

# Executive summary

**Peace Talks in Focus 2020. Report on Trends and Scenarios** is a yearbook that analyses the peace processes and negotiations that took place in the world during 2020. The examination of the development and dynamics of negotiations worldwide allows to provide a comprehensive overview of peace processes, identify trends and comparatively analyse the various scenarios. One of the main objectives of this report is to provide information and analysis to those who participate in peaceful conflict resolution at different levels, including parties to disputes, mediators, civil society activists and others. The yearbook also aims to grant visibility to different formulas of dialogue and negotiation aimed at reversing dynamics of violence and channelling conflicts through political means in many contexts. Thus, it seeks to highlight, enhance and promote political, diplomatic and social efforts aimed at transforming conflicts and their root causes through peaceful methods.

Methodologically, the report draws mainly on the qualitative analysis of studies and information from many sources (the United Nations, international organisations, research centres, media outlets, NGOs and others), as well as on experience gained during field research. The report also cross-cuttingly incorporates a gender perspective in the study and analysis of peace processes.

The report is divided into six chapters. The first presents a summary and map of the 40 peace processes and negotiations that took place in 2020 and provides an overview of the main global trends. The next five chapters delve into the peace processes and negotiations from a geographic perspective. Each of them addresses the main trends of peace negotiations in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, respectively, and describes the development and dynamics of each case in those regions. At the beginning of each of these five chapters, a map is included indicating the countries where peace processes and negotiations have occurred in 2020.

## Peace processes and negotiations in 2020

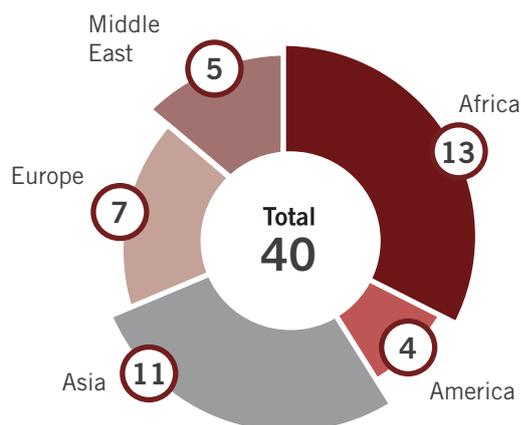
AFRICA (13)	ASIA (11)	EUROPE (7)
Burundi Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) CAR DRC Eritrea – Ethiopia Libya Mali Morocco – Western Sahara Mozambique Somalia South Sudan Sudan Sudan – South Sudan	Afghanistan DPR Korea – Republic of Korea DPR Korea – USA India (Assam) India (Nagaland) Myanmar Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) Philippines (MILF) Philippines (MNLF) Philippines (NDF) Thailand (south)	Armenia–Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) Cyprus Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) Moldova (Transdniestria) Serbia – Kosovo Spain (Basque Country) Ukraine
	AMERICA (4)	MIDDLE EAST (5)
	Colombia (FARC-EP) Colombia (ELN) Haiti Venezuela	Iran (nuclear programme) Israel-Palestine Palestine Syria Yemen

## Negotiations in 2020: global overview and main trends

A total of 40 global peace processes and negotiations were identified in 2020: 13 in Africa (32.5% of the total), 11 in Asia (27.5%), seven in Europe (17.5%), five in the Middle East (12.5%) and four in the Americas (10%). Compared to the previous year, there was decrease in the number of peace processes and negotiations studied around the world. There were 50 such processes in 2019 and 49 in 2018. The decrease took place mostly in Africa (13 peace processes, compared to 19 in 2019), where the agreements made in previous years were being implemented in some

places and were no longer analysed in this publication as part of peace negotiating processes, such as the Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia (Ogaden) and Ethiopia (Oromia). In other cases, various dialogue initiatives and peace efforts active in previous years ceased to be counted as such after they were considered to have become discontinued. This was the case in Nigeria (Niger Delta), the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram) and Senegal (Casamance). The lack of talks and negotiations in 2020 also led to the exclusion of cases that had been covered in the previous year outside of Africa:

## Regional distribution of peace negotiations in 2020



Iran (northwest), Iraq (with information emerging about exploratory contact in these two processes the previous year), Nicaragua and China (Tibet). Unlike in 2019, no new negotiating process was reported in 2020.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** had an impact on peace processes around the world in various ways. On one hand, the need for negotiated solutions became clear in light of the severity of the pandemic in many conflicts and socio-political crises, which worsened access to health care, impacted the economic situation and access to livelihoods, hindered freedom of movement and access to services for populations in divided territories and increased violence against women, among many other things. Faced with this situation, the UN Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire in March 2020. Although some governments and armed opposition groups decreed and honoured ceasefires, on the whole most armed state and opposition actors continued to prioritise armed action, so the impact of the appeal was limited and uneven. The coronavirus pandemic also had a negative impact by slowing down peace negotiations and the implementation of peace agreements. In this sense, COVID-19 created obstacles for negotiating actors and mediators to travel, delayed rounds of negotiations and posed technological challenges.

Regarding the **actors involved in the peace processes and negotiations**, national governments were one of the negotiating parties in all the peace processes and negotiations. The governments of the respective countries conducted direct or indirect negotiations with various kinds of actors, according to the peculiarities of each context, which generally included armed groups (directly or through political representatives, and in some cases through coalitions of armed groups), as was usually the case in Asia; a combination of armed groups and political and social actors, prevalent in Africa and the Middle East; and representatives of political/military bodies seeking secession or recognition as independent territories, which dominated the cases in Europe. To a lesser extent, cases involving governments and the political and social opposition were also identified, as in the Americas.

Regarding the **third parties** involved in peace and negotiation processes, although in many cases one can clearly identify the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment activities, in others these tasks were carried out discreetly or behind closed doors. Third parties participated in the vast majority of the peace processes (33 of 40, or 82.5%), in line with the previous year (80%). Yet again this year, there was third-party support for processes with different formats, including internal and direct negotiations (24), national dialogues (one), international negotiations (seven) and other formats (one). On a regional basis, while third-party support was very high in Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, peace processes involving third parties represented only 55% of the cases in Asia. In nearly all processes with a third party (28 of the 33), more than one actor performed mediation or facilitation tasks. The many different types of international actors included intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN, EU, AU, OSCE, IGAD, OIC, SADC, EAC, CEEAC and OIF, national governments, religious organisations and civil society actors, including specialised centres. Intergovernmental organisations played a dominant role, except in Asia, where they were much less involved. The UN was involved in 60% of the peace processes that involved at least one third party

With regard to the **negotiating agendas**, one must consider the particular aspects of each case and bear in mind that the details of the issues under discussion did not always become known to the public. For yet another year, the search for **truces, ceasefires and cessations of hostilities** was among the most outstanding issues on the agenda. In 2020, this became more important due to the COVID-19 pandemic and UN Secretary-General António Guterres' call in March for a global ceasefire that would help people to deal with the pandemic and facilitate humanitarian access to the most vulnerable populations affected by violence. According to United Nations data, in June around 20 armed groups and their organisations or political fronts had responded positively to the global appeal, while the states' response was more limited. In contrast, violence worsened in some cases. Armed groups that explicitly endorsed the call included the SLM/A-AW, which declared a unilateral ceasefire in Sudan's Darfur region; the ELN, in Colombia, for a period of one month; the Communist Party of the Philippines, which unilaterally ordered a halt to the offensive activity of its armed wing (the NPA) between 26 March and 15 April; and the armed group FLEC, which announced a four-week ceasefire in the Cabinda region of Angola; among others. In Thailand, the BRN announced a cessation of offensive armed actions in April, citing humanitarian reasons and prioritising the response to the pandemic. Though the government did not reciprocate, the announcement was followed by a substantial drop in hostilities by both parties. In Myanmar, unilateral ceasefires were declared by both the government and various armed groups in response to the appeal. In relation to Yemen, Saudi Arabia announced a truce in April that was criticised by the

## Internal and international peace processes/negotiations with and without third parties in 2020

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (4)	Negotiations with third parties (24)	National dialogues without third parties (2)	National dialogues with third parties (1)	Other formats (2)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (7)
<b>AFRICA</b>							
Burundi	x						
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West-South West)		x					
CAR		x					
DRC		x					
Eritrea-Ethiopia							x
Libya		x					
Mali		x	x				
Morocco – Western Sahara							x
Mozambique		x					
Somalia		x					
South Sudan		x	x				
Sudan <sup>1</sup>		x					
Sudan – South Sudan							x
<b>AMERICAS</b>							
Colombia (FARC)		x					
Colombia (ELN)					x		
Haiti				x			
Venezuela		x					
<b>ASIA</b>							
Afghanistan		x					
Korea, DPR–Korea, Republic of						x	
Korea, DPR – USA						x	
Philippines (MILF)		x					
Philippines (MNLF)	x						
Philippines (NDF)		x					
India (Assam)	x						
India (Nagaland)	x						
Myanmar		x					
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)		x					
Thailand (south)		x					
<b>EUROPE</b>							
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)							x
Cyprus		x					
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) <sup>11</sup>		x					
Moldova (Transnistria)		x					
Serbia – Kosovo <sup>12</sup>							x
Spain (Basque Country)					x		
Ukraine (east) <sup>13</sup>		x					
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>							
Iran (nuclear programme)							x

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (4)	Negotiations with third parties (24)	National dialogues without third parties (2)	National dialogues with third parties (1)	Other formats (2)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (7)
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>							
Israel-Palestine							x
Palestine		x					
Syria <sup>i</sup>		x					
Yemen		x					

i. In 2019, the three peace processes and negotiations that were taking place in Sudan in 2018 were merged into one, due to the completion of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition after the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the peace negotiations in Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single process.

ii. The nature of the peace processes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Russia’s role in those conflicts and peace processes are open to interpretation. Ukraine considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, whereas Russia considers itself a third party.

iii. The peace process between Serbia and Kosovo is considered interstate because even though its international legal status is still controversial, Kosovo has been recognised as a state by over 100 countries. In 2010, the International Court of Justice issued a non-binding opinion that Kosovo’s declaration of independence did not violate international law or UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

iv. The nature of the peace process in Ukraine and Russia’s role in the conflict and peace process are open to interpretation. Ukraine considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, whereas Russia considers itself a third party.

v. There are two parallel negotiating processes in Syria (Astana and Geneva). Third parties are involved in both processes, though some of them directly project their interests onto the negotiations.

Houthis, who demanded that it be part of a broader agreement and presented an alternative proposal, without committing the country to a ceasefire. According to the United Nations, in most cases the parties to the conflict declared unilateral ceasefires that did not last long (between 15 and 90 days). Implementation of the ceasefires was mostly uneven and limited in time. During the year, armed actors in different contexts tried to negotiate, establish or agree on ceasefires without necessarily having any relation to the Secretary-General’s global appeal, though they yielded different results, as in South Sudan, Cameroon, Libya, Ukraine and Syria, among others.

Other important issues on the negotiating agendas were related to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, such as in Mali, Mozambique, CAR and the Philippines (MILF), among others; the status of territories in dispute, in contexts such as Sudan (Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile), Papua New Guinea (Bougainville), the Philippines (MILF), Thailand (south), Serbia-Kosovo, Moldova (Transdnistria), Cyprus, among others; and issues related to the distribution of political power, including aspects related to governance, the formation of national unity governments and elections (in Haiti, Venezuela, South Sudan, Burundi, Mali, among others). Another topic discussed in some negotiations was control of nuclear proliferation, specifically in Iran and in the process between North and South Korea.

In terms of their **evolution**, the peace processes analysed in 2020 confirmed a great diversity of trends. Progress was made in some negotiating processes in Africa, such as in Mozambique, with the launch of the DDR programme after the 2019 peace agreement, despite failing to achieve the objective of dismantling all the RENAMO bases; Sudan, with the signing of the historic peace agreement between the government, the SRF rebel coalition and the SLM/A-MM faction

following a year of negotiations; Sudan-South Sudan, with the continuation of the approaches begun in 2019 and headway made in diplomatic relations and border delimitations; and South Sudan, where progress was made in the implementation of some clauses of the 2018 peace agreement, mainly those related to the formation of the unity government and territorial decentralisation, as well as in negotiations with groups that had not signed the agreement. Asia also witnessed notable progress, such as in Afghanistan, with the historic agreement between the Taliban and the US government and the beginning of the intra-Afghan dialogue. In the Philippines, very significant progress was made in the implementation of the peace agreement with the MILF, mainly in terms of the demobilisation of its combatants and in the institutional rollout of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In Papua New Guinea, its government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government agreed on the foundations of the process to negotiate the political status of the region. And in Thailand, a new peace process began between the government and the armed group BRN, after the failure of the previous negotiating format between the government and a coalition of rebel groups. In contrast, many negotiating processes faced difficulties and some remained at an impasse. The general scene in the Middle East in 2020 followed in line with previous periods, with dynamics of chronic deadlock (as in Israel-Palestine), the widening of gulfs between the parties with respect to previous commitments (the Iranian nuclear programme) and rounds of meetings with no or limited results (intra-Syrian talks). Other peace processes that faced obstacles and problems were those in Burundi, Cameroon, Libya, the CAR, the DRC and Somalia, in Africa, as well as the inter-Korean dialogue and the process between the US and North Korea and the negotiations between the Philippines and the NDF, in Asia. The negotiations in Europe faced significant obstacles and dynamics of deadlock for the most part, and the outbreak of the war between Armenia

## Main agreements of 2020

Peace processes	Agreements
Afghanistan	Agreement to bring peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which is not recognised by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban, and the United States of America. Signed on 29 February 2020, it establishes the gradual military withdrawal of the United States, the Taliban's pledge that terrorist attacks against US interests will not be planned or perpetrated on Afghan soil and the beginning of an intra-Afghan negotiating process between the Taliban and the Afghan government.
Armenia - Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Nine-point agreement signed by the President of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Russia that was mediated by Russia on 9 November and went into effect on 10 November. The points included: 1) a complete ceasefire and cessation of all hostilities; 2) the transfer of the Agdam district and the Armenian-controlled territories of the Qazakh district to Azerbaijan; 3) the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces along the line of contact and the Lachin corridor; 4) the terms of the deployment (parallel to the withdrawal of the Armenian Armed Forces, for a renewable period of five years); 5) the establishment of a peacekeeping centre to monitor the ceasefire and implementation of the agreements; 6) the transfer to Azerbaijan of the Kalbajar and Lachin districts, with the exception of the Lachin corridor, which will guarantee the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, without affecting the city of Shusha, and a plan to build a new route along the Lachin corridor that connects Stepanakert and Armenia and will be under the protection of Russian forces, as well as security guarantees by Azerbaijan for the movement of people, vehicles and goods; 7) the return of internally displaced people and refugees to Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas, under the control of UNHCR; 8) the exchange of prisoners of war and other detainees, as well as the remains of deceased persons; and 9) the unblocking of all economic and transport communications in the region, Armenia's provision of a connection between Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan enclave and traffic control conducted by the Russian Federal Security Service's border control agency.
Libya	Permanent ceasefire agreement between the main parties to the conflict signed on 23 October by representatives of the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the LNA (or ALAF) forces of Khalifa Haftar in Geneva after several meetings of the 5+5 Libyan Joint Military Commission (the negotiating format adopted after the Berlin Conference on Libya in January 2020). The agreement stipulates that within a maximum period of three months, all military units and armed groups must withdraw from the battle lines to their bases and all mercenaries and foreign fighters must leave Libyan soil, airspace and waters. It also provides for the suspension of military training programmes until a new government is formed, the start of the demobilisation of armed groups and some confidence-building measures.
Mali	Agreement between the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the Platform on security arrangements to avoid confrontation between their respective local factions in Ménaka.
South Sudan	Rome Declaration on the Peace Process in South Sudan, signed on 12 January between the government of South Sudan and the SSOMA rebel alliance, in which the parties committed to a ceasefire, to guarantee humanitarian access and to maintain continuous dialogue under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio and regional organisations.
Sudan	Juba Peace Agreement signed on 31 August by the Sudanese government and the rebel coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Sudan Liberation Movement faction led by Minni Minnawi (SLM/A-MM).
Sudan-South Sudan	Agreement in September to form a joint technical committee to resume oil production in the state of Unity and other key oil fields. In late October, the governments of both countries signed a joint military and defence cooperation agreement.
Ukraine (east)	Agreement on measures to strengthen the ceasefire, reached on 23 July by the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE) with the participation of representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The seven points of the agreement included: 1) a ban on offensive, reconnaissance and sabotage operations and of operating any type of aerial vehicle; 2) a ban on gunfire, including by snipers; 3) a ban on the deployment of heavy weapons in or near settlements, especially in civil infrastructure, including schools, nurseries, hospitals and public places; 4) the use of disciplinary action for ceasefire violations; 5) the creation of and participation in a coordination mechanism to respond to ceasefire violations facilitated by the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination; 6) specification of the limited circumstances in which opening fire is permitted in response to an offensive operation; and 7) a ban on non-compliance under any order. The agreement went into effect on 27 July.

and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh revealed the underlying difficulties of the process thus far.

Regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, the many challenges faced by women to participate in formal processes and to incorporate a gender perspective in the negotiations were once again confirmed. In a year that marked the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which recognises the specific impacts of war on women and their role in peacebuilding and demands commitments in this area from states and other actors, the warring governmental and opposition parties' lack of political desire to integrate a gender perspective and to implement mechanisms and guarantees for effective female participation became apparent once again, with regard to both negotiating parties involved in conflict and female civil society activists. Despite the limitations, there were cases in which some progress was made at formal levels, such as in Mali, where nine women (three

for each signatory party) participated in the sessions of the Follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the Peace Agreement, even though women had yet to be included in the four subcommittees and other executive bodies, and in Libya, where the political dialogue (known as the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, or LPDF) included 16 women out of 75 total participants, despite threats to their safety. In the intra-Afghan negotiations, the government's negotiating panel included four women and in the Philippines, a woman became the head of the NDF's negotiating panel. Women active in civil society continued to demand greater participation in formal processes around the world, denouncing violence and putting forward proposals in multiple areas related to conflicts and their impact. Though excluded from the negotiating processes in Somalia, Burundi and the CAR, women demanded to participate in the elections under way. Women's organisations continued to call for ceasefires and supported the call of the UN Secretary-General, as in

Yemen and Syria. They denounced the specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, including in the form of a rise in violence and gender inequality.

## Regional trends

### Africa

- Thirteen peace processes and negotiations were identified in Africa throughout 2020, accounting for 32.5% of the 40 peace processes worldwide.
- The chronic deadlock and paralysis in diplomatic channels to address the Western Sahara issue favoured an escalation of tension at the end of the year.
- At the end of 2020, the parties to the conflict in Libya signed a ceasefire agreement and the political negotiations tried to establish a transitional government, but doubts remained about the general evolution of the process.
- In Mozambique, the Government and RENAMO made progress in implementing the DDR program envisaged in the 2019 peace agreement.
- The first direct talks were held between the government of Cameroon and a part of the secessionist movement led by the historical leader Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe to try to reach a ceasefire agreement.
- In Sudan, the government and the rebel coalition SRF and the SLM/A-MM signed a historic peace agreement that was not endorsed by other rebel groups such as the SPLM-N al-Hilu and the SLM/A-AW.
- In South Sudan, the transitional government was formed and peace talks were held with the armed groups that had not signed the 2018 peace agreement.

### America

- Four dialogue processes took place in the Americas: two in Colombia, one in Venezuela and one in Haiti, which account for 10% of the negotiations that took place during 2020.
- Turkey facilitated dialogue and an agreement between the Venezuelan Government and Venezuelan opposition leader and former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles.
- Despite pressure from the international community to resume the inter-Haitian national dialogue, it did not continue throughout the year or lead to significant agreements.
- The implementation of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC continued, though with serious difficulties due to the increasing violence in the country and the murder of human rights activists and defenders.

### Asia

- There were 11 negotiating processes in Asia in 2020, accounting for more than a quarter of all international cases.
- The US government and the Taliban signed a peace agreement in February and subsequently began a process of intra-Afghan dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban, which included four women in the government negotiating delegation.
- In the region of Mindanao in the Philippines, both the institutional development of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the reintegration of some of the 40,000 former MILF fighters progressed satisfactorily.
- The government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government agreed to appoint former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern as a facilitator of negotiations on Bougainville's political status.
- Despite the signing of a ceasefire, both the government and the NDF ended negotiations during Duterte's current term in the Philippines.
- A new peace process began in southern Thailand between the government and the BRN, the main armed group in the south of the country.
- The Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong was revived in Myanmar, which held its fourth session after two years of deadlock, albeit with significant difficulties due to the absence of non-signatory groups to the national ceasefire agreement.

### Europe

- In 2020, seven of the 40 peace processes in the world (17.5%) took place in Europe.
- For the most part, peace processes in Europe continued to lack institutionalised mechanisms for the participation of women and other sectors of civil society.
- The resumption of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh ended with a Russian-mediated agreement that divided the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and guaranteed Baku's control of the adjacent districts, while leaving the political status of the area unresolved.
- In Ukraine, the parties to the conflict agreed on measures to strengthen the ceasefire, which helped significantly to reduce the violence.
- The EU-facilitated negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo, which has been at an impasse since late 2018, resumed, but disagreements continued on important issues, such as the creation of the association of Serbian municipalities of Kosovo.
- There were calls for the resumption of the 5+2 negotiating format in Moldova regarding the conflict around Transdniestria.
- The peace process in Cyprus remained deadlocked

during the year, while the conflict worsened, with increased militarised tension in the eastern Mediterranean.

## **Middle East**

- The Middle East was the scene of five cases of negotiation that accounted for 12.5% of all processes in the world in 2020.
- Problems in keeping the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme afloat persisted throughout the year amidst high tension between Washington and Tehran.
- In Yemen, there were mediation and facilitation initiatives to try to achieve a cessation of hostilities and attempts to implement prior agreements between the parties alongside constant escalations of violence.
- The chronic impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations persisted, with no prospects for dialogue after Netanyahu's plan to formalise the annexation of occupied territories and Trump's initiative for the region.
- The rejection of plans proposed by Israel and the US in 2020 led to rapprochement between Fatah and Hamas and an agreement to hold presidential and legislative elections, although the differences between the parties were once again evident by the end of the year.
- The complexity of the armed conflict in Syria had its correlation in the ceasefire and diplomatic initiatives, with a high role for regional and international actors in the negotiation schemes put in place.
- Women's groups in the region continued to demand greater participation in formal negotiations. In Syria and Yemen, they demanded ceasefires to reduce violence and face the COVID-19 pandemic.

