

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Burundi Authorities continued to harass opposition while country's removal from UN Security Council agenda marked major victory for President Ndayishimiye.** Unidentified assailants 2 Dec killed two members of opposition party National Congress for Freedom (CNL) in Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province. Police 14 Dec arrested six CNL members in Mutimbuzi commune, Bujumbura Rural province on suspicion of supporting rebel group. In joint report on human rights violations, 15 civil society organisations 10 Dec recorded 821 arbitrary arrests, 368 extrajudicial killings, 182 torture cases and 59 enforced disappearances in 2020; report identified CNL members and ethnic Tutsis as main victims, and security forces and ruling party CNDD-FDD youth wing Imbonerakure as main perpetrators. Ndayishimiye 30 Dec said Burundian Tutsis are over-represented in international organisations, vowed to “purify the dirty water” in Burundi. Meanwhile, govt relations with international community thawed. UN Security Council 4 Dec removed Burundi from its agenda; thousands of ruling-party supporters 12 Dec celebrated move in capital Gitega, economic capital Bujumbura and Ngozi city. Ndayishimiye 7 Dec met EU Ambassador Claude Buchu in Bujumbura; first meeting between EU and Burundian head of state since EU suspended financial cooperation with govt in 2016. FM Albert Shingiro 10-11 Dec also met Buchu alongside Belgian, French, German and Dutch ambassadors in Bujumbura to discuss normalisation of relations with EU. Former President Buyoya 18 Dec died of COVID-19 in France; Buyoya had resigned as African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel late Nov after Supreme Court in Oct sentenced him in absentia to life imprisonment for involvement in murder of Hutu President Ndadaye in 1993. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 15 Dec expressed concern about “violation of fundamental rights” of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, including cases of forced eviction.

➔ **Cameroon Separatists disrupted regional elections in Anglophone regions, while jihadists continued to target civilians in Far North.** President Biya's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) won nine of ten regional councils in 6 Dec elections; CPDM's ally National Union for Democracy won remaining council; main opposition parties, Maurice Kamto's Cameroon Renaissance Movement and John Fru Ndi's Social Democratic Front, boycotted vote. Security forces 8 Dec lifted months-long blockade of Kamto's home in capital Yaoundé. Ahead of vote, Anglophone separatists 4 Dec imposed three-day ghost town in North West and South West regions. On voting day, suspected separatists 6 Dec killed municipal councillor in Alabukam village and wounded two men near Akum village, both North West. Also in North West, suspected separatists 12 Dec kidnapped Kedjom Ketinguh village chief, released him three days later after ransom payment; armed forces 13 Dec reportedly killed community leader in Mukuru village, Wum commune, and 26 Dec reportedly killed two patients in Tubah District Hospital. In South West region, soldiers 12 Dec reportedly killed two civilians in Eyumojock subdivision, and 21 Dec raided two villages in Mbonge commune, killing six. Suspected separatists 13 Dec kidnapped three village chiefs in

regional capital Buea, later killed one and released two. Army and separatists 22 Dec exchanged fire in Tombel town, leaving civilian dead. UN Special Envoy for Central Africa Louceny Fall 9 Dec briefed UN Security Council on Anglophone conflict; U.S. called Cameroon greatest concern in region with 6.2mn in need of humanitarian assistance, 2.3mn more than in early 2020. Boko Haram (BH) attacks continued in Far North. In Mayo-Sava division, BH overnight 9-10 Dec attacked Gakara village, injuring two soldiers; night of 15-16 Dec killed two civilians in Gouzoudou locality. In Mayo-Tsanaga division, BH 2 Dec killed three civilians in Mayo-Moskota town; 28 Dec killed civilian and injured several others in Ouzal village. In Logone-et-Chari division, BH overnight 23-24 Dec killed 12 civilians in Darak and Blangoua towns. In Adamawa region in centre, Central African Republic-based armed group Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation (3R) 26 Dec reportedly kidnapped three Cameroonian gendarmes.

↓ 🇨🇦 **Central African Republic** **Deadly fighting involving armed groups allied to former President Bozizé broke out ahead of 27 Dec general elections; electoral results could spark escalation in Jan.** After months of uncertainty over presidential candidacy of former President Bozizé, Constitutional Court 3 Dec rejected his application, citing international arrest warrant and UN sanctions against him; Bozizé's party same day denounced court ruling. Coalition of six armed groups, all signatories to Feb 2019 peace agreement and including some supporting Bozizé, 15 Dec announced mobilisation against govt and electoral process; 18-19 Dec took over parts of Lobaye, Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana Gribizi and Ombella M'Poko prefectures in west, centre and south, blocking main supply routes to Bangui, and clashing with army and UN peacekeeping force (MINUSCA) notably around cities of Bossombele (Ombella M'Poko), Bossemptele (Ouham-Pendé) and Bambari (Ouaka); death toll unknown; 1,500 civilians reportedly fled to neighbouring Cameroon 18-23 Dec. UN 18 Dec condemned violence and called on "all actors to urgently cease hostile actions". Govt next day said Bozizé was behind new armed coalition and accused him of "coup attempt". At govt's request, Russia and Rwanda 20-21 Dec deployed hundreds of troops notably around Lobaye's capital Mbaiki. Unidentified assailants 25 Dec killed three MINUSCA troops in Dekoa town, Kémo prefecture (centre). On election day, suspected armed group members set election material on fire in Ouham-Pendé prefecture and fired shots in Ouaka, Haute-Kotto and Nana-Mambéré prefectures; also threatened voters and election officials across country. Unidentified assailants next day attacked public bus in Grimari city, Ouaka prefecture, reportedly killing several civilians including Médecins sans Frontières worker. Electoral commission 28 Dec said over 14% of polling stations were closed due to insecurity across country. Meanwhile, clashes between armed groups erupted in north east: ethnic Goula ex-Seleka group and ethnic Arab Missirias militia from neighbouring Sudan 1 Dec clashed in Boromata town, Vakaga prefecture, leaving 35 Arab Missirias and four Goula dead; army and MINUSCA immediately sent troops to patrol town.

↓ 🇨🇩 **Chad** **Intercommunal violence flared up in several regions leaving dozens dead, while govt continued to repress opposition amid COVID-19 restrictions.** Farmer-herder clashes 10 Dec killed at least 12 in Doubarid locality, Ouaddai province (east). Land dispute between ethnic Bulala and Arab communities 12 Dec escalated into brawl in Achiguek village, Batha East province (centre), leaving at least 25 dead. Herder-farmer clashes overnight 13-14 Dec also reportedly left nine

dead in Béré town, Tandjilé province (south); angry mob next day ransacked *préfet's* residence and vandalised police vehicles in Béré, leaving another two dead. Meanwhile, President Déby's constitutional revision suffered setback. Parliament 3 Dec adopted constitutional reform bill providing that head of Senate – and not VP, personally appointed by president, as favoured by Déby – would take over as interim president in case of presidential vacancy or inability; Déby 14 Dec passed text into law. Court 11 Dec acquitted and released human rights activist Alain Kemba Didah and two co-defendants of “public order offenses” and “acts of rebellion” including breaching COVID-19-related restrictions; trio was arrested late Nov after organising opposition's “citizens' forum” in capital N'Djamena. Govt 11 Dec suspended opposition Parti Réformiste for three months after party chairman Yacine Abdramane Sakine 7 Dec said military was “held hostage by a small minority [...] to keep Déby's corrupt regime in power”. Members of opposition party Les Transformateurs 12 and 23 Dec gathered in N'Djamena to call for greater political freedom; police used tear gas to disperse them, citing COVID-19 regulations, leaving at least three injured. Amid small rise in COVID-19 cases, Déby 31 Dec banned all movement in and out of N'Djamena (including through airport) and all but essential movements within city for one week.

↓ **DR Congo** In major show of force and after weeks of political tensions, President Tshisekedi announced end of ruling coalition; meanwhile armed group attacks continued in eastern provinces.

President Tshisekedi 6 Dec announced end of ruling coalition with former President Kabila's Common Front for Congo (FCC), vowed to seek new majority in parliament. Brawl next day erupted in parliament between pro-Tshisekedi and pro-Kabila MPs who rejected move as unconstitutional, leaving three injured, while police used tear gas to disperse Tshisekedi's supporters gathered outside parliament. MPs 10 Dec voted to remove Kabila's ally Jeannine Mabunda as head of National Assembly, first indication that Tshisekedi has managed to shift balance of power in his favour in FCC-dominated assembly. Immediately after vote, Industry Minister and FCC member Julien Paluku defected to Tshisekedi, urged fellow FCC member, PM Ilunga Ilunkamba, to resign to avoid no-confidence vote. Tshisekedi 31 Dec tasked Senator and FCC defector Bahati Lukwebo with identifying new majority. Tshisekedi also pursued efforts to reinforce his grip on army and police, meeting with several senior security officials throughout month. Meanwhile, violence continued in east. In North Kivu province's Beni territory, suspected armed group Allied Democratic Forces 6-22 Dec killed at least 40 civilians in multiple attacks, including at least 21 night of 11-12 Dec in Bolema area, Rwenzori sector. Unidentified gunmen 6 Dec killed eight civilians in North Kivu's capital Goma. In Ituri province's Djugu territory, suspected armed group Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) 7 Dec killed five civilians in Baijate village; CODECO 20 Dec clashed with armed forces in Muvramu village, leaving two civilians and one CODECO combatant dead; in joint attack, CODECO and Patriotic and Integrationist Front of Congo (FPIC) overnight 21-22 Dec killed three in Gbalana village. Elsewhere in Ituri, armed forces 16 Dec clashed with FPIC in Komanda town, Irumu territory, leaving eight militiamen and one soldier dead. In Tanganyika province, ethnic Twa militia 21 Dec killed one and injured several civilians in Kintu locality. UN Security Council 18 Dec renewed UN mission (MONUSCO) mandate for one year.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea Reports of Eritrean involvement in fighting in neighbouring Ethiopia's regional state of Tigray kept emerging.** As fighting continued between forces of Ethiopia's federal govt and Tigray (see Ethiopia), Tigray President Debretsion Gebremichael 4 Dec again accused Asmara of supporting Addis Ababa's military offensive, saying that "Eritrean soldiers are everywhere"; Eritrean FM Osman Saleh next day denied involvement, denounced "propaganda." Evidence of Eritrean soldiers' presence and involvement in hostilities in Tigray, including in state capital Mekelle, also reported by aid workers, UN and EU officials. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi 11 Dec said UN refugee agency had received "an overwhelming number of disturbing reports of Eritrean refugees in Tigray being killed, abducted and forcibly returned to Eritrea". Eritrean delegation led by Saleh and presidential adviser Yemane Gebreab 8 Dec travelled to Sudan and met with Sovereign Council head Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to discuss Ethiopia-Tigray conflict and impact on regional stability. Amid Sudan's efforts to reclaim territories on border between Sudan's Al-Qadarif state and Ethiopia's Amhara region, Eritrea late Dec reportedly moved troops toward its border with Sudan.

↓ **Ethiopia Violence erupted in disputed border area with Sudan, deadly fighting continued in Tigray region and intercommunal clashes killed hundreds in Benishangul-Gumuz region.** Sudanese military early Dec reclaimed territory in disputed Al-Fashqa area on border between Ethiopia's Amhara region and Sudan's Al-Qadarif state. Ethiopian gunmen 15 Dec killed at least four Sudanese troops in Al-Fashqa. Border demarcation talks between Sudan and Ethiopia 22-23 Dec failed to yield agreement. In following days, Sudan allegedly made further territorial gains in Al-Fashqa and Al-Quraisha border regions, 31 Dec said its forces had taken control over all border territory it accuses Ethiopia of encroaching upon. Ethiopia 29 Dec warned Sudan of counter-offensive if it "does not stop expanding into Ethiopian territories". Despite PM Abiy declaring victory in Nov, fighting continued between Tigray's and federal govt's forces. Tigray President and former ruling party Tigray People's Liberation Front leader Debretsion Gebremichael 4 Dec again accused neighbouring Eritrea of supporting federal govt's military offensive in Tigray (see Eritrea). UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet 9 Dec expressed concern over "ethnic profiling" and "hate speech" against ethnic Tigrayans in rest of country. Tigray's transitional govt – established by federal parliament's upper house in Nov – took office 13 Dec. In Benishangul-Gumuz region in north west, suspected members of armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) 8 Dec killed at least ten ethnic Amhara civilians in Metekel zone; attack by suspected ethnic Gumuz gunmen 23 Dec killed at least 207 mostly Amhara and Shinasha civilians and displaced more than 40,000 in Metekel. In Oromia region in centre, suspected OLA combatants mid-Dec killed at least 19 mostly ethnic Amhara civilians in Horo Guduru Wellega and West Wellega zones; local authorities 16 Dec claimed security operations had killed some 400 OLA combatants in recent weeks. Clashes in border area between Afar and Somali regions late Dec reportedly left several dozen dead. Electoral board 25 Dec scheduled legislative and regional elections for 5 June 2021; said it would announce poll date for Tigray later on.

➔ **Kenya** **Tensions rose with Somalia, with both countries deploying troops to shared border, while Al-Shabaab intensified attacks in north and east.** President Kenyatta mid-Dec received President Bihi of Somalia's breakaway state Somaliland in capital Nairobi; counterparts announced that Kenya would open consulate in Somaliland's capital and that Somaliland would upgrade its liaison office in Nairobi by March; during Bihi's visit, Somalia 15 Dec cut diplomatic relations with Kenya for "constantly interfering" in its internal affairs. In following days, both Kenya and Somalia reportedly deployed forces along common border to Mandera county and Gedo region respectively. Somalia 19 Dec accused Kenya of hosting and arming Somali militia to launch cross-border attacks and said it would take "all necessary steps" to protect its "territorial integrity". Kenyatta and Somalia President Farmajo 20 Dec met during summit of regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Djibouti 25 Dec deployed fact-finding mission to assess situation at Somalia-Kenya border. In Garissa county in east, Al-Shabaab 2 Dec attacked Amuma police station, injuring police officer. In Wajir county in north east, Al-Shabaab 18 Dec abducted local official in Gumarey sub-location and later beheaded him. In Lamu county in east, Al-Shabaab 20 Dec ambushed police escort vehicle on Lamu-Gamba road, no casualties reported; security forces 27 Dec shot and killed seven Al-Shabaab militants in Boni forest. In Mandera county in north east, Al-Shabaab 29 Dec ambushed ambulance, killing civilian. In border area between Garissa and Isiolo counties, clashes between ethnic Borana and Somali 1 Dec left seven dead. In Mombasa county in south, police 1 Dec arrested 91 suspected members of separatist Mombasa Republican Council in Mirironi village. Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga's signature campaign to trigger referendum on constitutional reform concluded 4 Dec; electoral commission 30 Dec started to verify signatures.

➔ *** Somalia** **Electoral disputes delayed Dec legislative polls and threatened to derail Feb presidential election; tensions rose with Kenya.** Federal electoral commission – whose members opposition considers to be loyalists of President Farmajo – 5 Dec appointed chairperson, prompting opposition bloc of 14 presidential candidates to appoint parallel electoral body. Opposition protests 15 Dec resulted in clashes with security forces, reportedly leaving several injured in capital Mogadishu. After missing 10 Dec deadline for conclusion of federal parliament's upper house election – due to Jubaland and Puntland's refusal to appoint regional electoral commissions – federal electoral commission 23 Dec postponed upper house poll to late Dec-early Jan and said selection of delegates tasked with electing lower house would begin 7 Jan; opposition bloc of presidential candidates same day rejected new timetable; federal electoral commission 29 Dec again postponed upper house poll early to mid-Jan. Mandate of federal parliament expired 27 Dec. Somalia 15 Dec cut diplomatic ties with Kenya for "constantly interfering" in its internal affairs; move coincided with Somaliland President Bihi's visit to Kenya during which he and Kenyan President Kenyatta announced that Kenya would open consulate in Somaliland's capital and that Somaliland would upgrade its liaison office in Kenya by March. In subsequent days, both Somalia and Kenya reportedly deployed troops to their shared border. Mogadishu 19 Dec accused Kenya of hosting and arming Somali militia to launch cross-border attacks and said it would take "all necessary steps" to protect its "territorial integrity". Farmajo and Kenyatta 20 Dec met during summit of regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Mogadishu reportedly asked IGAD to establish

commission to look into its complaints, including arming of Somali militia. Djibouti 25 Dec deployed fact-finding mission to assess situation at Somalia-Kenya border. In Hirshabelle state, clan militia opposed to last month's state presidential election outcome 4 Dec clashed with federal govt forces in Hiraan regional capital Beledweyne, leaving at least two injured. Al-Shabaab continued to launch deadly attacks. Notably, Al-Shabaab suicide bombing 18 Dec killed 21, mostly civilians, in Mudug region's capital Galkayo. U.S. 4 Dec announced it would "reposition" most of its troops in Somalia to neighbouring countries by early 2021.

➔ **Somaliland Somaliland and Kenya announced they would upgrade diplomatic ties.** President Bihi and Kenyan President Kenyatta mid-Dec met in Kenya, announced that Kenya would open consulate in capital Hargeisa and that Somaliland would "upgrade" its liaison office in Kenyan capital Nairobi by March. During Bihi's visit, Somalia – which considers Somaliland as one of its member states – cut diplomatic relations with Kenya, accusing it of meddling in its internal affairs (see Kenya, Somalia). Bihi 19 Dec received Malawi FM, discussed ways to deepen bilateral relations. Bihi and Djibouti President Guelleh 29 Dec announced reopening of their shared border after six-year closure. Registration of voters for parliamentary and local elections, which have been postponed several times since 2019 and are now planned for May, continued throughout month. In Sanaag region in east, Al-Shabaab militants 10 Dec abducted several people in Milxo village; 21 Dec released them.

➔ **South Sudan Govt and former rebel opposition groups agreed to end stalemate over formation of state and county govts in all but one state; meanwhile intercommunal violence continued.** Govt and former rebel opposition groups 9 Dec agreed to move forward with formation of state and county govts, except in contested Upper Nile state, as well as with reconstitution of national legislature; parties agreed to organise peace and reconciliation conference to bring together Upper Nile communities prior to appointment of state governor, over which President Salva Kiir and former rebel leader turned VP Riek Machar have been at odds since June; Machar mid-Dec, however, indefinitely postponed conference. Kiir 30 Dec appointed six out of ten deputy state governors. In bid to reassert control over Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO), Machar 1-5 Dec organised national party conference; dissent has been mounting in SPLA-IO's ranks over slow implementation of Sept 2018 peace agreement. Regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development 20 Dec formally confirmed there are no travel restrictions on Machar. Govt and holdout rebel group National Salvation Front early Dec held talks in Italy's capital Rome but failed to reach breakthrough on draft ten-point Declaration of Principles aimed at guiding future political negotiations. In Central Equatoria state in south, Kiir's forces and SPLA-IO clashed several times throughout month in Kajo-Keji county. In Western Equatoria state in south, unidentified gunmen 16 Dec reportedly attacked SPLA-IO in Mvolo county. In Upper Nile state in east, unidentified gunmen mid-Dec reportedly attacked SPLA-IO in Maban county. Meanwhile, intercommunal violence persisted across country. In Central Equatoria state, cattle-related violence killed at least 43 throughout month in Terekeka and Lainya counties. In Lakes state in centre, cattle raids and intercommunal violence throughout month killed at least 29 in Yirol east, Cueibet and Awerial counties. In Warrap state, also in centre, intercommunal clashes mid-Dec left seven dead in Tonj North county.

↓ **Sudan** **Military clashed with Ethiopian forces in disputed border region and reclaimed large swathes of territory.** Sudan's military early Dec reclaimed territory in disputed Al-Fashqa area on border between Sudan's Al-Qadarif state and Ethiopia's Amhara region. Ethiopian gunmen 15 Dec killed at least four Sudanese troops and wounded 20 in Al-Fashqa. Sudan subsequently deployed reinforcements and seized more land in area. Following unsuccessful talks 22-23 Dec between Sudan and Ethiopia to demarcate border, Sudan made further territorial gains in Al-Fashqa and Al-Qureisha border regions. Addis Ababa 29 Dec warned Sudan of counter-offensive if it "does not stop expanding into Ethiopian territories". Khartoum 31 Dec said its forces had taken control over all border territory it accuses Ethiopia of encroaching upon. In Central and South Darfur states, clashes over gold mining territory between rival factions of holdout rebel group Sudan Liberation Movement/Army led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW) and fighting with govt troops early Dec displaced over 27,000 and left two children dead. In South Darfur state, intercommunal clashes late Dec killed at least 25 in several areas. UN Security Council 22 Dec voted to end mandate of UN-AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID) on 31 Dec. On second anniversary of uprising that led to ouster of former President Bashir, thousands 19 Dec demonstrated in capital Khartoum and across country, demanding acceleration of democratic reforms. Also in Khartoum, thousands 29 Dec attended funeral of individual reportedly tortured to death mid-Dec while in paramilitary Rapid Support Forces custody. U.S. 14 Dec formally removed Sudan's State Sponsor of Terrorism designation. Ethiopia and Sudan 13 Dec agreed to resume negotiations on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Russia 1 Dec signed agreement with Sudan to establish naval base on Sudan's Red Sea coast.

➔ **Tanzania** **Opposition party Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT) formed unity govt with ruling party on semi-autonomous Zanzibar archipelago.** President Magufuli, who was re-elected in late Oct, 5 Dec unveiled cabinet consisting of 23 ministers and 23 deputy ministers. On semi-autonomous Zanzibar archipelago, ACT 6 Dec agreed to form unity govt with ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party; Zanzibar's President Hussein Mwinyi same day appointed ACT's national chairman Seif Sharif Hamad as Zanzibar's first VP; Hamad sworn in 8 Dec. ACT and other opposition party Civic United Front 20 Dec accused police of killing ACT official and wounding several other people previous day during security operation in Kibutuka village, Lindi region in south; regional police commander 21 Dec denied allegations. VP Samia Suluhu 14 Dec attended Southern Africa regional bloc SADC Defence and Security Troika in Mozambique's capital Maputo to discuss Islamist insurgency in neighbouring country; extraordinary summit of SADC heads of state and govt scheduled for Jan (see Mozambique).

➔ 🌐* **Uganda** **Political tensions ran high ahead of 14 Jan general elections, and violent crackdown on opposition could further escalate in coming weeks.** Police 1 Dec fired tear gas and rubber bullets at opposition National Unity Platform (NUP) leader and presidential hopeful Bobi Wine and his supporters in Kayunga district, leaving several injured; security forces same day blocked Wine and supporters on their way to campaign venue in neighbouring Jinja district, reportedly firing live bullets at Wine's car. Ruling party National Resistance Movement (NRM) supporters 4 Dec clashed with opposition Democratic Party (DP) supporters in Kyotera district; police reportedly intervened, killing DP supporter and injuring at least two others. Police 4 and 27 Dec arrested Forum for Democratic

Change presidential candidate Patrick Amuriat Oboi for allegedly disobeying police orders in Bushenyi district and violating COVID-19-related campaign ban in Jinja district, respectively. Security forces 27 Dec clashed with Wine and his supporters in Masaka district, leaving Wine's bodyguard dead and at least two journalists injured. Police 30 Dec arrested Wine in Kalangala district on grounds of COVID-19-related campaign ban, sparking protests; police reportedly fired tear gas to disperse crowd. Govt early Dec froze bank accounts of at least four NGOs involved in election-monitoring activities; after 9 Dec asked U.S.-based technology company Google to shut down 14 YouTube channels for allegedly inciting riots, Google representative 16 Dec said removal of channels would require court order. Uganda Media Council 10 Dec directed all journalists to reapply for accreditation in order "to sanitise the industry", prompting outcry from Uganda Editors' Guild and African Centre for Media Excellence. President Museveni 16 Dec appointed his son Lieutenant General Muhoozi Kainerugaba to head of Special Forces Command. Police 22 Dec arrested prominent human rights lawyer and activist Nicholas Opiyo in Kampala on suspicions of money laundering along with three other lawyers and NUP official; High Court 30 Dec released Opiyo on bail. UN human rights experts 29 Dec urged govt to curb "election-related violence" and "crackdown" on political opponents and activists.

Southern Africa

↓ **Mozambique** **Islamist insurgents moved closer to liquefied natural gas (LNG) site in far north, forcing international oil company to evacuate staff.** In far north Cabo Delgado province, Islamist insurgents increasingly targeted strategic towns, moving toward Afungi peninsula where LNG project is located. In Palma district, Islamist insurgents 7 Dec attacked Mute town, 20km from LNG site, and clashed with security forces, reportedly killing soldier; insurgents next day moved to Nguéo town, 2km north of Mute, forcing unknown number of civilians to flee to Palma town; 29 Dec killed five in Olumbe and Monjane villages few kilometres away from LNG site, and two soldiers in ambush on Monjane-Patacua axis on edge of Afungi peninsula. Following attacks, French oil and gas company Total late Dec started to evacuate staff from LNG facility. In neighbouring Nangade district, insurgents 8 Dec ambushed vehicle near Pundanhar town on Palma-Nangade axis, killing civilian, kidnapping two others and temporarily closing route to Palma; 12 Dec killed at least 14 civilians in several villages. In Macomia district, insurgents 10 Dec kidnapped unspecified number of fishermen in Mucojo town, released them few days later; next day killed at least four in Chai area. Southern African Development Community (SADC) Defence and Security Troika 14 Dec met with President Nyusi and Tanzania's President Magufuli in capital Maputo to discuss security situation in Cabo Delgado; extraordinary summit of SADC heads of state and govt scheduled for 21 Jan. Meanwhile, number two of opposition Renamo party's armed dissident faction Renamo Military Junta (JMR), Joao Machava, 6 Dec demobilised in Mabote district, Inhambane province (south). JMR leader Mariano Nhongo 11 Dec accused security forces of kidnapping six of his family members in past few days in Gondola district, Manica province (west); 23 Dec announced unilateral ceasefire, promised to negotiate with govt. Elsewhere in Manica province, armed individuals dressed in police uniforms 13 Dec kidnapped former Renamo party MP Sofrimento Matequenha from his home in provincial capital Chimoio; police same day denied abduction; Matequenha's body found 24 Dec in Pindanganga village, 60km north east of Chimoio.

➔ **Zimbabwe** **Authorities continued to harass govt critics and opposition, and political parties held contested internal elections.** Police 4 Dec detained Tendai Biti, VP of Nelson Chamisa's faction of main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-A), on charges of assault; Biti released on bail next day; opening of trial set for 18 Jan. Authorities 14 Dec arrested mayor of capital Harare and prominent MDC-A official Jacob Mafume on allegations of witness tampering; court 17 Dec denied him bail; Mafume was previously arrested 25 Nov on corruption charges and granted bail 8 Dec. Govt 28 Dec suspended Mafume, deputy mayor Luckson Mukunguma and four other councillors on allegations of incompetence and misconduct of duty. High Court 15 Dec overturned magistrate's Aug ruling barring prominent human rights lawyer from representing investigative journalist Hopewell Chin'ono. Security forces 24 Dec arrested National Patriotic Front member and former pro-ruling party ZANU-PF Chipangano gang leader Jim Kunaka in Harare over allegations of inciting violence in run-up to 31 July anti-corruption protests; judge 29 Dec denied him bail. In Thokozani Khupe's faction of MDC (MDC-T) extraordinary congress in Harare 27 Dec, Douglas Mwonzora was elected MDC-T leader; Khupe immediately alleged fraud, threatening to file

Supreme Court application seeking annulment of results. Tensions subsided after Mwonozora 29-30 Dec appointed Khupe and other rival candidates Morgan Komichi and Elias Mudzuri to senior executive positions. ZANU-PF 5-6 Dec held district coordinating committee (DCC) elections in eight provinces; DCCs had been dissolved in 2012. ZANU-PF elections reportedly marred by fraud and violence, prompting several reruns; notably, riots erupted in Mutare city as party members burned ballot boxes amid allegations of vote-rigging and buying.

Sahel

➔ **Burkina Faso** **Jihadist violence persisted mainly in northern regions, and President Kaboré was sworn in for second term.** In Sahel region in north, suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) militants 7 Dec kidnapped resident in Beldiabe town, Oudalan province. Suspected jihadists 15 Dec also ambushed army patrol in Mansila commune, Yagha province, killing soldier; subsequent clashes reportedly left 13 attackers dead. In Centre North region, security forces 15 Dec killed two suspected jihadists in Silmangue village, Namentenga province. Clashes between volunteers fighting alongside security forces (VDPs) and suspected jihadists 19 Dec reportedly left several jihadists dead and one VDP injured near Dablo town, Sanmatenga province. Situation remained fragile in East region: suspected al-Qaeda-linked Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) combatants 1 Dec kidnapped municipal councillor in Boula village, Gagna province. Policeman 9 Dec also shot dead farmer at checkpoint near Tanghin-Dassouri city in Centre region's Kadiogo province; in response, protesters same day took to streets in Tanghin-Dassouri, briefly occupying unmanned police station and blocking road. Meanwhile, independent body National Human Rights Commission 7 Dec reported 647 incidents around 22 Nov general elections, which impeded human rights including freedom of movement, free speech and access to education. Constitutional Council 18 Dec confirmed re-election of President Kaboré, who was sworn in 28 Dec; Kaboré 30 Dec dissolved govt.

➔ **Mali** **Violence continued unabated in centre, infighting between rival jihadist groups persisted in north, and tensions surrounded formation of interim legislative body.** Jihadist and intercommunal violence continued in centre. Jihadist group Katiba Macina 9 Dec attacked Dogon militia Dana Ambassagou in Songho area, Mopti region, killing five militiamen. Explosive device 28 Dec killed three French soldiers in Hombori area, also Mopti region; al-Qaeda-linked Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) later claimed responsibility. In neighbouring Ségou region, High Islamic Council early Dec led mediation between jihadists and ethnic Bambara hunters around Farabougou village, which has been under jihadist siege since Oct; jihadists insisted on Bambara hunters' disarmament and compliance with Sharia law; EU Commission 2 Dec reported conflict around Farabougou had displaced around 17,000 people. In northern Timbuktu region, infighting between JNIM and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) 12 Dec left at least 15 ISGS and five JNIM combatants dead near N'Daki village. Also in north, airstrikes by French Operation Barkhane 1 Dec killed unspecified number of JNIM combatants on Ansongo-Ménaka axis, and 10 Dec reportedly killed six JNIM militants in Diay area, Timbuktu region. Interim govt 3 Dec published list of 121 members of newly formed legislative body National

Transitional Council (CNT). Coalition of opposition and civil society groups (M5-RFP) next day announced boycott of CNT over lack of power sharing, said interim govt violated constitution and transition charter by unilaterally appointing members instead of letting political parties and social groupings select their representatives; some actors however supported and joined CNT, including members of M5-RFP and former PM Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga. CNT 5 Dec elected Colonel Malick Diaw, VP of military junta's governing body, as CNT president. Public prosecutor's office 31 Dec reportedly charged six public figures, including former PM Boubou Cissé, with "coup attempt" over reported allegations that they plotted to "destabilise" transitional institutions. Main opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé 25 Dec died of COVID-19 in France; Cissé was released in Oct after being held hostage for six months by jihadist militants.

↓ **Niger** **Ahead of 27 Dec general elections, jihadists launched one of deadliest attacks on civilians in years, leaving dozens killed.** In Diffa region (south east), Boko Haram (BH) faction led by Abubakar Shekau (JAS) 12 Dec launched one of deadliest attacks on local population in years in Toumour village, killing at least 27 civilians and wounding dozens more. Earlier in month in Diffa, BH splinter group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) combatants 11 Dec stormed domicile of canton chief in Chetimari village, leaving civilian dead; suspected jihadists same day raided Kindjandi town, leaving civilian dead. Jihadists also maintained attacks against security forces in Tillabery region (south west). Notably, suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) combatants 1 Dec killed soldier near Banizoumbou village, Filingué department; suspected al-Qaeda-linked Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) combatants 4 Dec killed two forest guards and wounded three soldiers near La Tapoa town, Say department; clashes between suspected jihadists and security forces 28 Dec left seven soldiers and 11 jihadists dead in Taroun area, Ouallam department. Also in Tillabery, security forces early Dec reportedly killed several Fulani civilians suspected of supporting jihadists in Abala area, Filingué department, and Banibangou area, Ouallam department, while residents in Mogodyougou town, Ouallam department, 8 Dec killed two suspected ISGS combatants. In neighbouring Dosso region, suspected ISGS combatants 3 Dec killed civilian in Rouda Peulh village, Dogon Doutchi department, sparking concerns over ISGS's expansion southward from Tillabery region. Meanwhile, ahead of 27 Dec general elections, presidential candidates Salou Djibo and Seini Oumarou 16 Dec reiterated doubts over ruling-party candidate Mohamed Bazoum's nationality, thereby questioning his eligibility. Opposition leader Hama Amadou – barred from running for president by Constitutional Court in Nov – 22 Dec called on supporters to vote for former President Mahamane Ousmane. Vote held 27 Dec without major incidents.

West Africa

↑ **Côte d'Ivoire** **Amid lull in post-election violence, President Ouattara took oath for controversial third term and opened dialogue with opposition.** Opposition Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) leader and de facto opposition spokesperson Henri Konan Bédié 9 Dec dissolved National Transitional Council, created after Oct presidential election with view to forming transitional govt, called for national dialogue. During swearing-in ceremony,

Ouattara 14 Dec mandated PM Hamed Bakayoko to resume dialogue with opposition, with stated aim to find consensus on reform of electoral commission ahead of 2021 legislative elections. Ouattara next day appointed PDCI dissident and presidential candidate in Oct election, Kouadio Konan Bertin, as national reconciliation minister. Opposition boycotted and sharply criticised inauguration: Bédié 7 Dec decried it as “non-event”, while exiled opposition figure, former PM Guillaume Soro, 13 Dec denounced “illegal and illegitimate” ceremony. Govt and opposition representatives, including Bédié, 21 Dec met in economic capital Abidjan, 29 Dec agreed to hold legislative elections in March 2021; disagreements persisted, however, on release of detained and return of exiled opposition leaders, and reform of electoral commission; political dialogue set to resume mid-Jan. Authorities 30 Dec released and placed under judicial supervision opposition leader and presidential candidate in Oct election Pascal Affi N’Guessan, in detention since early Nov on terrorism charges. Meanwhile, NGO Human Rights Watch 2 Dec urged authorities to “investigate the killing of more than 50 people” around Oct presidential election and stop “targeting opposition members through a flawed legal process”. Govt 4 Dec handed diplomatic and ordinary passports to former President Gbagbo, currently in Belgium following his 2019 acquittal of crimes against humanity by International Criminal Court (ICC), 9 Dec said Gbagbo should await end of ICC proceedings before returning to Côte d’Ivoire. Gbagbo’s wing of Ivorian Popular Front party 23 Dec announced end of its ten-year boycott of national elections, said party would take part in 2021 legislative elections.

➔ **Guinea President Condé was sworn in for controversial third term, and intercommunal violence erupted in south east.** Condé 15 Dec took presidential oath for third term, called for unity and end to violence. Opposition remained divided and continued to lose momentum. Main opposition leader and presidential runner-up Cellou Dalein Diallo boycotted swearing-in ceremony and denounced it as “sham”, while several other opposition figures attended. Coalition of opposition parties and civil society groups National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC), at forefront of mobilisation against third term since 2019, same day failed to mobilise supporters for protest in capital Conakry against Condé’s alleged “constitutional coup”. Territorial administration and decentralisation Minister Bouréma Condé 11 Dec warned that govt would not tolerate any “breach of the peace”. Authorities 30 Dec reportedly prevented Diallo from leaving country to attend funeral of late Malian opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé. Meanwhile, international community increased pressure on govt to address human rights violations by security forces and stop muzzling opposition. U.S. embassy in Guinea 11 Dec urged authorities to build “more democratic society”. NGO Human Rights Watch 14 Dec called on govt to stop “relentless crackdown” on opposition, and NGO Amnesty International next day urged govt to investigate killings of opposition protesters and others around Oct presidential election. EU Commission 19 Dec called for independent investigation into 17 Dec death in custody of opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) youth leader, Roger Bamba, and release of all political prisoners. Intercommunal violence erupted in Macenta city (south east): ethnic Toma and Manian residents 26-27 Dec clashed over control of cheftaincy, reportedly leaving over 20 dead and dozens more wounded.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** **Authorities issued international arrest warrant against opposition leader and intercommunal violence broke out near capital Bissau.** Attorney General's Office 18 Dec said it had issued international arrest warrant against runner-up in 2019 presidential election and leader of main opposition African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Domingos Simões Pereira, without elaborating on charges against him; Pereira, who went into exile in Portugal in early 2020, had early Dec announced his intention to resume political activity in Guinea-Bissau. UN mission Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) ended 31 Dec; UNIOGBIS Head Rosine Sori-Coulibaly mid-Dec said UN would continue to guarantee safety of former PM Aristides Gomes, who took refuge in UN mission headquarters in early 2020. Meanwhile, President Embaló 16 Dec threatened to dissolve National Assembly and call for early legislative elections, due to boycott by PAIGC deputies of parliamentary session on 2021 budget. Intercommunal violence erupted near Bissau: ethnic Yunkun and Thun communities 29 Dec clashed over land dispute in Nhoma town, 25km north of Bissau, leaving at least four dead and several wounded.

➡ **Nigeria** **Jihadist and criminal violence continued in north east and north west, while authorities came under international scrutiny.** Boko Haram (BH) factions continued to launch attacks in north-eastern Borno state despite ongoing military operations. BH combatants 7-30 Dec killed at least 24 security personnel, one civilian and abducted at least 38 people including two aid workers in Damboa, Konduga, Jakana, Mafa and Jere areas. Army 6-8 Dec killed 13 combatants apparently from BH faction led by Abubakar Shekau (JAS) in Magumeri, Bama and Gwoza areas; airstrikes 11 Dec killed "several" JAS combatants in Gwoza area; army next day repelled attack in Askira-Uba area by same faction, killing over 20 combatants. Suspected JAS suicide attack 19 Dec killed three civilians in Konduga town. BH 24 Dec killed 11 civilians in Pemi village. Armed group violence and abductions continued in north west, particularly Katsina state: gunmen 11 Dec stormed secondary school in Kankara town and abducted over 300 schoolboys; govt and local security officials immediately blamed attack on criminal groups but Shekau 15 Dec claimed responsibility; schoolboys released 17 Oct. Also in Katsina, armed group 17 Dec attacked convoy of traditional and religious ruler from Kaura Namoda town (Zamfara state), in Funtua area, killing eight guards; 19 Dec briefly kidnapped about 80 Islamic school students in Dandume area. In Niger state (Middle Belt), armed groups 8-15 Dec killed four and abducted around 30 civilians, prompting 5,000 others to flee. In Enugu state (south east), unidentified gunmen 26 Dec killed Oruku community's traditional chief in Nkanu East area. Federal parliament 1 Dec summoned President Buhari over insecurity in north, reflecting rising discontent including within ruling party; Buhari rejected convocation, claiming lawmakers lack power to summon him on security matters. Meanwhile, govt suffered international setbacks. U.S. 7 Dec designated Nigeria as "country of particular concern" with regard to religious freedom, paving way for sanctions. Office of International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor 11 Dec said there is "reasonable basis to believe" that both BH and security forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Nigeria, concluded ICC investigation is warranted.