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## CrisisWatch 2023 – August Trends and September Alerts

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# Africa

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## Central Africa

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➔ **Cameroon** **Anglophone conflict continued in North West and South West regions, while Far North region faced renewed jihadist attacks and violence over land disputes.**

*Army reported successful operations against Anglophone separatists.* Govt forces 6 Aug ambushed Anglophone rebels in Bafut town (Mezam division, North West), killing two, and raided Anglophone separatist camp in Bopo village, Mbonge town (Meme division, South West), killing five rebels and seizing weapons. Separatists who late July mounted roadblocks across North West and South West regions with stated aim of curtailing govt's extrajudicial killings, 16 Aug allowed road transport again. Unidentified armed group overnight 11-12 Aug reportedly raided Kekukesi-Akwaya locality in Manyu division (SW), killing four civilians.

*Boko Haram stepped up attacks in Far North region after brief lull in July.* Boko Haram combatants 2-3 Aug killed 12 civilians and kidnapped another 20 on Darak island of Lake Chad (Logone-et-Chari division); 8 Aug also attacked Bakarisse camp for internally displaced persons in Kerawa locality (Mayo-Sava division), killing three. Jihadist insurgents 15-29 Aug carried out nearly two dozen other attacks, killing at least three civilians in Mayo-Tsanaga and Mayo-Sava divisions. Soldiers 18 Aug killed at least four Islamic State West Africa Province militants near Hile-Alifa town (Logone-et-Chari), and 25 Aug killed another four jihadist militants near Mozogo town (Mayo-Tsanaga).

*Land disputes evolved into intercommunal clashes in Far North region.* Competition over ownership of rice field located near Kai-Kai town (Mayo-Danay division) 10 Aug led to violent clashes between villagers, leaving three casualties. Two weeks earlier, land dispute had turned into confrontation between Christians and Muslims in Warba village (Mayo-Sava division), with four killed and dozens injured.

⚡ **Central African Republic (CAR)** **Referendum win opened the way for President Touadéra to extend his rule indefinitely, institutionalising authoritarian drift.**

*Touadéra secured controversial referendum victory.* Electoral body 7 Aug announced resounding 95% yes vote for new constitution in referendum held 30 July, and Constitutional Court 20 Aug validated results, saying turnout reached 57%. New constitution, which scraps presidential term limits and bars Central Africans of foreign origin or holding another citizenship from running for president, paves the

way for Touadéra to seek third term in 2025. Opposition coalition Republican Bloc for the Defence of the Constitution, which boycotted referendum, claimed results were “fraudulent” and turnout as low as 10%; bloc’s coordinator Crépin Mboli-Goumba 22 Aug vowed to “oppose this desire to liquidate democracy in our country”. Internationally, U.S. 22 Aug expressed “deep reservations” over referendum vote in absence of independent electoral observers and called on CAR authorities to set date for long-overdue local elections.

*Violence continued amid growing divisions within rebel coalition.* Armed forces 1 Aug killed seven presumed Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) rebels during operation in gold mine in Abba area of Nana-Mambéré prefecture. Amid growing divisions within CPC, locals in Nana-Gribizi prefecture from 19 Aug onward reported presence of unidentified armed group equipped with robust armaments in several villages including Mbrès, Azène, Linguiri, and Koukourou; armed men in Azène allegedly claimed being part of new rebel movement, portrayed it as last chance for rebellion in CAR. In response, UN mission MINUSCA 22 Aug sent blue helmets to patrol area between Mbrès and Koukourou. Unidentified armed group presence also reported late-Aug in Chari village, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, while unidentified armed men 25 Aug attacked army position in Yawa village, Lobaye prefecture, forcing over 2,000 people to flee.

*In other important developments.* In apparent revenge attack, suspected Fulani herders Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) militiamen 1 Aug killed 13 civilians in Diki village, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture.

#### ↓ **Chad Amid renewed hostilities in northern Tibesti region, prominent rebel group declared an end to 2021 ceasefire with govt.**

*Two-year ceasefire between FACT and govt collapsed.* Military mid-Aug bombed position of prominent Libya-based rebel group, Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), in northern Tibesti region, reportedly killing three rebels. FACT 18-19 Aug denounced act of war and called off 2021 unilateral ceasefire, vowing “quick, powerful and uncompromising” reaction. In televised address from frontline, Interim President Déby 20 Aug vowed to personally lead battle against FACT if rebels do not put down arms. Meanwhile, another Libya-based rebel group, Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR), 10 Aug conducted offensive on Wour, Kouri and Kouri-Zaou army bases in Tibesti, leaving unknown number of soldiers killed and allegedly capturing 23; CCMSR 28 Aug announced death of two senior leaders in airstrike conducted 17 Aug in northern Chad. Libyan National Army led by Khalifa Haftar late Aug announced offensive against positions of Chadian rebels in southern Libya, said operation conducted in coordination with Chadian authorities.

*Jihadist, communal and other violence continued to take toll on civilians.* Boko Haram 5 Aug beheaded four captives after their families failed to pay ransom in Lac province (west). Chieftaincy dispute between two sub-clans of Mbaye community next day turned violent in Bekourou locality, Mandoul province (south), leaving four dead and 35 injured. Clashes between pastoral herders and local farmers 18-19 Aug left at least ten people dead in Abkhoura village, Mangalme department, Guera province (south). Meanwhile, Logone Oriental province (also south) saw several

attacks by unidentified armed men, with two Arab herders and one farmer killed 13-14 Aug.

*Exiled opposition leader announced homecoming.* Succès Masra, president of opposition party Les Transformateurs, 10 Aug announced his imminent return from exile — where he has lived since October 2022 crackdown on protesters — and outlined intention to prioritise dialogue and national reconciliation. Minister of Reconciliation and Social Cohesion Abderaman Koulamallah 18 Aug said authorities would guarantee Masra's security.

*In other important developments.* Prominent Fulani rebel leader from southern Chad, Baba Laddé, 22 Aug called on all “patriotic forces” to unite for “national uprising” against Déby.

### ↓ **Gabon Military seized power from President Ali Bongo moments after authorities announced his re-election for third term.**

As general elections 26 Aug drew to a close, authorities cut internet access and announced nightly curfew. Main opposition candidate in presidential contest, Albert Ondo Ossa, same day denounced “fraud” and 28 Aug claimed to have won, urging incumbent President Ali Bongo to concede defeat and organise handover. Election body 30 Aug however said Bongo had won third term with 64.27% of vote. Moments later, gunfire was reported in capital Libreville, and dozen military officers appeared on state TV to announce “putting an end to the current regime”; officers said they had detained Ali Bongo, election results were cancelled, all borders closed and state institutions dissolved. Hundreds of people immediately filled streets in multiple cities to celebrate change of leadership. Military junta, calling itself Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions, later same day named head of Republican Guard, General Brice Oligui Nguema, as country's transitional president. Coup drew international condemnation. Notably, African Union 31 Aug suspended Gabon's membership and “strongly condemn[ed] the military takeover of power” as did, among others, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, and French and U.S. govts.

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## **East and Southern Africa**

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### ➔ **Kenya Govt and opposition returned to negotiating table, but mutual distrust persisted; Al-Shabaab continued to step up attacks near Somalia border.**

*Govt and opposition resumed talks to bridge differences.* Ruling Kenya Kwanza alliance led by President Ruto and Raila Odinga's opposition Azimio la Umoja coalition 9 Aug agreed to resume bipartisan talks to tackle disagreements on raft of issues, including high cost of living and results of 2022 elections. Bipartisan dialogue committee 21 Aug met and 30 Aug signed framework agreement for dialogue, agreeing to report to respective leaders on five major issues within 60 days. Hard-line politicians from both sides and sour personal relations however risk derailing talks; notably, Deputy President of Kenya Rigathi Gachagua 22 Aug dismissed bipartisan talks as “waste of time”. Meanwhile, energy regulator 14 Aug said govt reinstated limited subsidy to stabilise fuel price for 30 days; along with tax hikes,

govt's removal of fuel and maize subsidies has sparked public anger and protests in recent months.

*Al-Shabaab staged multiple attacks in Lamu county near Somalia.* Al-Shabaab 1 Aug ambushed and killed two people in Mwembeni area on Lamu-Witu-Garsen road near Lamu-Tana River county border; security forces next day reported killing 60 Al-Shabaab militants in response to series of ambushes in area. Al-Shabaab 10 Aug killed three soldiers near Kiunga town, 15 Aug launched two separate attacks on civilian vehicles near Koreni and Bargoni localities, leaving at least two dead, and 22 Aug killed two civilians in ambush near Lango La Simba area on Lamu-Witu-Garsen road.

*Cattle-related violence erupted along Kisumu-Kericho border.* Tensions over suspected cattle rustling 19 Aug turned into clashes in Nyakach sub-county along border between Kisumu and Kericho counties; at least two killed and eight injured.

➔ **Mozambique Insurgent activity against govt forces remained high in Macomia district in northern Cabo Delgado province; authorities postponed district elections.**

*Macomia district continued to be hotspot of Cabo Delgado conflict.* Suspected Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) fighters 1 Aug killed nine soldiers near Ilala village; Southern African Development Community Mission to Mozambique (SAMIM) patrol hours later engaged insurgent cell, causing unknown number of casualties. ISMP militants 5-8 Aug killed at least seven soldiers in clashes near Catupa forest, and 22 Aug ambushed govt and SAMIM forces convoy travelling to Quiterajo village, killing nine. Army 23-25 Aug announced killing three senior ISMP executives, including commander of operations in Cabo Delgado, in Macomia forests; report is yet to be confirmed by Rwanda and SAMIM. Meanwhile, ISMP cells pursued hearts and minds strategy in some coastal areas, with militants 3 Aug buying goods and food from residents in Pangane (Macomia) and Marere (Mocímboa da Praia district) villages.

*Reports of indiscipline within security forces in Cabo Delgado continued to emerge.* Rwandan soldiers 1 Aug reportedly intervened after police beat local in Mocímboa da Praia town. Meanwhile, significant number of police officers and soldiers in Aug reportedly had salaries delayed for second month; delays in salary payments could add to indiscipline within security forces, creating additional hurdle in counter-insurgency efforts.

*President Nyusi visit to Cabo Delgado overshadowed by postponed elections.* As Nyusi visited Palma town and his home district Mueda, National Assembly 3 Aug approved indefinite postponement of district elections initially scheduled for 2024, due to financial and security constraints. Main opposition party RENAMO said decision threatens democracy and will allow ruling party to entrench hold on power. Meanwhile, mayor of Nampula city and RENAMO party member Paulo Vahanle alleged police officer 22 Aug attempted to kill him; RENAMO 26 Aug threatened to "bring country to a halt" in case of attacks on party members.

➔ **Tanzania Govt faced criticism over detention of critics.**

NGO Human Rights Watch 7 Aug alleged authorities have detained or threatened 22 people since June for criticising govt decision to let foreign logistics company manage Tanzania's ports, and urged govt to "respect freedom of expression, right to protest". Police 12 Aug arrested lawyer Boniface Anyasile Mwabukusi and opposition politician Mpaluka Nyagali on accusations of inciting and planning nationwide anti-govt protests.

↓ **Zimbabwe Multiple observation missions reported widespread irregularities in general elections, casting doubt on legitimacy of vote which saw President Mnangagwa declared winner of second term.**

*Election authorities Mnangagwa re-elected in elections marred by irregularities.* Electoral commission 26 Aug declared President Mnangagwa winner of presidential election held 23 Aug with 52.6% of vote against opposition leader Nelson Chamisa's 44%; ruling party ZANU-PF also won 136 of 210 parliamentary seats against 73 for main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC). Chamisa 27 Aug alleged "gigantic fraud" and 29 Aug called for elections rerun. Conduct of elections could also hamper Zimbabwe's re-engagement drive with international partners, as most international election observers said vote was marred by irregularities and poor organisation, while pre-election environment was largely favourable to ZANU-PF. Notably, in departure from past statements on elections in Zimbabwe, Southern African Development Community (SADC) 25 Aug said elections "fell short of the requirements of the Constitution of Zimbabwe", citing curbs on freedom of assembly and judicial capture. In response, Mnangagwa 27 Aug criticised outside observers for "interrogat[ing] institutions of a sovereign government".

*Lead-up to vote and election day marred by violence and repression.* NGO Zimbabwe Peace Project recorded 84 human rights violations related to elections in first half of Aug, including arson, assaults, kidnapping threats and intimidation. Notably, suspected ZANU-PF activists 3 Aug ambushed and killed CCC supporter near campaign rally in capital Harare; police arrested 10 people in connection with case. Police 15 Aug also arrested 40 CCC members including MP candidate for allegedly blocking traffic and disrupting order during campaign event in Harare suburb. On voting day, journalist and opposition figure Hopewell Chin'ono 23 Aug accused ZANU-PF supporters and officials of intimidating voters outside polling stations, also criticised electoral commission's lack of preparedness as authorities extended voting to 24 Aug in some wards amid delayed distribution of ballot papers. Police 24 Aug arrested 41 election monitors from civil society groups, accusing them of trying to disrupt voting process by releasing unofficial vote results from independent count.

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## **Great Lakes**

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➔ **Burundi Army clashed with anti-Kigali rebels near Rwandan border, while main opposition party continued to crumble with disunity.**

*Army engaged anti-Kigali rebels based in Burundi.* Armed forces 3 Aug engaged Kinyarwanda-speaking rebels from Rwanda in Mabayi district, Cibitoke province; clashes reportedly left six rebels and three soldiers dead, and forced residents to flee. Army's operations commander subsequently vowed to intensify night-time patrols

in area, reflecting army's growing commitment to combat anti-Kigali rebels against backdrop of improving relations between Burundi and Rwanda. Unidentified assailants 9 Aug killed local leader of ruling party youth militia Imbonerakure, Isidore Niyongabo, at his home in Mabayi commune; locals accused FLN rebels of killing Niyongabo for collaborating with security forces during aforementioned operation.

*Standoff continued between rival factions of main opposition party.* Group of ten dissident executives of National Congress for Freedom (CNL) party 14 Aug proclaimed Marie Immaculée Ntacobakimvuna as interim party president to replace CNL President Agathon Rwasa; CNL wing loyal to Rwasa rejected move. Meanwhile, interior ministry 18 Aug prohibited planned gathering of party's political bureau loyal to Rwasa.

*In other important developments.* Ahead of 2025 legislative elections, senate in Aug started consultations on removal of ethnic-based quotas in public sector employment provided in Burundi's constitution and 2000 Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.

**↓ DR Congo Ahead of elections set for December, crackdown on dissent and civil liberties escalated as security forces killed over 40 anti-UN protesters in eastern province of North Kivu.**

*Anti-MONUSCO protest turned deadly.* Govt forces 30 Aug stopped religious group from holding demonstration against UN mission (MONUSCO) in North Kivu's provincial capital, Goma; crackdown reportedly left at least 43 people dead and 56 wounded, while over 150 people were arrested. Repression sent chilling message across country over space for free speech and dissent in lead-up to general elections due in late 2023.

*Armed group violence continued in eastern provinces, mainly targeting civilians.* In Ituri province, Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 19-21 Aug killed over 50 people in Irumu territory. Also in Ituri, Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO), which gathers various ethnic Lendu militias, 15 Aug killed 11 civilians in two attacks in Irumu territory, and 27-28 Aug killed 30 people in Djugu and Aru territories. Amid fragile truce with govt, Rwanda-backed M23 rebels continued to fight with local armed groups for territorial control in North Kivu. Notably, clashes between M23 and Democratic Forces for the liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) 6 Aug killed at least two FDLR combatants and ten civilians in Marangara and Ruzanze villages, Rutshuru territory. Meanwhile, participants to President Tshisekedi-sponsored roundtable held 14-16 Aug in capital Kinshasa called for immediate lifting of so-called "state of siege" declared in May 2021 in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, citing lack of conclusive results in fight against armed groups.

*In other important developments.* In likely bid to strengthen control of security apparatus as elections near, Tshisekedi 1 Aug appointed new heads of National Intelligence Agency and National Security Council. Electoral commission 11 Aug published provisional list of candidates for National Assembly, and 27 Aug completed registration of candidates for provincial and municipal elections; political heavyweights Joseph Kabila and Martin Fayulu boycotted registration process. Electoral commission 22 Aug restricted municipal election on 20 Dec to communes

located in provincial capitals, citing customary power conflicts in rural areas; elections projected in 2024 in remaining municipalities.

➡ **Rwanda Washington sanctioned Rwandan and Congolese individuals for alleged role in eastern DR Congo (DRC) conflict; President Kagame reshuffled military positions.**

*U.S. sanctioned individuals for contributing to eastern DRC conflict.* U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 15 Aug held phone call with Kagame to discuss security crisis involving Rwanda-backed M23 rebels in eastern DRC; Blinken reportedly renewed call for “diplomatic solution to the tensions” between Kinshasa and Kigali and “for each side to take measures to de-escalate the situation”. Meanwhile, U.S. treasury 24 Aug placed sanctions on six individuals for their alleged role in eastern DRC conflict, including one Rwandan and one Congolese senior army officers, one M23 deputy commander, and three Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda militia leaders.

*Kagame announced major changes in security forces.* Hours after coup in Gabon, Kagame 30 Aug retired 12 army generals, including old guard members, and dozens of other senior military officers; also promoted several young officers to rank of colonel and designated new generals to lead military divisions.

➡ **Uganda World Bank suspended new lending to Uganda in response to anti-homosexuality law, while opposition party encountered internal divisions.**

*World Bank halted funding to Uganda.* World Bank 8 Aug announced freezing fresh loans to Uganda over recently passed anti-homosexuality law, setting aside funding worth nearly \$2bn. In almost instantaneous reaction, Uganda’s currency went downward to its lowest level against U.S. dollar in nearly eight years. President Museveni in following days released two defiant statements chastising institution for its “insufferable” decision, while finance ministry 10 Aug told parliament that World Bank move would likely affect payment of some public servants’ salaries.

*Prominent opposition party faced internal rift.* Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) Sec Gen Nathan Nandala Mafabi 7 Aug petitioned parliament to replace Ibrahim Ssemujju Nganda as FDC Chief Whip in parliament after latter alleged Mafabi and other FDC leaders received “dirty money” from state agents ahead of 2021 general elections. Speaker of Parliament Anita Among 16 Aug declined to dismiss Ssemujju, citing opposition party members themselves sharing dissatisfaction with Mafabi, prompting latter to accuse Among of taking sides in internal party matter to drive wedge between FDC factions.

*Violence involving Kenyan Pokot herdsmen persisted in Karamoja sub-region.* Armed individuals from West Pokot county of Kenya 21 Aug launched cattle raid and later ambushed Ugandan soldiers in Nakapiripirit district (Karamoja sub-region), killing two.

*In other important developments.* Authorities looked to domestically promote military successes against Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in DR Congo following militia’s deadly attack on Ugandan school in June. Notably, armed forces 6-21 Aug reported capturing two ADF operatives, seizing 150 firearms and

rescuing 26 hostages, and 23 Aug claimed killing several ADF elements including one commander.

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## Horn

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➡ **Eritrea Asmara rejected fresh accusations of troop presence in Ethiopia's Tigray region while fears simmered that Ethiopia's Amhara rebellion could draw Eritrea in; army accused of human rights abuses.**

*Asmara dismissed allegations of troop presence in Tigray.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs 10 Aug summoned British Chargé d'Affaires after British Ambassador to Ethiopia Darren Welch 9 Aug called for complete withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Ethiopia's Tigray region; govt accused Welch of "endorsing the TPLF's [Tigray People's Liberation Front] irredentist claims".

*Amhara rebellion heightened risks of Eritrean involvement on insurgent side.* Ethiopia's Defence Minister Abraham Belay 22 Aug announced plans to return hundreds of thousands of people displaced from Western and parts of Southern Tigray (under Amhara's administration since Nov 2020) to their homes; Abraham added that govt will dissolve Amhara's "illegal administration" in these areas in accordance with Nov 2022 peace deal with TPLF (see Ethiopia). Remarks came amid escalating rebellion in Amhara region, led by nationalist militia known as Fano, and increased likelihood of Asmara supporting Fano rebellion in order to prevent Tigray from recovering control of disputed territory and gaining access to an external border.

*UN spotlighted human rights abuses in army.* UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea Mohamed Babiker 7 Aug said Eritrean conscripts are subjected to torture, inhumane or degrading treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, forced labour and abusive conditions during military service.

↓ **Ethiopia Amhara region witnessed worsening violence as nationalist militia clashed with security forces, prompting Addis Ababa to declare state of emergency; federal minister vowed to end Amhara's "illegal administration" in Western and Southern Tigray.**

*Violence in Amhara region reached new heights.* Fighting between Amhara nationalist militia known as Fano and federal and regional forces dramatically escalated, with Fano early Aug seizing control of several towns and cities. Addis Ababa 3 Aug blocked internet access to region, next day declared six-month state of emergency. In following weeks, authorities arrested hundreds of people allegedly linked to militants, including politician and outspoken govt critic Christian Tadelle. By 9 Aug, federal forces had recaptured major towns, pushing Fano militants to rural areas where fighting continued. Clashes late Aug flared in large towns, such as Debre Tabor and Debre Markos. UN 29 Aug said at least 183 killed in clashes since July.

*Minister vowed to return IDPs to Western and Southern Tigray.* Defence Minister Abraham Belay 22 Aug announced on Facebook govt plans to return people displaced during Tigray conflict from Western and parts of Southern Tigray (under Amhara's administration since Nov 2020) to their homes; Abraham added that govt will dissolve Amhara's "illegal administration" in these areas as per Nov 2022 peace



deal with Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Remarks risk enflaming perceptions among Amhara that federal govt betrayed them when it struck deal with TPLF, and could empower Fano rebellion and draw Eritrea into conflict (see Eritrea).

*Govt-insurgent fighting persisted in Oromia region.* Heavy clashes between govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continued in Oromia, with civilians again targeted. Notably, residents in West Shewa Zone's Chobi district 16 Aug accused govt troops of killing at least 12 civilians during anti-insurgent operations; OLA fighters 17 Aug attacked police station in West Guji, killing local official. Fano continued to mount attacks and abduct residents.

*In other important developments.* World Food Programme 8 Aug resumed food aid deliveries, suspended in June. BRICS bloc of emerging economies 24 Aug invited Ethiopia to join from Jan 2024. Talks with Egypt and Sudan over Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam 28 Aug concluded without breakthrough (see Nile Waters).

➡ **Nile Waters** **Talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) concluded without breakthrough.**

Ethiopian, Egyptian and Sudanese officials 27 Aug met in Egyptian capital Cairo to restart negotiations over Ethiopia's controversial GERD project, though talks 28 Aug concluded without any indication of progress. Resumption of discussions followed mid-July agreement between Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi and Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed to finalise deal on dam's filling and operation within four months. Next round of talks scheduled for Sept in Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

↓ **Somalia** **Govt's attempt to revitalise offensive against Al-Shabaab in central regions backfired, with military retreating after making initial gains in Galgaduud region.**

*Military offensive against Al-Shabaab suffered setback as troops retreated.* President Mohamud 5 Aug travelled to Galmudug state capital, Dhusamareb, to reinvigorate stalled offensive against Al-Shabaab in central regions. Army and allied clan militias 14 Aug launched operations in Galgaduud and Mudug regions (both Galmudug state) and in following days made initial progress. Notably, army 16 Aug successfully cleared mines in several villages on border between Galgaduud and Hiraaan regions, 21 Aug regained key Wabho town, next day captured Cowsweyne village and 24-25 Aug took over strategic Elbur town (all Galgaduud). Troops however lost ground after Al-Shabaab militants 26 Aug launched major attack involving suicide bombs in Cowsweyne, inflicting heavy losses on govt force. Govt forces in following days reportedly pulled back from villages and towns recently captured, including Budbud, Wabho, Galcad, El Dhere and Masagaway, and 29 Aug also left Elbur.

*Al-Shabaab militants continued to pose major threat in several regions.* In Lower Shabelle region (south), bomb aboard passenger bus 9 Aug killed six and wounded 12 on road between Marka to Qoriyoley districts. In Hiraaan region (centre), Al-Shabaab suicide bomber 10 Aug targeted Jalalaqsi district governor, killing five including district officials but leaving governor unharmed. Militants 23 Aug launched suicide attack on security forces in Kadha area on Mogadishu's outskirts, killing two soldiers. Meanwhile, authorities 4 Aug announced arrest of ten govt staff from various departments including intelligence agency for allegedly collaborating

with Al-Shabaab, serving as reminder that group has infiltrated govt security structures.

*Security situation remained tense but stable in Puntland state.* After Puntland parliament in July passed constitutional amendments allowing for direct election of state president, Puntland President Said Deni 1 Aug pledged to hold presidential and parliamentary polls by 8 Jan 2024; opponents however continued to accuse him of seeking to use transition to direct universal suffrage to extend term or set rules of the game in his favour.

➡ **Somaliland In most significant advance since conflict began, Dhulbahante militias captured several army positions on outskirts of Las Anod town, driving Somaliland forces out of Dhulbahante territory.**

*Clan militias forced govt troops out of Dhulbahante territory.* In major victory, Dhulbahante militiamen 25 Aug captured Goojacade army base from Somaliland forces, as well as several smaller outposts on outskirts of Sool region's capital Las Anod, meaning Somaliland forces no longer retain significant presence in Dhulbahante territory. Abdulkadir Ahmed 'Firdhiye', who was elected 5 Aug as chair of self-declared SSC-Khatumo state's executive council (new 45-member body tasked with running area), same day gave triumphalist speech vowing to "immediately commence efforts to secure our region and establish our own administration". Somaliland President Bihi and opposition party leaders next day jointly pledged to defend Somaliland's territory. In joint statement, UN, African Union mission in Somalia, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, European Union and others 27 Aug condemned "escalation of conflict" and urged all sides to agree to "immediate and unconditional ceasefire".

*Clan militia protesting election delays mounted new attack in Togdheer region.* Newly-formed militia composed of members of Haber Yonis clan protesting against delays in Somaliland's electoral cycle 11 Aug ambushed Somaliland security forces in Godayar district in Togdheer region, killing nine and injuring 17. Abdirahman Irro, founder of main opposition party Waddani (which is dominated by Haber Yonis clan), 12 Aug called on both sides to refrain from violence.

*In other important developments.* Ruling Kulmiye party 21 Aug elected Bihi as candidate for presidential election set for late 2024, and Interior Minister Mohamed Kahin as new party chair. Elders from Haber Jeclo clan 27 Aug proposed combining political party and presidential elections in Nov 2024 as means to bridge gap between govt and opposition over electoral dispute.

➡ **South Sudan President Kiir appointed ally as finance minister amid deteriorating relations with U.S. over Juba's economic management; concerns about country's preparedness for elections persisted.**

*U.S. issued business advisory over govt's economic mismanagement.* Minister of Petroleum, Puat Kang Chol, and Minister of Roads and Bridges, Simon Mijok Mijak, 3 Aug appeared in front of Public Financial Management (PFM) Oversight Committee, reportedly painting grim picture of govt's economic mismanagement. Chol presented numbers that revealed misappropriation of oil income while Mijok reportedly described non-transparent procurement process for road building project and vastly inflated prices for its development. Days after presentation and amid

years of mounting frustration, U.S. Department of State, Labor and Commerce 14 Aug issued advisory warning U.S. companies that conducting business with enterprises linked to South Sudanese govt officials or their families comes with “reputational, financial and legal risks”. Move marked significant escalation from previous warnings of business dealings with sanctioned individuals and companies. Meanwhile, President Kiir 3 Aug sacked Finance Minister Dier Tong Ngor and replaced him with Bak Barnaba Chol, who hails from Kiir’s home state Warrap; appointment set to tighten Kiir’s grip on public resources.

*Stalled election preparations raised concerns.* Head of UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Nicholas Haysom 2 Aug said country “is not yet ready for elections”; UNMISS Deputy Head Guang Cong 10 Aug reiterated warning, while interim chairperson of peace monitoring mechanism Charles Tai Gituai same day said authorities had made no progress on implementing key sections of peace deal. Despite concerns, govt 15 Aug said South Sudan would hold elections in 2024 according to schedule without implementing key provisions like census, border demarcation and provisions for displaced populations. VP Machar 29 Aug met with South Africa’s Deputy President Paul Mashatile in capital Juba, with latter offering to help resolve “challenges that may hinder free and fair elections”.

*In other important developments.* UNMISS 28 Aug reported thousands of South Sudanese refugees had returned to Akobo town from Ethiopia, owing to “ethnically fuelled violence within refugee camps in the Ethiopian Gambella region” and food shortages. Juba 3 Aug acceded to international Convention on Cluster Munitions.

► **Sudan Army chief fled Khartoum as fighting in capital raged on, inter-ethnic clashes flared in Darfur, and tribal mobilisation threatened stability in east.**

*Army leader fled Khartoum amid heavy fighting.* Hostilities between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continued in Khartoum, with RSF attacking SAF military bases and SAF conducting airstrikes and firing artillery. Notably, SAF early Aug targeted Shambat bridge, key RSF supply line to sister cities Omdurman and Bahri; SAF and RSF 20-23 Aug battled over Armoured Corps base in Al-Shajara neighbourhood, SAF’s only remaining stronghold in capital besides headquarters. Meanwhile, army chief Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan 24 Aug escaped headquarters after months-long RSF siege, subsequently visiting regional bases and Port Sudan before 29 Aug travelling to Egypt for talks.

*RSF-SAF clashes in Darfur enflamed intercommunal conflicts.* RSF 4 Aug claimed it had defeated SAF in Central Darfur, which SAF denied; in South Darfur, fighting between SAF and RSF throughout month killed scores and displaced 50,000 from state capital Nyala; and in North Darfur, fighting 17 Aug resumed in state capital El-Fasher. SAF-RSF fighting exacerbated intercommunal conflicts, particularly in South Darfur; notably, Salamat and Beni Halba tribes throughout month clashed in Kubum locality; rival Reizigat clans fought in and around Nyala. Meanwhile, media outlet *The New Humanitarian* 15 Aug reported testimonies of Darfuri refugees in Chad alleging RSF attacks on non-Arab civilians, especially Masalit, fleeing region.

*Tribal mobilisation in east threatened stability, fighting continued in Kordofan.* In eastern Sudan, RSF late July accused former President Bashir’s National Congress

Party and Islamists in military of arming tribal militias, prompting number of Arab tribes to join RSF in Aug. In North Kordofan state, SAF 1 Aug clashed with RSF near Umm Ruwaba city. In South Kordofan state, rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North continued targeting SAF positions, notably in state capital Kadugli and Dalam town.

*Burhan rejected RSF call for negotiations.* Amid stalled external mediation efforts, RSF 27 Aug expressed willingness for talks and presented ten-point plan for “lasting peace”; Burhan next day rejected initiative.

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## Sahel

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➔ **Burkina Faso** Amid countrywide insecurity, military authorities engaged in diplomatic spat with Paris over stance on Niger coup, and intensified crackdown on dissent.

*Insecurity remained elevated, with heavy toll on civilians.* Military operations against jihadist groups continued. Notably, airstrike 2 Aug allegedly killed around ten al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) militants in Bourou village, Soum province, Sahel region. Meanwhile in Hauts-Bassins region, presumed JNIM combatants 1 Aug killed around seven army auxiliaries (VDPs) and lost ten of their own militants in attack on Niamana village, Kenedougou province. Civilians remained caught between jihadists on one hand and govt forces and their civilian auxiliaries on the other. Notably, presumed JNIM fighters 6 Aug killed around 22 civilians and wounded another ten near Nohao village, Boulgou province, Centre-East region.

*Ouagadougou continued to draw further away from erstwhile allies.* French govt 6 Aug announced suspending French development and budgetary aid to Burkina Faso after country expressed support for coup leaders in Niger (see Niger). In response, Ouagadougou next day denounced double taxation treaty with France. After Niger 6 Aug closed its airspace, French flag carrier Air France next day suspended all flights to and from Ouagadougou (and Bamako) citing “geopolitical situation in the Sahel”. Meanwhile, interim President Capt. Traoré 31 Aug reportedly discussed possible military cooperation with Russian delegation in capital Ouagadougou.

*Clampdown on dissent intensified.* Coalition of around 50 political parties and civil society groups, Patriotic Front, 4 Aug denounced “abuses” and non-inclusive governance by military authorities; statement came days after alleged state agents briefly kidnapped former MP Issouf Nikiéma and court sentenced civil society activist Mohamed Sinon to prison for criticising gendarmerie. Authorities 10 Aug suspended prominent media outlet Radio Omega over accusations of promoting “strategy of chaos” in Niger after station broadcast interview with civil society activist opposing coup.

*In other important developments.* Videos purporting to show gunshots near air base in Ouagadougou 1 Aug circulated on social media, prompting Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Col.-Maj. Célestin Simporé to denounce presence of “suspicious” individuals around base; days earlier, latter had denied rumours circulating on social media of mutinous feelings in certain military barracks.

↓ ⚡ **Mali** Amid UN mission's withdrawal, significant clashes erupted in north between govt forces and former rebels for first time since 2015 peace agreement; coming weeks could see more violence and collapse of peace process.

*MINUSMA withdrawal put 2015 peace deal under threat.* Permanent Strategic Framework, which gathers northern armed groups signatory to 2015 Algiers peace agreement with Bamako, 1 Aug warned about “serious imminent risks” associated with handover to Malian army of UN mission (MINUSMA) camps in areas controlled by signatory armed groups. In following days, major clashes erupted between alliance of former rebel groups Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and military for first time since peace deal implementation. CMA alleged army and Russian paramilitary Wagner Group 4 Aug attacked CMA-controlled border post in Foyta locality (Timbuktu region) near Mauritania, killing two CMA elements; govt forces and CMA 11-12 Aug also clashed near MINUSMA camp in Ber (also Timbuktu region), leaving unclear number dead. MINUSMA 13 Aug accelerated withdrawal from Ber camp in light of security situation, completing it same day, and 16 Aug also left Goundam camp (Timbuktu). CMA 28-29 Aug accused army of launching airstrikes on CMA positions near Anefis town in Kidal region.

*Jihadist violence continued in centre and north.* Islamic State Sahel Province 3 Aug attacked army-escorted convoy in Essailal locality, Menaka region (north), killing at least six soldiers. Al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 8 Aug imposed blockade on Timbuktu city, creating food and aid shortages, to oppose Malian army's deployment in context of MINUSMA's withdrawal. In Bandiagara region (centre), suspected JNIM elements 18 Aug raided Yarou village, killing 23 people.

*In other important developments.* Bamako and Ouagadougou 1 Aug warned West African regional bloc (ECOWAS) against any military intervention in Niger, saying it would amount to declaration of war against Mali and Burkina Faso. After Niger 6 Aug closed its airspace, French flag carrier Air France next day suspended all flights to and from Bamako (and Ouagadougou) citing “geopolitical situation in the Sahel”. In escalating row, France and Mali 7-9 Aug stopped issuing visas to each other's nationals.

➡ ⚡ **Niger** West African regional bloc continued to threaten use of force to restore constitutional order; move could trigger major pushback and put Niger and wider region at risk of war.

*ECOWAS maintained threat of force to restore constitutional order.* Military junta 6 Aug closed Niger's airspace as West African regional bloc (ECOWAS) seven-day ultimatum to hand power back to elected President Bazoum expired. ECOWAS 10 Aug activated standby force for possible action against junta and 18 Aug reportedly set “D-Day” for military intervention. Regional bloc, which appears divided over course of action, 19 Aug sent delegation to Niger to press coup leader Gen. Tchiani and other junta figures for peaceful return to constitutional order.

*Coup leaders found common ground with counterparts in Sahel.* Military authorities in Bamako and Ouagadougou 1 Aug jointly said any ECOWAS military intervention in Niger would amount to declaration of war against Mali and Burkina

Faso. Senior junta leader, Gen. Salifou Mody, next day met with Malian and Burkinabe transitional presidents in their respective capitals. Coup leaders continued to capitalise on ill feelings toward former colonial power. Junta 25 Aug ordered French ambassador in Niamey, Sylvain Itte, to leave country within 48 hours; French President Macron 28 Aug said Itte would stay at his post, reportedly prompting junta in following days to order police to expel him.

*Junta proposed three-year transition to civilian rule.* Junta 7 Aug appointed former Finance Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine as interim PM, and 10 Aug announced 21-member interim govt with military officers in charge of six ministries, including defence and interior, and Bazoum's party holding no ministries. Gen. Tchiani 19 Aug said transition to civilian rule would "not go beyond three years"; also warned ECOWAS that security forces would "not shirk" from defending country. ECOWAS 21 Aug rejected three-year transition plan as "unacceptable".

*Jihadists launched deadliest attacks on military in months.* Possibly emboldened by political upheaval in Niamey, suspected jihadists 15 Aug ambushed military detachment near Koutougou town, Tillabery region (south west), killing 17 soldiers and wounding another 24. Another ambush 20 Aug killed 12 soldiers in Anzourou commune, also Tillabery, with military reporting "heavy losses" among assailants.

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## West Africa

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➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** **Death of former President Bédié created power vacuum in main opposition party, and Niger's junta recalled ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire to protest President Ouattara's firm stance against coup.**

*Veteran politician Bédié died, leaving massive void in his party.* Veteran politician and leader of Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), former President Henri Konan Bédié, 1 Aug died aged 89. President Ouattara next day declared ten days of national mourning, cancelling 7 Aug Independence Day celebrations. PDCI set to embark on fierce succession struggle one month before local elections set for 2 Sept, and two years before 2025 presidential contest, as Bédié kept strong control over party apparatus during his decades in charge, resisted generational change, and did not designate successor.

*Tensions rose between Abidjan and Niamey after coup in Niger.* Following extraordinary summit of West African regional bloc ECOWAS, Ouattara 10 Aug affirmed commitment to using all necessary means, including military force, to reinstate constitutional order in Niger; also said Côte d'Ivoire would send battalion of up to 1,100 troops as well as financial resources in case of ECOWAS Standby Force deployment. In response, junta in Niamey 14 Aug recalled Nigerien ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire (see Niger).

➡ **Guinea** **Tensions continued to run high between transitional authorities and political parties.**

*Opposition expressed concern over transition timeline.* Transitional President Col. Doumbouya early Aug amended electoral code by decree, enabling military governors to appoint local state representatives. Opposition immediately denounced attempt by junta to consolidate power. Notably, Edouard Zoutomou Kpoghomou,

leader of Union for Progress and Renewal political party, 7 Aug accused Col. Doumbouya's military govt of attempting to extend transition period beyond 24-month timeline agreed upon with West African regional bloc ECOWAS. Main opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) 17 Aug also reiterated opposition to future electoral processes being led by military govt.

*Political landscape reshaped itself in anticipation of future elections.* After 19 opposition parties late July announced creation of National Alliance for Change to serve as common front ahead of next elections, nine political parties in Upper Guinea region 13 Aug announced joining force. Former UN Special Representative for Central Africa, Guinean diplomat François Louncény Fall, 11 Aug announced his candidacy for president. UFDG 15 Aug said preparations for leader Cellou Dalein Diallo's highly anticipated return from exile still ongoing, with no fixed date in sight.

*In other important developments.* Delegation from Niger's junta 12 Aug visited Guinea and met with Col. Doumbouya to ask for "stronger support to face the challenges ahead", in view of ECOWAS threat of military intervention.

➡ **Nigeria Turmoil increased among rival jihadists in North East Zone, while military suffered deadly armed group attack in North Central Zone.**

*Jihadist violence continued to wreak havoc in Borno state, North East Zone.* Boko Haram fighters 12 Aug attacked military base near Konduga town, killing three soldiers, and later same day shot ten farmers dead in Maiwa village, 5km outside Borno state capital Maiduguri. Group 22 Aug also kidnapped over 40 women on their farms near Maiduguri-Mafa road in Jere area, released them three days later after state official reportedly paid ransom. Turmoil continued to increase between – and within – rival jihadist groups. Inter-ethnic clash among Boko Haram fighters 15 Aug reportedly left 82 dead in Kukawa area; crisis allegedly sparked by execution of seven fighters from Buduma tribe after they tried to surrender to govt troops. In what could amount to deadliest confrontation to date, Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province 18-19 Aug clashed near Marte town, allegedly resulting in death of over 100 combatants on both sides.

*Army suffered deadly armed group attack in North Central Zone.* Armed group 14 Aug ambushed soldiers near Kundu village in Zungeru area of Niger state (North Central); at least 36 soldiers killed in attack and subsequent crash of military medical evacuation helicopter. Domestic intelligence agency 16 Aug warned of imminent kidnapping-for-ransom attack on Abuja-Kaduna railway line. Military operations against criminal groups continued. Notably, security forces 10 Aug rescued ten people held hostage at Birnin Yero village, Igabi area of Kaduna state (North West).

*President Tinubu's economic policies faced opposition amid aggravated hardship.* Labour unions 2 Aug led marches across country to protest soaring cost of living notably since Tinubu removed fuel subsidy; labour union representatives later same day met with Tinubu and agreed to return to talks. Meanwhile, nearly three months after taking office, Tinubu 21 Aug swore in 45 ministers; bloated cabinet widely seen as contradictory to Tinubu's campaign promise of reducing governance costs.

*In other important developments.* Niger coup leaders 3 Aug announced withdrawing ambassador to Nigeria as West African regional bloc ECOWAS, presided over by Tinubu, threatened to use force to restore constitutional order (see Niger).

➡ **Senegal Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko continued hunger strike to protest detention, and electoral reform allowed previously sidelined political heavyweights to stand for election.**

On hunger strike since late July to protest his detention and dissolution of his PASTEF party, opposition leader Ousmane Sonko was admitted to hospital 6 Aug and to intensive care 16 Aug. PASTEF next day condemned “inhuman persecution” of Sonko. Almost 150 prominent figures, including former minister Serigne Diop, and President of Senegalese League for Human Rights, Alassane Seck, signed petition demanding Sonko’s release and reinstatement of PASTEF. Meanwhile, parliament 5 Aug passed electoral law revision effectively clearing two key opposition figures to run for president in Feb 2024: Khalifa Sall, former mayor of Dakar, and Karim Wade, son of former President Abdoulaye Wade.