



Our Impact



*2024 opens with what may feel like insurmountable levels of deadly conflict around the globe. But **war is not inevitable**. Crisis Group holds firm to our beliefs that war is manmade and that it can be stopped. In this snapshot, we reflect on the progress we have helped conflict parties make from March to October 2023. It shows that peace – even if it comes in increments – is possible.*

At a time when independence and impartiality are at a premium, we continue to talk to all sides, which gives our analysis and recommendations unique value. Thanks to our strong reputation in Colombia, we could contribute directly to formulating the new president's security policy. We helped create a rare space in which representatives from the military and communities affected by conflict could engage in open dialogue. Our efforts in Nagorno-Karabakh – while not enough to deter Baku's September operation – contributed to intense diplomacy by all sides, and diplomats turned to us knowing our analysis is informed by our constant communication with key stakeholders in both Baku and Yerevan. Through targeted advocacy campaigns and strong communications messages, we elevated the climate and security discourse at COP28 in Dubai. We raised awareness of the risks of inter-ethnic conflict among resistance forces in Myanmar, as well as the unintended consequences of certain recruitment practices. In Afghanistan, we discouraged foreign donors from turning their backs on the most vulnerable people when aid was needed most. Our recommendations for helping restore stability in Haiti were well received at the UN, and senior European officials appreciated our advice on how to support cash-strapped countries in dealing with the Ukraine war's economic fallout.

1. Afghanistan

WE RAMPED UP our advocacy in Afghanistan as the Taliban began introducing edicts to ban girls from secondary schools and women from working at some NGO offices and parts of the UN. With a million girls blocked from education and tens of thousands of women’s jobs threatened amid a growing humanitarian crisis, the Taliban’s draconian rules discouraged donors at precisely the moment when foreign aid was most needed. Senior figures from the UN, NGOs and donor countries sought our advice.

We helped them make hard decisions along the lines of the recommendations in our February report. We suggested that, rather than cutting aid to send a fruitless message to the Taliban, the more principled response would be to mitigate harm to the most vulnerable.

Martin Griffiths, the UN’s head of humanitarian affairs, described our analysis as “pitch perfect”.

A major European donor commended us for “the strong logic in your recommendations. It is logical that we need to get away from mostly symbolic reactions and come back to pragmatic policies that foster the aims that we have all formulated for Afghanistan”.



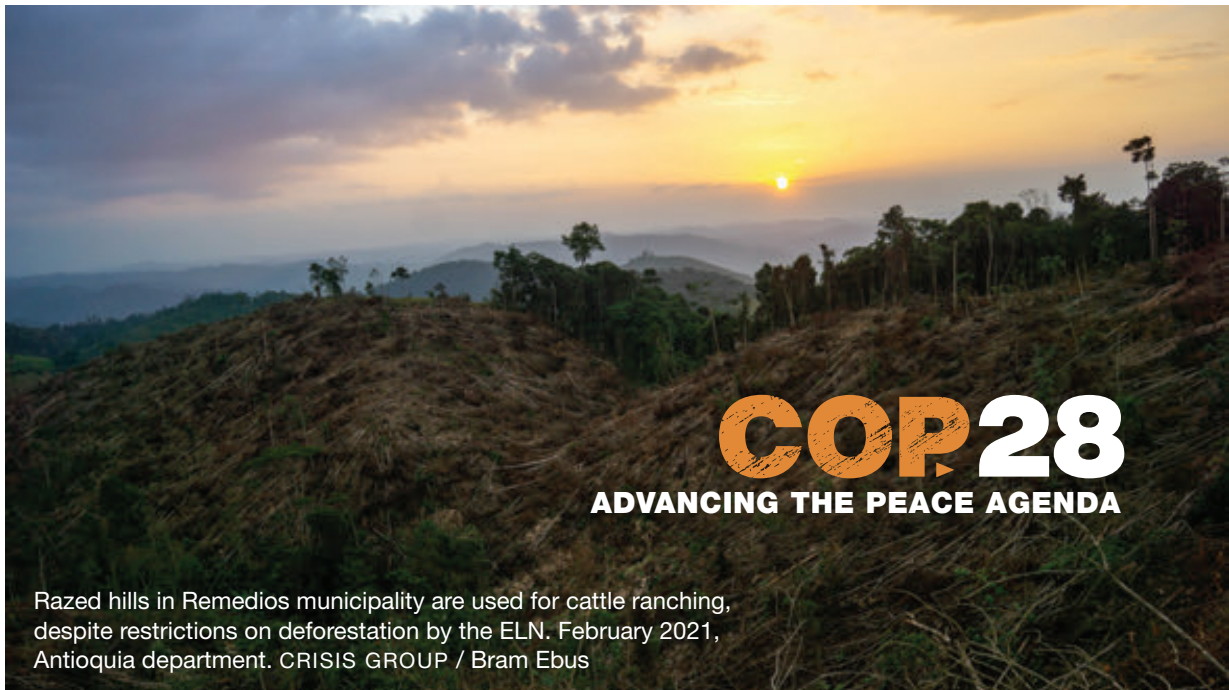
First grade students studying at Zarghona high school while the older female students remain absent, September 2021 / Stefanie Glinski

2. Climate and COP28

GOVERNMENTS HAVE credited Crisis Group’s multi-year climate security campaign with advancing important ideas as climate change affects more and more of the world. Officials from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which hosted the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change’s 28th conference, or COP28, in Dubai in December 2023, emphasised our campaign’s pivotal role in shaping the agenda. The UAE took a significant step by introducing the inaugural Relief, Recovery and Peace Day on 3 December, marking the first explicit discussion of conflict issues at any UN climate conference to date. Countries experiencing conflict receive on average only one third of the financing that those at peace get for climate adaptation, as Crisis Group reported in 2022. To raise awareness of the distinct challenges faced by conflict-affected states, the UAE unveiled a declaration that incorporated several

Crisis Group recommendations. It seeks to provide a comprehensive package of policies for overcoming the obstacles that these states encounter when seeking adaptation funding to build their resilience to climate shocks. The provisions based on Crisis Group analysis include those urging strengthening early warning systems, integrating considerations of debt in climate finance, reassessing donor risk appetites, monitoring funding flows, and linking adaptation to loss and damages.

Our impact was felt prior to COP28 as well, when our President & CEO Comfort Ero moderated the official COP28 side event at the UN General Assembly convened by the UAE Mission to the UN. In attendance were ministers from seven countries and senior UN officials, including the heads of the humanitarian and political affairs units.



COP28

ADVANCING THE PEACE AGENDA

Razed hills in Remedios municipality are used for cattle ranching, despite restrictions on deforestation by the ELN. February 2021, Antioquia department. CRISIS GROUP / Bram Ebus



Crisis Group's Elizabeth Dickinson meets with community leaders in a small, conflict-affected town on Colombia's Atlantic coast, October 2023. CRISIS GROUP / Jorge Gutiérrez Lucena.

3. Colombia

IN COLOMBIA, WE HAVE become a leading voice shaping the country's security policy, as the Gustavo Petro government aligned many of its approaches with our recommendations for how best to protect communities affected by conflict. The Colombian military has requested Crisis Group's input on how best to translate its new strategy into tactics and operations. This outreach owed to our years of work in the country, combined with early advocacy after Petro's election, when we circulated a white paper among senior retired military officers and future officials in the then-incoming government diagnosing the shortcomings of present strategies and highlighting the need for change.

Our reports are cited directly in the country's new Security and Defense Strategy, launched in April. The defence minister publicly thanked us for our advice, while the ministry asked for our collaboration in carrying out the strategy. We were also invited to speak on three occasions to an elite planning group

inside the armed forces that is drafting its own transformation plan. Our access to the military allows us to act as an informal bridge between this institution and both civilian authorities and diplomats. One senior military officer said he speaks to Crisis Group because we "can talk to everyone", while another told us we "show the expertise of having worked in the field for years". With this interest in collaboration in mind, we organised an event to discuss Colombia's ceasefires with armed and criminal groups with the defence ministry, social leaders, international organisations, Colombian civil society groups and the Irish embassy. This meeting achieved something that rarely happens in Colombia: it brought the military together with representatives of communities affected by conflict, with a common goal, despite the history of mistrust between them. Afterward, several diplomats remarked that our work has been vital to opening up this space for dialogue and urged us to continue our active role.



Bullet holes seen on the side of a car, caused by the violence and on-going conflict between gangs and government forces in Haiti. CRISIS GROUP / Diego Da Rin

4. Haiti

WE ADVOCATED FOR an inclusive political agreement in Haiti – a necessary condition to restore democratic institutions and pave the way for competitive and uncontested elections – that should complement the deployment of an international mission to fight the gangs that have captured most of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings. Our relationships with the UN system and delegates of member states have been particularly helpful in advancing our proposals to address the crisis. In April and ahead of the UN Secretary-General’s report to the Security Council, we alerted delegates to the risk that an international mission under Haiti’s present dispensation could improve the security situation but sow the seeds of political instability.

Later that month, in a series of meetings in New York, we shared recommendations on

negotiations with key political figures and organisations in Haiti with UN senior officials overseeing this process, including the special representative of the Secretary-General, and established a strong relationship of collaboration. In May, the Canadian House of Commons cited us four times in its Report on the Human Rights Situation in Haiti, based on our December testimony before the institution. Our Deputy Program Director for Latin America also testified before Canada’s Senate on the deteriorating situation in the country in October.

5. Myanmar

OUR SEPTEMBER BRIEFING examining the Ta'ang National Liberation Army's (TNLA) consolidation of control in northern Shan State since the 2021 coup was a distinctive case of a targeted local media strategy boosting our regional advocacy efforts. With Myanmar's military fighting on other fronts, our report explained how the TNLA has been firming up its foothold in the country's north, increasing the likelihood of clashes with other ethnic armed groups. We urged the group to focus on improving governance in areas under its administration in conjunction with civil society. Prior to publication, we circulated an advance copy of

the Burmese-language overview of the briefing to the media and other materials in Burmese including a subtitled video and press release to ensure maximum reach. The country's top broadcast outlets, many of which are operating from exile, covered the briefing, as did the regional press, generating more than one million views on third-party media platforms.

Our briefing's high visibility prompted a direct response from a TNLA general, who responded in broadcast interviews to concerns raised in our briefing on recruitment practices within the force and the risks of communal conflict in TNLA-governed areas. The general



Members of ethnic rebel group TNLA on patrol near Namhsan Township in Myanmar's northern Shan State. March, 2023. STR / AFP

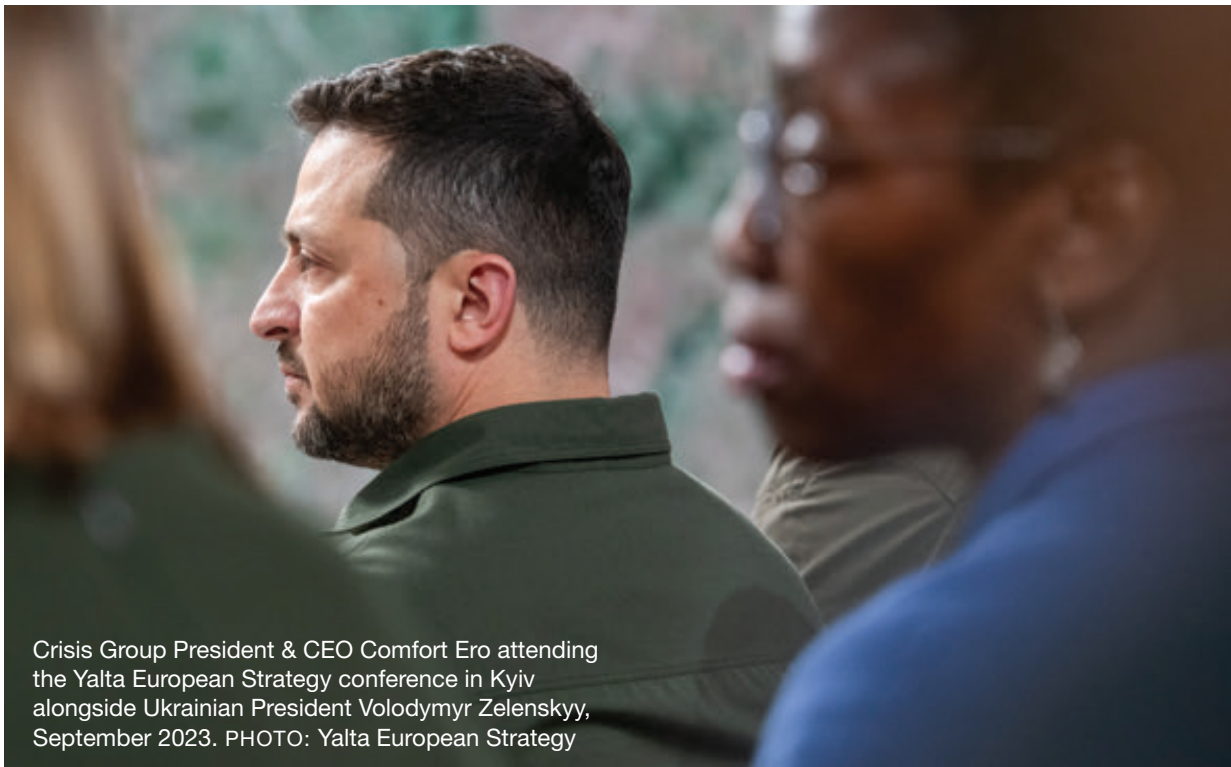
acknowledged breaches of the TNLA’s policy against recruiting child soldiers, noting the group’s efforts to adopt a more “systematic, disciplined and ethical approach”. He also said the group recognises the need to maintain cohesion among people of different ethnicities in TNLA-controlled areas. The general remarked that “it is good to release such a report” and “for the public to be able to know”. The TNLA almost immediately removed a map of a proposed “Ta’ang State” from its

associated Ta’ang State TV news website after our report drew attention to why the map was controversial. There is little to suggest the crisis triggered by the 2021 coup will end any time soon, and the junta rejects outside advice, but our TNLA briefing illustrates how focusing on a fairly narrow subject can shed light on broader issues, such as the risks of inter-ethnic conflict and the obstacles that resistance forces in Myanmar face in forming a united front to challenge the military regime.

6. Mitigating Ukraine War Ramifications

WE FOCUSED HIGH-LEVEL advocacy efforts on addressing the broader ramifications of the Ukraine war and bridging divides between European policymakers and their Global South

counterparts. Our President & CEO Comfort Ero advised senior officials across Europe of the need to help other regions grapple with the economic shocks of the conflict, as highlighted



Crisis Group President & CEO Comfort Ero attending the Yalta European Strategy conference in Kyiv alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, September 2023. PHOTO: Yalta European Strategy

in her widely read President's Take in our EU Watch List 2023 and Spring Update. We called for more robust European policies that help vulnerable countries deal with the war's economic fallout.

Comfort echoed these points in a keynote address at the EU's first-ever Schuman Security and Defence Partnership Forum in March. The event was hosted by EU High Representative Josep Borrell and attended by foreign and defence ministers from the 27 EU member states; defence ministers and others from 45 partner countries; and representatives of the UN, NATO, OSCE, African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Gulf Cooperation Council and League of Arab States. Comfort was the only civil society figure invited to the event. Our May briefing outlining seven priorities for the G7 urged leaders at the Hiroshima summit convening that month to help poorer countries avert default on debt and boost aid to those enduring conflict. The briefing highlighted the acute debt crisis in Africa and called for giving African governments greater

liquidity by recycling Special Drawing Rights to avert default, lending assistance to increase food production and taking action to give the continent a formal seat at the table at key forums like the G20.

A senior Japanese foreign ministry official remarked afterward that our suggestions had been helpful and agreed with our emphasis on the need for greater outreach to the Global South. Comfort was invited to speak about how Ukraine can improve its relations with non-European countries during the Yalta European Strategy's annual meeting in Kyiv in September. At the conference – which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended – Comfort appeared on two panels and met Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. She spoke about the need for Ukraine and its allies to more proactively reach out to non-European states experiencing the downstream effects of the war.

7. Sudan

CRISIS GROUP RESPONDED to the war in Sudan by engaging a wide set of African, Arab and Western interlocutors in search of a ceasefire. In the first six months of hostilities, Crisis Group found itself advising European, Kenyan, UN and U.S. officials on how to end the fighting, while also consulting with key officials in other African, Gulf and Western capitals. Within the first two weeks, we briefed a top Kenyan official, the members of the UN Security Council, EU member state representatives and a top EU diplomat. We also maintained frequent contact with key officials in the U.S.,

which took the initial lead mediating the conflict through talks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Crisis Group engaged officials in the African Union, as well as key Egyptian, Saudi, Emirati and Qatari representatives. Additionally, we met with influential Sudanese, including former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, and kept in constant contact with an array of Sudanese actors, including the warring parties, other armed groups and leading civilian figures, about the way forward.

All together, these engagements have allowed us to push for much more concerted and

coordinated ceasefire efforts, argue against support for either warring party, and propose new ideas for how to bridge competing initiatives and bring an end to the war sooner. While

the fighting rages unabated, Crisis Group’s work remains important for supporting nascent peace efforts and preventing greater disunity amid geopolitical polarisation.



Smoke plumes billow from a fire at a warehouse in southern Khartoum amid ongoing fighting. June, 2023. AFP

8. United States

WE HAVE HELPED SHAPE thinking in the U.S. executive branch on issues relating to accountability and conflict resolution in Russia’s war in Ukraine. In conversations with officials from the Departments of State, Justice and Defense, we have emphasised that Ukraine and its partners should pursue a sequenced approach to accountability efforts in order to avoid weakening the international criminal justice project if such prosecutions prove futile and to ensure that such efforts, particularly

those targeting Kremlin leadership such as a new aggression tribunal, do not complicate eventual negotiations to freeze or end the war. We shared our analysis – from our March Q&A, “A New Court to Prosecute Russia’s Illegal War?” and our *May Foreign Affairs* article – with offices in the executive branch. According to a State Department official working on Ukraine issues, our work found a receptive audience in the Department. One of the State Department officials leading U.S. engagement on a



A man walks among graves of unidentified people, killed during Russian occupation and reburied from a mass grave in the Ukrainian town of Bucha, near Kyiv. January, 2023. AFP / Sergei Supinsky

potential tribunal complimented our May article for presenting a distinct and underrepresented perspective on the creation of a new aggression court. The article also prompted *Foreign Affairs* to create a platform for debate with leading scholars, drawing widespread praise for its quality. Separately, we also focused advocacy efforts in Washington on drawing attention to the unintended consequences of U.S. sanctions following publication of our August report, *Sanctions, Peacemaking and Reform: Recommendations for U.S. Policymakers*.

Our related efforts outlining the perils of designating the Wagner mercenary group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) – which built on the same sanctions-related workstream – concluded that such a decision would risk further destabilising countries suffering from conflict, notably Mali and the Central African Republic. Contacts in the Biden administration and Congress told us that our

arguments helped them push back against the effort to designate Wagner an FTO. While we curtailed work on the potential FTO designation following the unexpected Wagner rebellion in Russia in late June, the research and advocacy made us an indispensable resource for policymakers and provided us with an important platform for suggesting alternative approaches for curbing Wagner’s malign influence.

9. Nagorno-Karabakh

CRISIS GROUP REMAINS Crisis Group remains the go-to organisation for policymakers grappling with how to mitigate the humanitarian crisis provoked by the mass exodus of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan retook it by force in September and how to prevent a wider war by keeping peace talks between Yerevan and Baku on track. We warned Western officials and diplomats of the dangers presented by Azerbaijan's months-long blockade of the region and military buildup in the weeks ahead of its offensive. In January, we included the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in our annual "10 Conflicts to Watch" article due to the danger of a new war.

In line with our advocacy, Washington, Brussels and Moscow had pushed for direct talks between Azerbaijan and de facto officials – in a bid to convince Baku to lift its blockade and to avert renewed violence. Though our efforts were not enough to deter Baku's September operation, they did contribute to intense diplomacy by all sides aimed at averting a military offensive.

During the crisis in September, our analysts maintained continuous communication with officials on both sides, providing recommendations to European and U.S. diplomats who were engaged in the ceasefire talks and subsequent diplomacy between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Our unique access to key stakeholders in the region, including in both Baku and Yerevan, ensures that our work is well informed, a fact recognised by representatives of other countries.

Crisis Group has also been instrumental in advocating for an EU monitoring mission to the international border between the two countries. Our January report, *Averting a New*

War Between Azerbaijan and Armenia, provided recommendations to the sides as well as to mediators, especially the EU, which sent a civilian mission to the Armenian side of the state border in February.

Our senior South Caucasus analyst published a commentary – in English, German, Russian and Ukrainian – zeroing in on a new role for the EU. We also placed an op-ed in the Russian edition of *Forbes* arguing that Russia would benefit from cooperating with the EU to resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

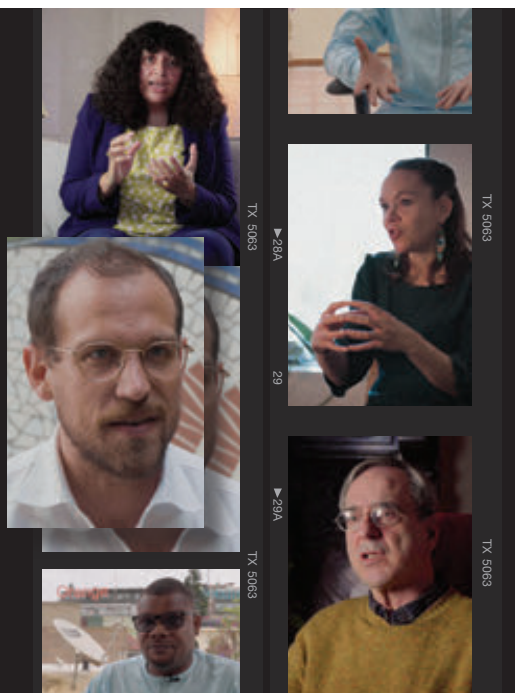
Our report and further recommendations laid out in the 2023 EU Watch List entry were warmly welcomed by many officials in Brussels, Washington and Paris, including a French senior official who praised our "balanced analysis". There remains a risk that Azerbaijan could mount further offensives, including as a means to effect negotiations, as it seeks to, for example, ensure a transit route to its exclave, Nakhichevan. But the EU mission still serves as some deterrent for cross-border operations and a strong incentive for Brussels and European capitals to do what they can to avert such an operation.



A Crisis Group map illustrating the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, where the September 2022 escalation of the conflict took place. As part of our January 2023 report, it was used by stakeholders and media to contextualise rising tensions in the region and for social media promotion of further publications and updates on the conflict.

IMPACT

Stories of Conflict Prevention



Above: What does preventing conflict actually look like? In our IMPACT video series, Crisis Group analysts recall experiences and how their work warned about or helped to prevent crises. Graphic by CRISIS GROUP / Claire Boccon-Gibod. Scan the QR code to find this and other videos in the series. **Front page:** The image on the front page is from the meeting pictured in the Colombia entry, between Crisis Group's Senior Analyst for Colombia, Elizabeth Dickinson, and community leaders in a town on the Atlantic coast, October 2023. CRISIS GROUP / Jorge Gutiérrez Lucena.

Our Vision and Mission

Our vision at Crisis Group is a **safer world** where all people are free of the threat of war, not only protected from harm but also able to pursue more fulfilling, prosperous lives. To make such a world, we must end armed conflict, ideally stopping it before it starts, but certainly halting it as soon as possible once it has begun. We must also do all we can to ease the pain of wars that stubbornly persist. Peace is not just the absence of war. The pillars of lasting peace, Crisis Group believes, are more inclusive politics; the reliable provision of basic public goods and services; and representative and accountable institutions that uphold human rights and the rule of law.

Our mission is to prevent or end deadly conflict around the world and keep its ravages to a minimum. When war looms, we sound the alarm; when war breaks out, we work to stop it; and when war drags on, we look for ways to alleviate the suffering it causes. Our central goal is to reach policymakers with timely analysis and prescription that impels them to act in the service of peace. To this end, Crisis Group conducts independent research in conflict zones, endeavouring to talk to all sides, and supplies expert advice and policy ideas to those in a position to make a difference.

PREVENTING WAR. SHAPING PEACE.