil y en un escenario incierto" in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, July 2025.

At the end of the year, there were prospects that the conflict could escalate again. Following the end of the “Twelve-Day War”, various analysts warned of Israel’s maximalist positions that transcend the Iranian nuclear programme and suggested that it could continue its offensive policies in an attempt to redraw the map of the Middle East. Given this stance, the Israeli government might attempt to expand on its strategic successes in the region, taking advantage of the weakening of regional actors allied with Iran in recent years, notably Hamas, Hezbollah and Bashar Assad’s regime in Syria. In this regard, according to reports, Netanyahu raised with Trump the need for fresh attacks against the Iranian ballistic programme during his visit to Washington in December. **The outbreak of a new wave of popular protests in Iran at the end of December and the regime’s immediate crackdown also served as an argument for Trump to warn Tehran of a new military intervention.**¹⁹⁹

Israel – Hezbollah	
Start:	2023
Type:	Government, Territory International
Main parties:	Israel, Hezbollah, other Lebanese armed organisations (al-Fajr Forces, Amal Movement) and Palestinian armed organisations active in Lebanon (Hamas’ al-Qassam Brigades and Islamic Jihad’s al-Quds Brigades)
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↓

Summary:

In the background of this conflict is the Palestinian Israeli issue and its consequences across the region. The thousands of Palestinian refugees who settled in Lebanon after 1948, together with the leadership of the PLO in 1979, prompted Israel’s continuous attacks in the southern part of the country. Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon in 1978 and again in 1982, claiming to expel Palestinian militias that were using the area to launch attacks on Israel. The Shia political and armed group Hezbollah was created in Lebanon in the early 1980s, during the Lebanese Civil War, for the stated purpose of opposing Israel, rejecting the Western presence in the Middle East and liberating Palestine. Hezbollah’s activities led to periodic clashes that culminated in the large-scale Israeli offensive against Lebanon in July 2006. Considered one of the most powerful non-state armed actors in the region, Hezbollah relies on Iran as its main source of external support. In recent years, it has been involved in combat operations in Syria and Iraq

and has provided military assistance to other armed groups with similar agendas in the region. In 2023, the crisis in Gaza and the resulting escalation of tensions throughout the Middle East led to a new phase of the armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Since 1978, a UN mission, UNSMIL, has been deployed on the de facto border area between Lebanon and Israel, with an evolving mandate that includes supervising the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon (2000) and the cessation of hostilities (after the 2006 war).

Violence associated with the armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah subsided in 2025 compared to the very high levels reached the previous year, when over 4,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of forced displacements were reported. **Hostilities decreased following the ceasefire reached in late November 2024 at the initiative of the United States and France, although repeated violations of the agreement have been reported since then.**²⁰⁰ Israel continued to carry out attacks on Lebanese soil nearly daily (one every four hours on average), according to estimates,²⁰¹ based on the argument that it wanted to eliminate Hezbollah members or prevent it from rebuilding its military capabilities. Hezbollah was not involved in attacks against Israel in 2025, not even during the “Twelve-Day War” between Israel and Iran in June,²⁰² though other regional allies of Iran did participate, such as the Houthis.²⁰³ According to data compiled by ACLED, over 400 people lost their lives in Lebanon over the course of 2025 due to violence linked to the conflict, including around 25 Hezbollah commanders. Between November 2024 and November 2025, the Lebanese Ministry of Health had recorded 330 fatalities and nearly a thousand wounded. In August, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) acknowledged having killed more than 240 alleged fighters and having carried out 600 airstrikes since the cessation of hostilities came into effect. **The UN reported that Israeli operations in Lebanon had caused the deaths of at least 127 civilians in one year, up to November.**²⁰⁴ In fact, one of the bloodiest episodes of the year occurred in January, when Israeli forces fired on displaced Lebanese civilians attempting to return to their homes, killing 22 people and wounding more than a hundred. In November, an airstrike on the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh left 13 dead, 11 of them minors. **Israeli attacks were not limited to southern Lebanon and also reached other locations, such as the Bekaa Valley and the northeastern governorate of Baalbek, as well as the capital, Beirut, which was hit by several airstrikes.** During 2025, the Netanyahu

199. According to some analysts, a possible US attack was halted in early 2026 at the request of Arab countries, which feared reprisals and a destabilising effect on the region. Netanyahu’s doubts also influenced US calculations, according to some concerned about the effects of potential Iranian attacks on Israeli soil during an election year. For more information, see Wong, Edward, Tyler Pager y Eric Schmitt, “Israel and Arab Nations Ask Trump to Refrain From Attacking Iran”, *The New York Times*, 15 January 2026 y Tisdall, Simon “Iran cannot be bombed into democracy. But it can be helped to find its way there”, *The Guardian*, 18 January 2026.

200. For more information, see the summary on Israel-Lebanon in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona, Icaria, 2026.

201. Christou, William, “Israel strikes southern Lebanon as deadline to disarm Hezbollah nears”, *The Guardian*, 24 December 2025.

202. See the summary on Israel, USA – Iran in this chapter.

203. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom in this chapter.

204. The Guardian, “At least 127 civilians killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon since ceasefire, UN says”, *The Guardian*, 25 November 2025.

government reported that practically all Israelis displaced by the conflict had returned to their homes. In Lebanon, by contrast, almost 65,000 people remained displaced by October, 51% of whom were women.²⁰⁵

In mid-February, in compliance with the provisions of the ceasefire agreement, Israel withdrew from most of southern Lebanon that it had occupied during the hostilities that broke out in 2023, but not all. **At the end of the year, Israel continued to violate the withdrawal conditions and maintained military forces in five positions and two “buffer zones” north of the Blue Line** (the de facto border between Israel and Lebanon, though it is not officially recognised). The Netanyahu government has stressed that it will hold these positions until Israel is certain that Hezbollah will not return to the area south of the Litani River. The ceasefire agreement stipulates that the Lebanese government will prevent Hezbollah and other armed groups from launching attacks against Israel and that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) will dismantle infrastructure and confiscate unauthorised weapons, among other tasks. In this vein, the LAF expanded their deployment in southern Lebanon during 2025. By September, there were already nearly 9,000 personnel south of the Litani River, and by October they had removed nearly 10,000 rockets, almost 400 missiles and over 200,000 explosives.²⁰⁶ **In August, the Lebanese government approved and entrusted the LAF with devising a plan to guarantee the state monopoly on the use of weapons by the end of 2025**, which would require the disarmament of Hezbollah and other armed groups. In September, the LAF presented their proposal to the cabinet. Although the details were confidential, it transpired that a three-month deadline had been set for the complete confiscation of arsenals south of the Litani River. The disarmament roadmap was rejected and criticised by Hezbollah and its main ally, the Amal Movement. Some Hezbollah leaders rejected total disarmament, whilst others said that they were willing to discuss how to integrate their military power into Lebanese national forces, but only after expelling Israel from Lebanese soil, securing the release of prisoners and beginning reconstruction. In the meantime, under an agreement reached by the Lebanese and Palestinian presidents in May, Palestinian factions aligned with the PLO began handing their weapons over to the Lebanese authorities. By November, arms deliveries had taken place in eight of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps. The agreement did not involve the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are also active in Lebanon.

In addition to these developments, **in the middle of the year the UN Security Council decided to renew the mandate of its mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the last time, until the end of 2026, after which it will end its operations** and begin its withdrawal from the country. Comprising nearly 12,000 personnel from 48 countries, the peacekeeping mission has come under mounting

criticism from Israel, which is uncomfortable with the mission’s observation work and reports. Among other things, UNIFIL has warned of Israel’s constant violations of Lebanese airspace, the construction of walls inside Lebanese territory and Israeli fire in areas close to UNIFIL personnel. The situation remained unstable and volatile at the end of the year. Following a ground incursion by Israeli forces into the town of Blida in October, the Lebanese president instructed the LAF to respond to any such activities in the future. In December, some reports indicated that Israel was considering launching a new large-scale campaign against Hezbollah, although in practice its attacks in Lebanon became relatively less deadly during the month. Israel was sceptical of the LAF’s announcement in early January that the first phase of disarmament south of the Litani River had largely been completed. According to reports, in late 2025, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar urged the United States to pressure Israel to de-escalate. Washington pressured the Lebanese government to agree to dialogue with Israel, though Beirut sought to avoid it, describing it as a step towards the “normalisation” of relations with Israel.

Israel – Palestine	
Start:	2000
Type:	Self-government, Identity, Territory International
Main parties:	Israeli government, settler militias, PA, Fatah (Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), Hamas (Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades), Islamic Jihad, FPLP, FDLP, Popular Resistance Committees, Salafists groups, brigades of Jenin, Nablus and Tubas, Lion’s Den
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Summary:	The conflict between Israel and the various Palestinian actors started up again in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, favoured by the failure of the peace process promoted at the beginning of the 1990s (the Oslo Accords, 1993-1994). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict started in 1947 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 divided Palestinian territory under British mandate into two states and soon after proclaimed the state of Israel (1948), without the state of Palestine having been able to materialise itself since then. After the 1948-49 war, Israel annexed West Jerusalem and Egypt and Jordan took over control of Gaza and the West Bank, respectively. In 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza after winning the “Six-Day War” against the Arab countries. It was not until the Oslo Accords that the autonomy of the Palestinian territory would be formally recognised, although its introduction was to be impeded by the military occupation and the control of the territory imposed by Israel. In October 2023, attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian groups marked a new turning point and served as justification for Israel to carry out acts of collective punishment against the Palestinian population that have been condemned as constituting genocide, especially in Gaza.

205. Consejo de Seguridad de Naciones Unidas, *Informe del secretario general sobre la Aplicación de la resolución 1701 (2006) del Consejo de Seguridad durante el período comprendido entre el 21 de junio y el 20 de octubre de 2025*, S/2025/738, 11 November 2025.

206. US Central Command, *Military Leaders Meet on Disarmament Efforts in Southern Lebanon*, 16 October 2025.

Extraordinary levels of violence continued to be reported throughout 2025, causing severe impacts on the Palestinian civilian population, which was affected by the incessant attacks, the blockade and the genocidal policies pursued by Israel. Although the implementation of ceasefire agreements led to a relative drop in violence in some periods of the year, the scenario in Palestine was identified as having the most intense level of political violence globally in 2025²⁰⁷ and the death toll remained of an unusual magnitude. According to OCHA's tally based on information from the Gaza Ministry of Health, **from October 2023 to the end of 2025, over 70,000 Palestinians had died in Gaza.**²⁰⁸ **Over 25,000 of these people had reportedly died in 2025** due to Israeli policies, which were increasingly described as genocidal. Data collected by ACLED between January and late November indicated that 16,000 Palestinians had died in the Israeli attacks.²⁰⁹

Various investigations indicate that the cumulative death toll in Gaza since October 2023 may be far higher, since many bodies have not been recovered from the rubble and official estimates do not account for unreported or indirect deaths resulting from the spread of diseases, lack of access to healthcare due to the destruction of hospitals and shortage of medicines, in addition to the use of hunger as a weapon of war and other practices. Estimates cited by the UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, point to a possible death toll of up to 680,000.²¹⁰ **Over 170,000 people have been wounded in the Gaza Strip, 66,000 of them in 2025. Furthermore, 80% of the infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged and more than 630,000 Palestinian children continued to lack access to formal education for the third consecutive year.** Practically the entire population of Gaza (2.1 million) remained displaced, having fled on multiple occasions. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), in two years, until the end of 2025, the combined effect of death and displacement had decreased Gaza's population by 10% (around 250,000 people).²¹¹

The situation in the West Bank also remained serious. The activity of Israeli forces and settler attacks against Palestinians and their property increased in a climate of

impunity in 2025, causing the deaths of at least 240 Palestinians, of which 55 were children, and wounding nearly 4,000. In the same period, 17 Israelis died in acts of violence in the West Bank and around a hundred were wounded.²¹² **The cumulative death toll of Palestinians from October 2023 to October 2025 exceeded one thousand, accounting for 43% of all Palestinian deaths in the West Bank over the past two decades.**²¹³

The year 2025 began with the announcement of a ceasefire mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, which came into force on 19 January and was driven by US President Donald Trump as part of the commencement of his second term. The plan was structured in three phases. The implementation of the first phase led Hamas to release Israelis held in Gaza and Israel to release detained Palestinians. It also involved a relative lifting of the blockade on access to humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip. Amid disagreements and mutual accusations over the implementation of the plan, Israel raised new conditions to extend the first phase and to block the transition to the second, which was supposed to lead to the establishment of a permanent ceasefire, further prisoner exchanges and Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. **On 18 March, Israel, which had continued its attacks despite the truce, broke the ceasefire and resumed its large-scale military campaign and total blockade against the Gaza Strip.**²¹⁴ The Netanyahu government again invoked its intention to achieve a "total victory" despite the perception that Hamas no longer posed a military threat, even within Israeli military circles.²¹⁵ The situation in Gaza deteriorated in the following months both due to violence and the severe shortages faced by the population. Israel imposed a food distribution system in coordination with the United States through the controversial Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which was widely criticised for violating the principles of humanitarian action. **By the end of July, nearly 1,400 Palestinians had died while trying to obtain food, most in incidents near Israeli-controlled food distribution centres.**²¹⁶ **In August, warnings multiplied about the famine situation caused in Gaza.**²¹⁷

In the West Bank, Israeli actions intensified at the beginning of the year, alongside the ceasefire in Gaza,

207. ACLED, *Israel recalibrates its military campaigns in a region still on edge*, Conflict Watchlist 2026, 11 December 2025.

208. UN OCHA OPT, *Reported impact snapshot. Gaza Strip*, 28 January 2026.

209. UN OCHA OPT, *Reported impact snapshot. Gaza Strip*, 28 January 2026.

210. UN, *Gaza: "This is the Shame of Our Time". Press Briefing by Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese*, 15 September 2025.

211. PCBS, *The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), presents a brief on the status of the Palestinian people at the end of 2025*, 31 December 2025.

212. UN OCHA OPT, *West Bank Monthly Snapshot - Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement. December 2025*, 21 January 2026.

213. UN, "UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory: 1001 Palestinians killed in West Bank since 7 October 2023 – one in five are children", *UNISPAL*, 17 October 2025.

214. For more information, see "Israel rompe el acuerdo de alto el fuego en Gaza y escala sus ofensivas en Cisjordania con devastadores impactos" in *Escuela de Cultura de Pau, Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, April 2025.

215. Rubin, Sira, Lior Soroka y Abbie Cheeseman, "Israeli military presents Netanyahu with options for expanding Gaza operation", *The Washington Post*, 5 August 2025; ACLED, "Israel recalibrates its military campaigns in a region still on edge", Conflict Watchlist 2026, 11 December 2025.

216. UN News, "Gaza: Nearly 1,400 Palestinians killed while seeking food, as UN warns airdrops are no solution", *UN News*, 1 August 2025.

217. The Guardian, "UN-backed experts declare famine in and around Gaza City", *The Guardian*, 22 August 2025.

with a ground operation that mainly affected the refugee camps of Jenin and Tulkarem and forced around 40,000 people to flee in the largest such displacement since 1967. Throughout 2025, the barriers and checkpoints imposed by Israel intensified, and it also expanded its policies of appropriation and expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank. **In the case of Israel–Palestine, the approval and construction of settlements in the West Bank in 2025 was the highest since the UN began systematic monitoring in 2017, thereby accelerating a scenario of de facto annexation.**²¹⁸ Israeli authorities repeated several times that they would not allow the establishment of a Palestinian state.

In September, the **UN International Independent Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza and held Israeli political and military figures responsible.** It released its report just as the land offensive began against Gaza City, which forced half a million people to move south. At the same time, some initiatives accelerated and several countries announced their formal recognition of the Palestinian state.²¹⁹ The negotiating channel between Israel and Hamas, which has continued to be facilitated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, was affected by an **Israeli attack on the Palestinian group’s delegation while it was in the Qatari capital** to assess a new ceasefire proposal. The attack caused an angry reaction, especially in Arab countries. **In October, Trump presented his 20-point plan for Gaza.** Aligned with Israeli interests and presented as an ultimatum to Hamas, the plan was designed without taking Palestinian needs into account and ambiguously and conditionally conceives of a possible Palestinian state. Under a scheme that imposes a new colonial administration on the Gaza Strip, the plan calls for an immediate ceasefire, the restoration of humanitarian access, the release of everyone held by Hamas in exchange for further releases of Palestinians, the deployment of a multilateral mission and the establishment of a transitional technocratic government composed of Palestinians and international figures supervised by a “Board of Peace” headed by Trump himself.

The implementation of the first phase of the plan led to a relative reduction in violence, although from its launch until the end of 2025, Israel had killed another 400 people in the Gaza Strip. Netanyahu’s forces withdrew to the “yellow line”, a new boundary imposed in Gaza meaning that between 53% and 58% of the territory remained under Israeli control. The entry of aid continued to be insufficient. By the end of the year, doubts remained about the composition and functions of the “Board of Peace” and about the form, tasks and accountability mechanisms of the international force,

among other aspects of the plan, which was endorsed by the UN with the approval of UNSC Resolution 2803 in November. This caused indignation and alarm among many Palestinian actors and experts, who condemned the plan for entailing serious violations of international law.²²⁰

Syria	
Start:	2011
Type:	Government, System, Self-Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Government, pro-government militias, Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar alSham, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, 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, Türkiye, Israel
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=
Summary:	Controlled by the Ba’ath party since 1963, the Republic of Syria has been governed since the 1970s by two presidents: Hafez al-Assad and his son, Bashar, who took office in 2000. A key player in the Middle East 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 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. In December 2024, an offensive spearheaded by the opposition group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) led to the overthrow of the Assad regime and opened a new phase in the country, characterised by many different economic, security, governance and transitional justice challenges.

Following the overthrow of Bashar Assad’s regime in December 2024, Syria faced a year of transition punctuated by ongoing episodes and dynamics of violence, including but not limited to clashes between various armed actors, sectarian massacres, assassinations and foreign interventions. Some analysts identified a significant decrease in the number of violent events in Syria in 2025 compared to the previous year (44% fewer, according to ACLED estimates).

218. International Crisis Group, *Sovereignty in All but Name: Israel’s Quickening Annexation of the West Bank*, Report no.252, 9 October 2025.
 219. For more information, see “Israel enfrenta creciente aislamiento por el genocidio en Gaza, mientras Trump propone nuevo plan para la Franja”, in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, October 2025 and Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2025. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2026.
 220. For more information, see “El riesgo de normalizar (aún más) el genocidio, el apartheid y la vulneración del derecho internacional” in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz para 2026*, January 2026, and Urrutia, Pamela, “Palestine: minimal peace or justice-based peace?”, *Nationalia*, 24 October 2025.

However, there was a significant rise in such events, some of them particularly bloody, in certain parts of the country.²²¹ **Different body counts confirmed that Syria continued to be the scene of a high-intensity armed conflict in 2025. According to data compiled by ACLED, nearly 7,900 people lost their lives due to episodes of violence in the country,** compared to more than 7,100 recorded in 2024. Most of these casualties were civilians. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented the deaths of over 3,600 people in 2025. In a partial death toll published in August, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) listed nearly 10,000 fatalities since the fall of Assad.²²² At the end of the year, the SOHR reported that an alarming number of civilians had been massacred in 2025 – nearly 2,700 killed in 63 massacres– and that 600 people had died in explosions.²²³

Two of the most serious events of the year took place on the Syrian coast in March and in the southern part of the country in July, highlighting the enormous security challenges facing Ahmed al-Sharaa, the former leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Al-Sharaa's new Syrian government struggled to halt spiralling violence, impose discipline on the many armed groups operating in the country and guarantee accountability. In Latakia and Tartous, on the Syrian coast, groups loyal to the former Assad regime clashed with the new Syrian security forces and affiliated militias not fully under the control of the new authorities, leading to a massacre with sectarian overtones that primarily affected the Alawite minority, of which Assad is a member. Over 1,500 people died from the violence in just a few days. Months later, Syrian government forces intervened to stop fighting between the Druze and Bedouin populations in the southern governorate of Sweida. Some of these Syrian security forces had participated in the Alawite massacre and their lack of discipline led to an escalation that caused the deaths of more than a thousand people and the displacement of another 200,000. Arguing that it intended to protect the Druze population, Israel used these events as a pretext to conduct new attacks on Syrian soil. In any case, Israel carried out attacks and incursions consistently throughout the year, including the occupation of territory.²²⁴

The two aforementioned episodes of violence rippled through Syrian society, intensifying fractures and the perception that the new authorities were not ensuring security or protecting Syrian citizens on equal terms. They also influenced other armed actors' perception that the government posed a threat and made them more reluctant to lay down their weapons. This was particularly the case with the Kurdish forces of the

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which controlled a significant part of northeastern Syria. This area was the scene of **hostilities during the year, mainly between the SDF and the Syrian National Army (SNA), supported by Türkiye.** In January and February, for example, the fighting claimed over 600 lives, including both fighters and civilians. In the meantime, **the Kurdish leadership of the SDF and al-Sharaa's government entered into talks; in March, they announced an agreement to integrate the SDF into the new Syrian Armed Forces before the end of the year.** However, negotiations to finalise the deal hit an impasse and disagreements escalated into armed clashes in August. The fighting intensified in December, mainly in the Aleppo area. Until the first few days of January 2026, these events had caused dozens of deaths and forcibly displaced 140,000 people.²²⁵

Another dynamic of violence in the country involved the armed group **Islamic State, which attempted to take advantage of the widespread upheaval in the country after Assad was toppled from power.** Some analysts indicated that ISIS sought to regroup and was recruiting people unhappy with the pragmatic approach taken by al-Sharaa, who in the past had links with the al-Qaeda branch in Syria. In late 2025, ISIS claimed responsibility for the first deadly attack against US forces since Assad's overthrow, which killed three and wounded two. In response to this attack, the bloodiest against US forces since 2019, Washington retaliated against alleged ISIS positions in eastern Syria. Al-Sharaa's government joined the US-led international coalition against ISIS during the year. Some analysts suggested that Damascus could become Washington's main ally in the fight against ISIS in Syria, challenging the role played by the SDF thus far.

The transitional government attempted to reposition the country on the regional and international stage in 2025. Al-Sharaa met with US President Donald Trump in May and convinced him to lift the sanctions against himself, his group and other members of his government for their links with what are considered terrorist groups. He also achieved the reversal of a significant part of the sanctions affecting reconstruction activities in the country. **One year after Assad was ousted, the new government faced enormous challenges in terms of security, the economy (90% of the population lived below the poverty line as a result of the conflict), governance and transitional justice.**²²⁶ Even though hostilities in 2025 forcibly displaced fresh waves of people, expectations about the new period dawning in the country also prompted one million people to return to Syria, with a similar number expected to return in 2026.

221. Ezzedine, Nancy, *Sectarian violence threatens Syria's chance at stability*, ACLED, 11 December 2024.

222. Shafaq News, "SOHR: Nearly 10,000 people killed since al-Assad's fall", *Shafaq News*, 7 August 2025.

223. Shafaq News, "Syria records 2,600+ civilian deaths in massacres and violations in 2025: SOHR", *Shafaq News*, 1 January 2026.

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

225. Christou, William, "Syrian army orders Aleppo evacuations amid fighting with Kurdish forces", *The Guardian*, 8 January 2026.

226. See "Siria: retos de seguridad y gobernanza amenazan la transición en el país" in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz para 2026*, January 2026.

The Gulf

Yemen	
Start:	2004
Type:	System, Government, Identity Internationalised internal
Main parties:	Armed forces loyal to the internationally recognised Government, followers of the cleric al Houthi (alShabaab alMumen/ Ansar Allah), tribal militias linked to alAlhmar 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), Security Belt Forces, AQAP, ISIS, international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE)
Intensity:	3
Trend:	=

Summary:

The conflict started in 2004, when the followers of the religious leader al-Houthi, belonging to the Shiite minority, started an armed rebellion in the north of Yemen. The government assured that the rebel forces aimed to reestablish 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 alHouthi 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 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 2023, the crisis in Gaza and its repercussions throughout the region also had an impact on Yemen, especially after the Houthis decided to launch attacks against Israel, Israeli ships and ships bound for Israel in the Red Sea, a route through which 15% of world maritime transport passes.

Yemen continued to be the scene of high-intensity violence and overlapping conflicts in 2025. **According to ACLED data, violent events in the country claimed the lives of nearly 2,900 people in the past year. This death toll was higher than in 2024, when it reached 1,781. However, over 500 of these fatalities were caused by hostilities pitting the Yemeni armed group known as the Houthis (Ansar Allah) against the United States and Israel as part of high regional tensions over Gaza and clashes in the Red Sea that began in late 2023 and led to an armed conflict with its own dynamics in 2025.**²²⁷ Meanwhile, the situation in Yemen continued to be characterised by periodic clashes between the Houthis, who control the north and the capital of the country, and the forces of the internationally recognised government, which includes a broad array of armed groups supported by regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Although the de facto truce that has remained partially in effect in the country since 2022 has helped to lower levels of violence compared to the worst period of the armed conflict, the fragility of the situation became evident in 2025 and many clashes were reported along the front lines, killing fighters and civilians. Throughout the year, there was fighting in the governorates of Al Bayda, Ma'rib, Taiz, Dhale, Shabwah and Lahij, as well as in the border area with Saudi Arabia. The Houthis reinforced their troops in these and other governorates, such as Al Jawf, Hajjah and Al Hudaydah. The US military campaign against the Houthis gave rise to speculation among their adversaries about Washington's possible support for a ground offensive against them that could roll back their positions, but this did not come to pass. On the contrary, cracks and fractures in the anti-Houthi camp intensified, leading to a serious crisis in late 2025.

Throughout the year, various events demonstrated the divisions within the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), the eight-member executive body leading the internationally recognised government. These divisions were due to power struggles, disagreements over economic issues and some groups' secessionist aspirations. There was also direct fighting between armed actors in the anti-Houthi camp. In November, clashes were reported for control of the hydrocarbon-rich governorate of Hadramaut between the Tribal Alliance, which is supported by Saudi Arabia, and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC), which aspires to the independence of the southern area. **The situation deteriorated significantly in December, when STC forces launched an offensive in the governorate of Hadramaut and the city of Al Ghaydah, then in the governorates of Shabwah and Abyan, which had thus far been held by other factions represented in the PLC. This STC offensive was aimed at consolidating their control over all southern provinces and making progress towards**

227. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom in this chapter.

their secessionist goals. At first, the STC argued that it needed to prevent these areas from being controlled by the Houthis or other jihadist armed groups. The offensive also left the Islah party increasingly isolated in the governorate of Ma'rib. The leader of the offensive and the STC, Aidarus al-Zubaidi, was simultaneously one of the vice presidents of the PLC. **In this context, tension rose between the regional powers involved in the Yemeni conflict.** Saudi Arabia claimed that these events posed a threat to Yemen's stability and to its own security and attacked STC positions. On 30 December, Riyadh also attacked a UAE military vessel in the port of Mukalla that was allegedly transporting arsenals for southern secessionist forces. PLC leader Rashad al-Alimi demanded the withdrawal of UAE forces from the country and they did so in the following days. Al-Alimi also declared a state of emergency and expelled al-Zubaidi from the PLC, revoking his membership and removing him as vice president. In early January 2026, the southern territorial advances had been reversed, but the open crisis pointed to a scenario of uncertainty.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) also returned to the scene in 2025, claiming responsibility for attacks primarily in the southern part of the country. The United States conducted airstrikes against alleged members of the armed group, reportedly killing around 10 people. During the year, the Houthis also intensified their repressive policies against political opponents, humanitarian workers and UN staff, including agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme. In December, the UN reported that the Yemeni group was holding 69 of its staff in detention.

Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom	
Start:	2025
Type:	System, Government International
Main parties:	Houthis/Ansar Allah, Israel, USA, United Kingdom, Iran
Intensity:	2
Trend:	↑

Summary:

The crisis in Gaza and the resulting escalation between various Middle Eastern actors fostered the beginning of a new scenario of tension that has focused mainly on the Red Sea since late 2023 and has led to constant armed exchanges pitting the Yemeni armed group known as the Houthis (or Ansar Allah) against Israel, the US and the United Kingdom. From a declared position of opposition to Israel and the US, which has been part of their political ideology for decades, and expressing solidarity with the Palestinian population, the Houthis launched armed attacks against vessels in the Red Sea in mid-November 2023, warning that they would continue their attacks until Israel halted its military campaign in the Gaza Strip. The Yemeni group then expanded its operations against merchant ships of various flags bound for Israel, thereby

affecting traffic in an area crucial for global maritime transport. This shift led to the establishment of the military Operation Prosperity Guardian (December 2023), led by the US and with significant participation from the United Kingdom and other countries. Since then, hostilities have intensified and expanded from their epicentre in the Red Sea. The dispute is also framed and influenced by tensions between the US and Israel with Iran, as the Houthis are part of the “axis of resistance” that brings together various actors in Tehran's orbit. This tension also impacts the dynamics of the armed conflict in Yemen and the prospects for transforming it through negotiations.

The confrontation pitting the Yemeni armed group known as the Houthis (also known as Ansar Allah) against the United States and Israel escalated significantly in the past year and continued to be heavily influenced by regional dynamics, particularly the development of the Gaza crisis and geopolitical tensions with Iran. Whereas the dispute had been considered a socio-political crisis in 2024, causing the deaths of between 30 and 50 people, **the violence intensified in 2025 and claimed over 500 lives, leading to its reclassification as an armed conflict.** The hostilities, which had been concentrated in the Red Sea in 2024, shifted mainly to Yemeni territory, where they had a major impact on civilians, and to a lesser extent to Israel. A decisive factor in the development of the conflict was **Washington's launch of an intense campaign against the Houthis in March, the first US armed intervention in the Middle East since Donald Trump was inaugurated for his second term in January 2025.**

The Trump administration had announced that it would take a tough stance towards the Houthis and one of its first foreign policy moves was to designate the group as a terrorist organisation, using a stricter definition than that used by Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden. The Yemeni group, which had declared that it would only halt its attacks against military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and against Israel based on developments in the situation in Gaza, finally did stop them in early 2025 following the announcement of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in January. However, the Netanyahu government's decision to break the truce and reinstate the total blockade on the Gaza Strip in March prompted the Houthis to resume their attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. In this context, a US bombing campaign against Houthi positions began on 15 March, aimed at degrading the group's abilities to destabilise a strategic maritime route for global trade, weakening its leadership and, incidentally, sending a message to Iran, its main regional ally and arms supplier. Washington warned that it considered Tehran fully responsible for any Houthi response. The United States launched more than a thousand attacks as part of Operation Rough Rider, which lasted 52 days, struck various Yemeni governorates and killed hundreds. The United Kingdom supported the operation and launched a couple of direct strikes as well. According to information collected by Yemen Data Project, the US campaign in Yemen caused at least 238

civilian deaths and wounded another 500, which were far more casualties than those reported during the military operation conducted in 2024.²²⁸ The analysis centre Airwars described these figures as unprecedented, since according to its **data the US had caused nearly as many civilian deaths in Yemen in less than two months as in all attacks it had launched in the country in the previous 23 years** (224 compared to 258, respectively).²²⁹ The most serious attacks occurred in the port of Ras Isa (Al Hudaydah) and in a detention centre in Saada (north), both in April, in which more than 150 people died. In total, from January to November 2025, 528 people lost their lives as a result of US attacks in Yemen, according to ACLED.²³⁰

On 6 May, Trump announced that the United States would stop the bombing following the “capitulation” of the Houthis. Indirect negotiations mediated by Oman had led to a ceasefire agreement between Washington and the Yemeni group, which involved halting attacks in the Red Sea and allowing commercial vessels to navigate freely. The ceasefire did not extend to Israel, however. According to reports, the announcement caught the Netanyahu government by surprise, and both countries continued their mutual attacks in the months that followed. The Houthis continued their attacks against Israel with ballistic missiles and drones,

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striking Ben Gurion Airport and the port of Eilat, for example. Israeli forces persisted in their attacks in parts of Yemen controlled by the Yemeni group. **Exchanges of fire intensified in June, following Israel's attack on Iran that led to the “Twelve-Day War”.**²³¹ In the final days of August, Israel launched a large-scale attack in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, which resulted in the death of the Houthi Prime Minister Ahmed Ghaleb Nasser al-Rahawi and other members of his cabinet. The Houthis intensified their attacks against Israel in response until a new ceasefire announcement in Gaza brought an end to their attacks in October. Throughout 2025, hostilities between the Netanyahu government and the Houthis wounded dozens in Israel and killed dozens, wounded hundreds and displaced thousands in Yemen. According to data compiled by ACLED, Israeli operations in Yemen during 2025 caused more than 120 fatalities. The centre also stated that Houthi attacks against commercial vessels plummeted between January and November, from 150 in 2024 to seven in 2025, but attacks against Israel spiked by 120% over the previous year.²³² At the end of the year, the de-escalation initiated by the Gaza ceasefire continued, though the atmosphere remained volatile due to the persistence of Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip,²³³ the unstable situation in Iran²³⁴ and the dynamics of the conflict between the Houthis and other Yemeni actors.²³⁵

228. During Operation Poseidon Archer, also launched by the United States and the United Kingdom, but under the administration of Joe Biden, the attacks caused the deaths of 21 Yemeni civilians in 12 months, according to Yemen Data Project data (viewed 27 January 2026). The crisis in the Red Sea also prompted the formation of two other multilateral military missions: Operation Prosperity Guardian, also led by the United States, and Operation Aspides, conducted by the European Union (also known as EUNAVFOR Aspides).

229. Airwars, “The U.S. killed almost as many civilians in 52 days as the previous 23 years of U.S. action in Yemen”, *Airwars*, 18 June 2025.

230. ACLED, *Regional power struggles fuel simmering tensions across the Red Sea*, Conflict Watchlist 2026, 11 December 2025.

231. See the summary on Israel, USA - Iran in this chapter.

232. ACLED, *Regional power struggles fuel simmering tensions across the Red Sea*, Conflict Watchlist 2026, 11 December 2025.

233. See the summary on Israel-Palestine in this chapter.

234. See the summary on Iran in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises).

235. See the summary on Yemen in this chapter.