



CrisisWatch

December Alerts & November 2023 Trends

Our monthly conflict tracker highlights **six conflict risks** in December:

After efforts to extend a Qatar-brokered truce faltered, **Israel** resumed its onslaught in southern Gaza. The majority of the enclave’s nearly 2 million people are now in the south, many having fled Israel’s military campaign in the north. Already hundreds of Palestinians have died in the past few days of bombardments, adding to the 15,000 plus killed before the truce. Further massive killing and displacement seem almost inevitable.

In **Lebanon**, deadly border clashes between Hizbollah and Israel expanded in scale and scope, further heightening the risk of full-scale war in the coming weeks.

Election-related violence in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** could erupt around the 20 December vote amid widespread distrust in the process and fighting in the eastern province of North Kivu, where M23 rebels continue their advance (see this month’s Conflict in Focus).

In **Sudan**, the Rapid Support Forces continued their multi-pronged offensive, leaving a trail of alleged atrocities in Darfur where the risk of all-out ethnic conflict remains, especially as more armed groups could be drawn in.

The military in **Myanmar** may step up its brutal response, including indiscriminate bombings, as it faces its most significant battlefield challenges since the February 2021 coup with ethnic armed groups launching attacks on multiple fronts.

Fears rose in **Guatemala** that President-elect Bernardo Arévalo could face more judicial persecution, including removal of his immunity or even an arrest, that would in turn fuel mass protests and unrest in December.

CrisisWatch identified **ten deteriorated situations** in November. Notably:

Political tensions escalated in **Madagascar** as the opposition rejected incumbent President Rajoelina’s re-election after boycotting the presidential election amid a crack-down on protests.

Armed men in **Sierra Leone** attacked the main military barracks and prison in the capital Freetown; the government denounced a coup attempt.

CrisisWatch also assessed one improved situation in November. In the **Philippines**, the government and communist rebels struck a deal to restart peace talks after a six-year hiatus.

Aside from the scores of conflict situations we regularly assess, we tracked significant developments in the **Dominican Republic, Gabon, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Senegal** and **Togo**.

TRENDS IN NOVEMBER



Deteriorated Situations

Sierra Leone, Madagascar, Western Sahara, India-Pakistan (Kashmir), Myanmar, South China Sea, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Cameroon, Sudan



Improved Situations

Philippines

ALERTS FOR DECEMBER



Conflict Risk Alerts

Guatemala, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan



Resolution Opportunities

Conflict in Focus**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

NOVEMBER 2023

What happened in November? Campaigning for the 20 December national elections began on 19 November, amid concerns over transparency and fairness. In the east, Rwanda-backed M23 rebels advanced on the army and an East African Community force, threatening the North Kivu provincial capital, Goma.

Why does it matter? DR Congo's electoral cycle will last into 2024 as indirect elections of senators, governors, and vice governors are planned for late February/March. Concerns about election-rigging and conflict in the east provide fertile ground for internal tensions to boil over.

What to watch in the coming weeks? The risk of election-related violence is high. If losing parties do not accept the presidential results expected in late December and fighting worsens in the east, the country could find itself in a serious crisis.

As both the East African regional force and UN troops start pulling out, President Tshisekedi seems determined to fill the security vacuum and fight the M23 with hast-

ily recruited army auxiliaries and help from a Southern African regional force.

With no signs of the M23 retreating or Rwanda disengaging, the risk of wider regional conflagration, including direct confrontation between Kinshasa and Kigali, cannot be discounted.

What should be done? To manage the risk of violence, the government should rein in abuses by security forces, the electoral commission should better guarantee fair electoral conditions and all parties should refrain from inflammatory rhetoric.

International partners should press all sides to adhere to the measures above and prepare for impartial mediation if the results are contested. They should continue to support domestic poll watchers.

As concerns the east, African and Western diplomats must press domestic and foreign backers of warring armed groups to pull back their support, and call on Kigali and Kinshasa to tone down their rhetoric, especially during the tense electoral campaign period and its aftermath.