

# Africa

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## Central Africa

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➔ 🇸🇩\* **Burundi** Amid ongoing harassment of opposition supporters, violent clashes between security forces and ruling party CNDD-FDD's youth wing, and main opposition party National Congress for Freedom (CNL), raised risk of escalation around general elections still planned for 20 May despite COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society mid-April condemned wave of arbitrary arrests of CNL members in several provinces since early April. CNL supporters and Imbonerakure, youth wing of CNDD-FDD, 8 April clashed in northern Kayanza province, one Imbonerakure killed; police next day arrested up to 30 CNL supporters there. Unidentified assailants 11 April killed local CNDD-FDD secretary in Kiremba commune, northern Ngozi province; authorities next day arrested ten party members on suspicion of involvement in attack. Clashes between CNDD-FDD and CNL supporters 19 April left six injured including CNDD-FDD regional secretary in Kirundo province in north. Police 28 April arrested CNL parliamentary election candidate for southern Makamba province over suspected involvement in previous day attack on Imbonerakure in Ngozi province. After first VP Gaston Sindimwo 7 April confirmed general elections planned for 20 May would go ahead despite COVID-19 pandemic, govt 15 April cancelled participation of diaspora in elections, citing insufficient capacity of electoral commission to organise voting abroad amid crisis. Campaign started 27 April. During raid in Bururi province in south, police 15 April reportedly killed three people, including former army officer Pascal Ninganza (alias Kaburimbo), suspected of having provided military training to demonstrators during 2015 anti-govt protests; civil society condemned extra-judicial killings. Military and Imbonerakure crossed into neighbouring DR Congo's South Kivu province late March-early April to allegedly combat Burundian rebel groups in Mulenge locality. Congolese military 3 April detained three Burundian nationals suspected of stealing weapons in South Kivu province. Govt forces 26-27 April reportedly clashed with Burundian rebel group RED-TABARA in South Kivu's Uvira territory; rebels claimed five govt soldiers killed.

➔ **Cameroon** Violence continued in Anglophone regions and Boko Haram (BH) launched deadly attacks in Far North. After govt 3 April announced reconstruction plan for Anglophone North West and South West regions, separatists immediately rejected project and reportedly attacked public buildings, infrastructure workers and govt forces; military said subsequent fighting in both regions left thirteen separatists killed by mid-April. In North West region, govt forces 3, 14-15, and 26 April reportedly killed seven civilians suspected of supporting separatists; clashes between military and separatists 9-12 April left six dead including two civilians in Bui area. In South West, govt forces 22 April reportedly killed three separatists and three civilians in Muanbong village. Report by independent investigation commission 22 April confirmed govt forces responsibility in killing of 23 civilians in north-western Ngarbuh village mid-Feb. Constitutional Council 7 April announced ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement had won all thirteen seats in 22 March parliamentary election rerun in eleven constituencies in Anglophone regions. In Far North, attacks by BH militants continued, killing at least sixteen civilians and two

soldiers 5-11 April in Mayo Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga, and Logone-Et-Chari departments. Notably, suspected BH double suicide attack 5 April killed ten civilians in Amchide locality. Military 20 April killed three BH militants and captured three others in Amchide locality; 24 April killed militant in Sandawadjiri village. Tensions increased between govt and main opposition party Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon (MRC) amid COVID-19 crisis. After govt late March created national solidarity fund to finance response to COVID-19, MRC leader Maurice Kamto 3 April launched own fundraising initiative; govt 7 April declared initiative illegal, but MRC reportedly pursued fundraising. Following disappearance of President Biya from public sight since 11 March, Kamto 15 April called on National Assembly speaker to seize Constitutional Court and declare power vacancy; Biya next day made public appearance in capital Yaoundé. Biya 15 April announced prisoner release to limit spread of COVID-19 in prisons.

↓ **Central African Republic** Renewed fighting broke up in north east after seven armed groups suspended participation in govt and Feb 2019 peace agreement implementation mechanisms. President Touadéra 16 April met Ali Darassa, leader of armed group Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC), and PM Firmin Ngrébada 25 April met Abdoulaye Hissène, leader of armed group Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance (FPRC), in capital Bangui in alleged attempt to explore ways to achieve peace in north east and centre before presidential election scheduled for Dec; however, in joint statement, seven armed groups, including UPC and FPRC, 25 April said they were suspending participation in govt and Feb 2019 peace agreement implementation mechanisms, accusing govt of failing to abide by its commitments. Violence thereafter flared in north east. Armed group Patriotic Rally for the Renewal of Central Africa (RPRC) and allied armed group Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ) 29-30 April clashed with FPRC in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture's capital Ndélé, at least 37 reportedly killed, mainly civilians. Earlier in month, ethnic Gula RPRC 6 April attacked ethnic Runga factions of FPRC in Ndélé; death toll unknown, but reportedly low casualties. UN Security Council 20 April imposed sanctions on Martin Koumtamadji (alias Abdoulaye Miskine), leader of armed group Democratic Front of the Central African People, including asset freeze and travel ban, accusing him of recruiting fighters in violation of Feb 2019 peace agreement. In north-western Ouham-Pendé prefecture, angry mob 9 April destroyed base of UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSCA) in Béboura village, injuring two peacekeepers, following death of civilian in road accident involving MINUSCA vehicle. In Bangui, authorities 3 April arrested six individuals including two military officers on suspicion of planning jailbreak of soldiers detained since late March for alleged coup plot. National Assembly President and VP 16 April proposed constitutional amendments to enable extension of President Touadéra and MPs' terms in case of postponement of Dec election due to COVID-19; political opposition and civil society rejected proposals.

➔ **Chad** Military conducted large-scale operation against Boko Haram (BH) factions in Lake Chad province in west and broader Lake Chad Basin; over forty BH militants reportedly captured during operation died of suspected poisoning while in detention in capital N'Djamena, triggering outcry from civil society groups. Following BH attack that killed around 100 soldiers late March on Bohoma peninsula, Lake Chad province in west, govt 9 April said eight-day counter-insurgency operation killed over 1,000 militants; 52 soldiers also died in operation.

In capital N'Djamena prison, 44 suspected BH members reportedly captured during operation were found dead 16 April; chief prosecutor 18 April announced investigation and said men appeared to have died of poisoning; civil society denounced mistreatment of prisoners, saying they were deprived of food and water for days; govt denied allegation. Meanwhile BH attacks persisted in Lake Chad province. BH faction Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) 18 April reportedly killed two soldiers and captured one other during attack in Litri area; ISWAP 25 April published video reportedly showing execution of captured soldier. President Déby 9 April announced end of Chadian participation in military operations abroad; however foreign ministry 12 April said Chadian forces would continue assisting UN peacekeeping mission in Mali and regional taskforces targeting jihadist groups. In south west, herder-farmer clashes left at least one dead 18 April in Mayo-Kebbi East province; dispute over ownership of mosque left one dead 28 April in Hadjer-Lamis Centre province. Senegalese authorities 6 April granted former Chadian President Habré 60-day home detention due to risk of COVID-19 spread in prisons; Habré detained in Dakar since Extraordinary African Chambers sentenced him to life imprisonment in 2016 for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Déby 15 April pledged \$1.5bn to aid people and businesses amid COVID-19 crisis. National Assembly 28 April voted to abolish death penalty, which was still authorised for terrorist crimes.

↓ **DR Congo** Armed group Cooperative for Development of Congo (CODECO) early-April stepped up deadly attacks in north-eastern Ituri province, threatening provincial capital, before military launched counter-offensive; tit-for-tat violence left at least 169 dead throughout month. In Ituri, CODECO militants early April gained control of several localities in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu territories, getting close to provincial capital Bunia. Notably, CODECO attacks in Djugu 10-13 April killed at least 69 civilians and sixteen security forces personnel. Military 17 April said it had recaptured fourteen localities from CODECO control in operations 8-17 April in Djugu and Mahagi territories. Clashes between govt forces and CODECO continued in several territories in Ituri late month, reportedly killing at least 40 militants, six security forces personnel and 38 civilians 19-28 April. Violence also continued in other areas. In North Kivu province, armed group Allied Democratic Forces 6 and 13 April killed eight civilians in Beni territory; unidentified assailants 24 April killed thirteen park rangers and five civilians in attack in Virunga national park; after park authorities accused rebel group Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda of involvement, Rwandan rebels 27 April denied involvement and blamed Rwandan govt forces for attack. In Tanganyika province, Twa militiamen 8 April killed seven civilians in Nyunzu territory. In Kongo Central province, clashes between members of separatist religious cult Bundu Dia Kongo and authorities 13-24 April left at least 33 dead, including civilians; police 24 April arrested cult leader in capital Kinshasa. After former President Kabila allies within ruling coalition challenged constitutional legality of COVID-19 state of emergency declared by President Tshisekedi 24 March without parliamentary approval, Constitutional Court 13 April backed measure. Authorities 8 April arrested Tshisekedi's chief of staff and president of Union for the Congolese Nation (UCN) party Vital Kamerhe on embezzlement charges, prompting protests in following days by UCN supporters in cities of Bukavu and Goma in east.

➡ **Rwanda** Pressure increased on govt over alleged military presence in neighbouring DR Congo (DRC); security forces faced allegations of abuses amid

COVID-19 lockdown. Local authorities and civil society in eastern DRC's North Kivu province 15 April condemned alleged rise in presence of Rwandan military forces there. President Kagame 27 April denied presence of govt forces in DRC and claimed instead that Burundian military were operating in DRC's South Kivu province. Armed group Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) 27 April denied allegations of involvement in 24 April attack in Virunga national park in DRC's North Kivu Province which left eighteen dead including thirteen park rangers; rebels accused Rwandan govt forces of attack. Military 4 April detained five soldiers suspected of physical and sexual violence against civilians while enforcing COVID-19 lockdown – in place since 22 March – in capital Kigali's Nyarutarama district. NGO Human Rights Watch 24 April accused security forces of having “arbitrarily arrested scores of people”, including journalists, for allegedly violating lockdown.

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## Horn of Africa

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➔ **Eritrea** UN special rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea and NGO Amnesty International early April called for release of prisoners from overcrowded prisons amid COVID-19 pandemic. Govt 8 April extended nationwide lockdown imposed late March for three more weeks.

➔ **Ethiopia** Ethnic violence broke out in north west, armed groups continued to launch attacks against civilians in Oromia region and govt declared nationwide state of emergency amid COVID-19 pandemic. In Benishangul-Gumuz region in north west, armed group 3 April launched attack, reportedly ethnically motivated, on Gilgel Beles town leaving at least eight dead. In western Oromia, suspected members of armed opposition faction Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) 9 April killed three civilians in Genji town. After COVID-19 pandemic late March prompted electoral board to delay general elections planned for Aug, opposition parties Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) 2 April said postponement offers opportunity to address “mistakes that have been threatening to derail Ethiopia's transition to democracy”. Political party Tigray People's Liberation Front late April said elections should proceed as planned. In response to COVID-19, govt 8 April declared five-month nationwide state of emergency, including ban on gatherings of more than four people. COVID-19 restrictions sparked isolated incidents: in capital Addis Ababa, police mid-to-late April arrested some 50 individuals for violating state of emergency, including at least one opposition leader; four individuals mid-April reportedly beat to death man, who urged them to adhere to social distancing, in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' region. Amid stalemate in negotiations with Egypt and Sudan on filling and operation of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Blue Nile River, PM Abiy 1 April said dam would be filled during rainy season (June-Sept). In meeting in Sudan's capital Khartoum 10 April, army chief of staff, Sudanese counterpart and head of Sovereign Council Abdel-Fattah Burhan reportedly agreed to coordinate border security operations following spate of criminal violence and clashes between militias on border between Amhara region and Sudan's Al-Qadarif state.

➔ **Kenya** Al-Shabaab attacks on security forces persisted in north east, police continued to brutally enforce COVID-19 restrictions and tensions increased in ruling party between factions of President Kenyatta and Deputy President Ruto. Al-

Shabaab remained active: in Wajir county in north east, Al-Shabaab militants 13 April attacked police reservists on patrol in Khrof Arar leaving six reservists and four militants dead; in Kilifi and Mombasa counties in south, police 24-25 April killed two suspected Al-Shabaab militants. Tensions between Kenya and Somalia persisted in border areas in north east. Notably, in Mandera town, stray bullets and rocket 22 April struck building amid fighting between Somali federal forces and Somalia's Jubaland state forces near Somalia's Bula Hawa town, Gedo region. Police continued to brutally enforce COVID-19 curfew killing at least fourteen across country 27 March-30 April. In capital Nairobi, thousands 10 April attempted to force their way into premises where food was being distributed, stampede left two dead. Govt next day banned uncoordinated food distributions. Govt agency Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) 6 April announced intention of ruling Jubilee Party to replace members of party's governing body, National Management Committee (NMC). Deputy party leader William Ruto, also deputy president, 10 April called proposed changes to NMC "illegal and fraudulent", denounced move as attempt by Raphael Tuju, party's sec gen and ally of Kenyatta, to hijack party's leadership. ORPP 17 April called halt to process of replacing NMC members after receiving 350 petitions from party members, including 146 from elected officials, and urged Tuju to use internal party dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve issue.

➔ **Somalia** Inter-clan violence erupted in south and centre leaving more than 100 dead; Al-Shabaab attacks continued against security forces and civilians in rural areas and capital Mogadishu, and against officials in Puntland state in north; and amid ongoing tensions with federal govt, president of federal member state Jubaland consolidated his position. Inter-clan violence late March-early April killed more than 100 in Lower Shabelle, Lower Juba, Bay (all south) and Galguduud (centre) regions. Notably, rival clans 2 April reportedly clashed over land dispute in Kismayo area, Lower Juba, leaving at least twenty dead; days later, clan in town of Wanlaweyn, Lower Shabelle, reportedly launched revenge attack against rival clan, leaving over twenty dead. In south, Al-Shabaab militants launched several attacks on civilians and security forces, including Ethiopian contingent of African Union mission (AMISOM), in Gedo, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Lower Juba, and Bay regions; violence left at least eleven soldiers and eleven civilians dead throughout month. In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab militants killed at least three soldiers and six civilians in several attacks, including 26 April mortar attack at UN compound which struck nearby house killing four civilians. In Puntland in north, Al-Shabaab militants 5-10 April killed two local officials in Mudug region's capital Galkayo. U.S. airstrikes in several regions 2-10 April killed 32 Al-Shabaab insurgents including senior leader Yusuf Jiis. Ethiopian army 13 April said it had killed at least seventeen Al-Shabaab militants in airstrikes in Jubaland state's Gedo region. Also in Gedo, fighting 22 April broke out between federal govt forces and Jubaland forces near Bula Hawa town, number of casualties unknown. Jubaland state President Madobe 23 April signed reconciliation agreement with opposition leaders who had contested his re-election in Aug 2019; late April said he was willing to reconcile with federal govt which continues to reject his re-election. Police 24 April shot and killed two civilians reportedly violating COVID-19 curfew in Mogadishu, prompting hundreds to demonstrate in following hours and day.

➔ **Somaliland** Inter-clan violence broke out in contested Sanaag region in east and in Awdal region in west, and President Bihi said govt was ready to resume talks

with Somalia federal govt. In Sanaag region, deadly skirmishes 11 April broke out between two clan militias over land dispute in Waqdariya area, death toll unknown; two clan militias 19 April also clashed over access to land in Fadhigaab area leaving two dead. To stem violence in Sanaag, military 26 April launched operation to disarm clans, while Bihi late April dispatched delegation led by interior minister to reconcile warring clans. In Awdal region, fighting 13 April broke out between two clan militias over plot of land in outskirts of regional capital Borama, number of casualties unknown. Bihi 9 April said govt was willing to consider resumption of talks – last held in 2015 – with Somalia over Somaliland’s claim to sovereignty which Mogadishu does not recognise. Amid COVID-19 crisis, Bihi 1 April ordered release of 574 prisoners.

↓ **South Sudan** Negotiations between President Kiir and former rebel leader turned VP Riek Machar over local power-sharing stalled, raising concerns over stability of unity govt, while ceasefire with holdout rebel groups in south broke down; intercommunal violence persisted. In meeting in capital Juba 13 April, Kiir and Machar’s Sudan People’s Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO) failed to reach compromise over appointment of state governors; Machar maintained peace deal entitles SPLA-IO to nominate three governors, while Kiir said only two; Machar 15 April turned down Kiir’s proposal to appoint caretaker governors. Several SPLA-IO members 16 April defected to Kiir, blaming Machar for turning movement into “family dynasty”. Implementation of transitional security arrangements remained stalled after committee overseeing unification of armed groups into single army late-March suspended process to prevent spread of COVID-19. Negotiations between unity govt and opposition coalition, South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA), which refused to be part of Sept 2018 deal, remained suspended as govt failed to appoint new delegates. Truce brokered in Jan between govt and non-signatory armed groups broke down in Central Equatoria region in south after SSOMA rebel group National Salvation Front (NAS) 9 April attacked Machar’s SPLA-IO forces in Kirinya, Yei River County; number of casualties unknown. SPLA-IO and Kiir-aligned South Sudan People’s Defense Forces reportedly clashed with NAS in Yei, Morobo and Kajo Keji counties 26 April, number of casualties unknown. Intercommunal violence continued in several areas, killing at least 65 throughout month. In Abyei region, disputed between South Sudan and Sudan, ethnic Dinka and nomadic Misseriya herders clashed 9-11 April, leaving at least six killed; Sudan and South Sudan 30 April agreed to cooperate to end violence there. Amid COVID-19 pandemic, govt 21 April ordered release of 1,400 inmates to reduce prison overcrowding and extended partial lockdown until further notice.

➔ **Sudan** Peace talks between transitional govt and rebel groups continued despite new delay and authorities redoubled efforts to hasten reforms. Govt and rebel coalition Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) failed to meet self-imposed 9 April deadline to reach comprehensive peace deal, agreed to extend talks until 9 May. Govt and Malik Agar, leader of faction of rebel group Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), 19 April entered negotiations over wealth-sharing in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states; 21 April agreed peace agreement would also apply to West Kordofan state. Abdelaziz al-Hilu, leader of another SPLM-N faction, 1 April extended ceasefire in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states until 30 May, citing COVID-19 crisis and need to give peace talks a chance. Govt, Sovereign Council, and opposition coalition Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) 6 April formed

committee to hasten transitional reforms, 12 April pledged to appoint Transitional Legislative Council and economic emergency committee by mid-May, and civilian governors by 18 April. SRF 14 April reiterated its demand that governors be nominated after peace deal is reached, prompting Hamdok to postpone appointments 18 April; SRF same day said it would back appointments provided it takes part in nomination process. After army 30 March reportedly deployed troops on border between Al-Qadarif state and Ethiopia's Amhara region following spate of criminal violence and clashes between militias, senior state officials 10 April met with Ethiopian counterparts in capital Khartoum, reportedly agreed to coordinate border security and monitoring operations. Amid COVID-19 outbreak, authorities 7 April postponed former President Bashir's trial. Dozens of supporters of Bashir, members of Islamist group Unified Popular Movement 9 and 16 April demonstrated against govt in Khartoum despite COVID-19 ban on public gatherings. Govt 18 April imposed three-week lockdown in Khartoum state to prevent spread of virus. UN 28 April said deployment of new police units to disputed Abyei region as part of UN peacekeeping mission (UNISFA) faced "serious delays" due to COVID-19.

➔ **Tanzania** President Magufuli continued to resist opposition calls to adopt measures to curb spread of COVID-19. Magufuli 22 April ruled out lockdown of economic capital Dar es Salaam. Opposition figure Zitto Kabwe 23 April warned against giving false hopes after Magufuli 16 April called for three days of prayer to quell "satanic" virus. Main opposition party Chadema's leader Freeman Mbowe 29 April urged govt to take action against COVID-19, saying Magufuli was in "state of denial". Parliament speaker 29 April suspended parliamentary sessions after two MPs died of suspected COVID-19 infection.

➔ **Uganda** President Museveni 14 April extended COVID-19-related lockdown by 21 days until 5 May. Police 20 April arrested prominent journalist Samson Kasumba for allegedly making seditious statements, released him next day on police bond.

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## **Southern Africa**

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↓ **Lesotho** Political crisis escalated as PM Thabane, facing mounting domestic and regional pressure to resign, briefly deployed military in capital Maseru. Constitutional Court 17 April reversed Thabane's three-month suspension of parliament, which he imposed in March after main opposition party Democratic Congress filed parliamentary motion of no confidence against him over suspected involvement in murder of ex-wife. Thabane next day temporarily deployed military onto streets of Maseru. South Africa 19 April dispatched mediation delegation on behalf of regional bloc South African Development Community to help resolve crisis. In joint statement, govt, political parties and South African mediators 20 April announced immediate exit of Thabane, ensuring his "dignified, graceful and secure retirement"; few days later, Thabane reportedly rejected move, saying he would not be told when to leave office. After Parliament reconvened 20 April, Senate 28 April passed constitutional amendment curbing PM's power to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. Ruling party All Basotho Convention 29 April gave Thabane until 3 May to step down or face no-confidence vote. Thabane 21 April extended COVID-19 lockdown until 5 May.

➡ **Malawi** High Court blocked COVID-19 lockdown citing economic damage on poorest, and Supreme Court of Appeal struck down electoral commission's request to postpone presidential election rerun planned for July. Govt 14 April said it would impose 21-day nationwide lockdown starting 18 April to prevent spread of COVID-19, prompting thousands of informal workers to protest against projected loss of income in city of Mzuzu in north and economic capital Blantyre 16-17 April. High Court 17 April blocked implementation of lockdown for seven days, after NGO Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) filed appeal citing concerns over lack of economic support for vulnerable communities; High Court 28 April extended order barring lockdown until govt implements socio-economic protections. President Mutharika same day announced emergency cash transfer program for small businesses and about 1mn people starting early May. Ahead of presidential election rerun planned for July, electoral commission (MEC) 4 April launched voter registration process. Govt 7 April urged MEC to suspend process due to COVID-19, prompting MEC chairperson Jane Ansah to request extension for holding election; Supreme Court of Appeal 16 April rejected request. MEC 14 April suspended registration in Blantyre after suspected members of youth wing of ruling party Democratic Progressive Party same day allegedly attacked registrants and MEC staff. Supreme Court of Appeal 15 April began hearing President Mutharika's appeal against Constitutional Court's 3 Feb ruling which ordered rerun of last year's presidential election within 150 days.

➡ **Mozambique** Jihadist violence continued to spread in far north, while govt and former rebel group, now opposition party Renamo, agreed to resume demobilisation of Renamo troops, and armed dissident faction of Renamo continued attacks in centre. Attacks by suspected jihadists continued unabated in several districts of Cabo Delgado province in far north. Notably, Islamist militants 8 April killed 52 civilians in Xitaxi village, Muidumbe district. Security forces 7 April drove back militants in Muidumbe town, killing 39, and 10 April repelled jihadist attack on Quirimba island, leaving 59 militants dead; five civilians also killed in fighting and twenty schoolchildren reportedly kidnapped. Suspected jihadists 17 April killed six civilians in Machova Koka village, Macomia district, and 22 April beheaded four others in Imbada village, Meluco district. Govt 15 April denied militants controlled any areas of Cabo Delgado province; 23 April said for first time insurgency was "external aggression" by Islamic State (ISIS). President Nyusi and Ossufo Momade, leader of former rebel group, now opposition party Renamo, 16 April agreed demobilisation and disarmament of Renamo forces should resume. Renamo 23 April accused security forces of killing fourteen civilians in Cabo Delgado's Palma district and near Ibo Island in three incidents mid-April; notably, security forces 12 April allegedly killed up to twelve civilians travelling by boat from Pemba to Ibo Island. Renamo dissident faction, which calls itself Renamo Military Junta, continued attacks against civilians in centre. Following Jan threat that faction would target businesses unless govt denied that Momade represented party, group's leader Mariano Nhongo 7 April claimed previous day attack on camp of Chinese-owned timber company which left one worker dead in Matarara camp, Manica province.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Civil society challenged govt's handling of COVID-19 crisis in court. High Court in capital Harare 14 April ordered govt to provide protective equipment for medical personnel handling COVID-19 patients, after doctors' association early April filed complaint arguing state was putting them at risk; same day ruled security



forces must respect human rights while enforcing COVID-19 lockdown, after lawyers' association early April filed urgent petition over alleged abuses by security forces; 20 April ordered police to stop harassing journalists covering lockdown following petition by journalist and NGO. President Mnangagwa 19 April extended nationwide COVID-19 lockdown by two weeks. After Supreme Court late-March declared Nelson Chamisa's leadership of main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change illegitimate and directed party's former Deputy President Thokozani Khupe to organise new leadership elections within three months, Chamisa's camp early April rejected ruling and denounced alleged attempt by govt to usurp party.

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## Sahel

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► **Burkina Faso** Amid continued jihadist violence in north and east, fighting flared between competing jihadist groups and security forces faced allegations of extrajudicial killings. Jihadist attacks in north continued to spread southward in border areas between Sahel, North, and Centre-North regions, and westward in Boucle du Mouhoun region. Suspected jihadists 1 April attacked Toéni military base, Sourou province in Boucle du Mouhoun region, reportedly killing soldier; fifteen jihadists also killed. Also in Toéni area, military vehicle 3 April detonated explosive device, three soldiers killed. Suspected militants of jihadist Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 9-10 April killed at least nineteen soldiers in Solle area, Loroum province in North region. In East region, suspected jihadists 4 April killed police officer near Kantchari, Tapoa province, 20 April abducted another in southern Kompienga province near Benin. Security forces continued counter-insurgency operations, reportedly killing at least 36 suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) militants in Sahel region in April. Violence flared mid-April between Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and JNIM after latter called on its militants to fend off ISWAP; clashes between militants 14, 16, 20 and 30 April in Soum province, Sahel region reportedly left at least 100 dead. Security forces faced allegations of summary executions of civilians. NGO Human Rights Watch 20 April said security forces 9 April allegedly killed 31 ethnic Fulani civilians during counter-insurgency operation near Djibo town, Sahel region; govt same day announced investigation. Govt 2 April said it would unblock \$650mn to mitigate social, economic, and health impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

► **Mali** Infighting between jihadist groups broke out in centre early month, while jihadist and intercommunal violence continued in several regions. Competing jihadist groups Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Katiba Macina clashed early April in Mopti and Ségou regions in centre allegedly over latter's willingness to engage in dialogue with govt, reportedly leaving over 100 mainly ISGS militants dead. Suspected Katiba Macina militants 2-3 April freed eight main opposition party Union for the Republic and Democracy staff kidnapped late-March alongside party leader Soumaïla Cissé in Timbuktu region in north; Cissé remained captive. In Gao region in north, jihadist Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 6 April attacked Bamba military base, killing at least 25 soldiers; twelve militants also killed. In Kayes region in west, suspected jihadists 6 April killed custom officer in Sebekoro town and gendarme in Sanankoro locality, raising concerns jihadist violence could spread westward. Intercommunal violence persisted

in Mopti region in centre. Notably, suspected Fulani gunmen 21 April killed at least twelve people in several villages near Bandiagara city. In second round of legislative elections held 19 April, ruling party Rally for Mali came first, winning 51 of 147 seats in parliament. Suspected jihadists prevented vote or forced villagers to boycott vote in several localities in north, centre, east. Media 12 April reported security forces arrested at least six people late March-early April on charges of “attempting to destabilise democratic institutions”, sparking rumours of coup attempt. UN mission (MINUSMA) 30 April said security forces carried out more than 100 extrajudicial killings 1 Jan-31 March.

► **Niger** Security forces stepped up counter-insurgency operations in south east and west amid continued jihadist violence; and govt measures to contain COVID-19 outbreak sparked social unrest in urban areas. In Diffa region in south east near Nigeria, security forces in cooperation with regional force MNJTF 2 April launched offensive to dislodge Boko Haram (BH) militants from islands of Lake Chad; number of casualties unknown. In Tillabéry region in west near Mali and Burkina Faso, security forces 2 April reportedly killed 63 Islamist militants in clashes near Tamalaoulaou village; four soldiers also killed. Suspected jihadists 5 April attacked gendarmerie in Banibangou, leaving two gendarmes and two jihadists dead. Govt 23 April denied reports by media and local officials alleging security forces had executed some 100 civilians in Ayorou district, also Tillabéry, 27 March-2 April; same day announced investigation. Amid COVID-19 pandemic, electoral commission 2 April suspended voter registration in Niamey region, sparking concerns pandemic could affect timeframe of presidential and legislative elections planned for Dec. Parliament 11 April extended state of public health emergency by three months until July. Police 17-19 April fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters demonstrating in capital Niamey and second largest city Maradi against COVID-19 curfew and ban on religious gatherings; at least 100 arrested. Govt 22 April relaxed curfew in Niamey. Public prosecutor 7 April said he would open investigation after defence ministry audit late-Feb revealed large-scale embezzlement of public funds involving figures close to President Issoufou. UN mission (MINUSMA) 30 April said Nigerien security forces carried out over 30 extrajudicial killings in Mali 1 Jan-31 March.

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## **West Africa**

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► **Côte d’Ivoire** COVID-19 restrictions sparked tensions between security forces and citizens and pandemic disrupted preparations of presidential election planned for Oct. Angry mob 5 April destroyed coronavirus testing centre in economic capital Abidjan’s Yopougon neighbourhood, citing risk of contamination; police arrested twelve individuals. President Ouattara 8 April ordered release of 2,004 prisoners to prevent COVID-19 spread in penitentiaries. Military authorities 14 April arrested four military personnel including colonel for allegedly beating and extorting money from residents while enforcing COVID-19 curfew in Guéhibly area in west. Ahead of presidential election due 31 Oct, govt mid-April suspended revision of electoral list originally scheduled to take place 18 April-2 May; Ouattara 8 April launched controversial revision of electoral code by ordinance, citing restrictions on parliamentary meetings due to COVID-19. African Union’s human rights court 22 April ordered temporary suspension of arrest warrant issued in Dec 2019 for former Assembly Speaker and potential presidential candidate Guillaume Soro over alleged

coup attempt and embezzlement of public funds; govt 29 April pulled out of court, accusing it of undermining country's sovereignty. Meanwhile, Abidjan's criminal court 28 April sentenced Soro in absentia to twenty years in prison for corruption.

➔ **Guinea** Opposition and civil society accused President Condé of exploiting COVID-19 crisis to silence opposition and tighten his grip on power following highly contested constitutional referendum and legislative elections in March. National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC), coalition of opposition parties and civil society groups opposed to constitutional referendum, 7 April denounced wave of arrests of political opponents since govt late March announced COVID-19 state of emergency. Notably, authorities 4 April reportedly detained three militants from main opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) in Koundara area in north west; security forces 5 April reportedly arrested UFDG supporter in capital Conakry. FNDC 7 April threatened to resume anti-govt protests despite its earlier commitment to observe truce amid COVID-19 crisis. FNDC 29 April called on International Criminal Court to open investigation into alleged crimes against humanity by govt in recent months. Electoral commission 1 April announced ruling party Rally for the Guinean People had won 79 out of 114 seats in National Assembly in March legislative elections. After Constitutional Court 3 April said 89.76% voted in favour of constitution changes in March referendum, Condé 6 April promulgated new constitution, which opposition fears could allow him to run for third term. Condé same day announced €340mn emergency plan to mitigate economic impact of COVID-19 crisis amid mounting discontent; notably, taxi drivers late March-early April went on strike in Conakry after govt limited to three number of passengers per taxi. Condé 13 April announced extension of COVID-19 state of emergency until 15 May.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau** Umaro Sissoco Embaló, whom electoral commission declared winner of late 2019 presidential election, consolidated power amid COVID-19 pandemic and despite persisting controversy about election results. Supreme Court's de facto president 2 April rejected some judges' call to examine leading party in Parliament African Party for the Independence of Guinea (PAIGC)'s latest appeal against results of Dec 2019 presidential runoff vote, saying court would sit only when COVID-19 related state of emergency is lifted. Embaló's govt stepped up pressure on some members of previous PAIGC-dominated govt. Notably, former Minister of Justice and Human Rights Ruth Monteiro 1-2 April said authorities prevented her twice from leaving country in March and distributed list with names of former ministers to airport and border posts to prevent them from leaving country; authorities 3 April denied existence of travel ban. Public Prosecutor's office 8 April summoned Monteiro to hearing on charge of refusing to return vehicles to authorities, compelled her to appear regularly before authorities to confirm identity and continued residence in country. Bissau Regional Court 2 April sentenced twelve individuals to fourteen to sixteen years in prison for having smuggled nearly two tons of cocaine into country in Sept 2019. Embaló's govt 6 April apologised for "excessive police actions" after human rights groups condemned alleged abuses by security forces while enforcing COVID-19 restrictions, including beatings and extortions; Embaló 12 April extended state of emergency for another fourteen days. Regional body ECOWAS 22 April recognised Embaló as president. Embaló and two PAIGC officials reportedly met 29 April in Bissau in bid to resolve crisis.

➡ **Nigeria** Military stepped up operations against Boko Haram (BH) in north east, bandit-related violence continued in north west, communal violence flared in Middle Belt, and enforcement of COVID-19 measures fuelled abuses. In north east, military in coordination with regional force MNJTF ramped up operations to dislodge BH factions from islands of Lake Chad and parts of Borno and Yobe states, reportedly killing hundreds since late March. Notably, army reportedly killed 105 Islamic State West Africa Province fighters on outskirts of Yobe state's Buni Gari village 18 April. Bandit-related violence continued in north west with at least 120 civilians killed in month in Sokoto, Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna and Katsina states. In Zamfara state, military 12 April intercepted caravan of bandits in Dansadau forest killing ten and rescuing eighteen captives; 20 April killed 21 bandits, lost four soldiers in Zurmi area; 24 April killed 89 bandits in same area. Herder-farmer violence continued in Middle Belt, including unidentified gunmen 1-14 April killing at least nineteen villagers in Bassa area of Plateau state, and clashes between Shomo and Jole ethnic groups leaving at least 25 dead in Taraba state 14 April. President Buhari 13 April extended COVID-19 lockdown in capital Abuja, largest city Lagos, and south-western Ogun state for another two weeks; 27 April extended lockdown for another week; most state governors took similar measures. Federal govt's rights protection agency, National Human Rights Commission, 15 April said it had received "105 complaints of human rights violations perpetrated by security forces" while enforcing COVID-19 lockdown including at least eighteen extra-judicial killings 30 March-13 April.

➡ **Togo** Security forces 21 April detained opposition leader and runner-up in Feb presidential election Agbéyomé Kodjo after he challenged results of vote and declared himself country's legitimate president. Authorities 24 April released Kodjo under judicial supervision after reportedly charging him with inciting public disorder, disseminating fake news and threatening national security.