



Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Cameroon** Separatist conflict continued to plague Anglophone regions, while President Biya travelled to U.S. amid govt efforts to bring separatists living abroad to justice.

Violence continued in Anglophone North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions. Govt forces 9 Dec killed high-profile separatist commander known as Gen. Lion in Mankon village, Mezam division (NW). In response, Ambazonia Defence Forces separatist fighters 11 Dec announced week-long lockdown of highway leading to Mankon. Anglophone separatists 15-16 Dec carried out string of attacks against govt forces notably in Kumbo town, Bui division (NW); Ndop town, Ngo-Ketunjia division (NW); and near Mamfe town, Manyu division (SW), leaving unknown casualties. In apparent retaliation, army 17-18 Dec reportedly burnt dozens of civilian homes, forcing unknown number to flee, in Bai-Panya village, Meme division (SW), and Yer-Dzekwa village, Bui division (NW). Meanwhile, Fulani militia 7 Dec killed four civilians in Menchum division (NW) over accusations of burning down cattle pasture used by Fulani herders.

Govt sought closer cooperation with U.S. against separatist sponsors. Defence Minister Joseph Beti Assomo 5 Dec announced creation of committee to identify and prosecute Anglophone separatist sponsors living abroad, particularly in U.S.; move comes after U.S. authorities late Nov indicted three people suspected of raising funds for Anglophone separatist fighters through extortion. Biya 13-15 Dec attended U.S.-Africa summit in Washington DC in likely attempt to show he remains at forefront of govt affairs despite his age. During summit, Anglophone groups demonstrated in Washington DC against Biya's presence, blaming U.S. administration for inviting him. Meanwhile, jailed separatist leader Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe 5 Dec reiterated readiness for talks with govt under international mediation, set conditions including release of political prisoners, demilitarisation of Anglophone regions and amnesty for exiled separatists; govt reportedly rejected move.

Sporadic jihadist attacks continued in Far North region. Suspected Boko Haram militants overnight 23-24 Dec reportedly killed three women in Kolofata commune (Mayo-Sava division); 29 Dec ambushed army patrol in Ldaoussaf town (Mayo-Tsanaga division), killing one soldier and wounding another.

➔ **Central African Republic** Authorities and Russian allies accused France of perpetrating "terrorist" acts, and armed groups continued to launch violent attacks across country.

Tensions with France boiled over following incident at border with Chad. After airstrike late Nov reportedly targeted military camp in Bossangoa town (Ouham prefecture near Chadian border), head of pro-govt organisation National Network for Safeguarding the Gains of Peace, Patrick Andjida, 2 Dec accused France and domestic opposition of manoeuvring to destabilise country; Russian military representative Alexander Ivanov 13 Dec said Central African Republic was under “threat ... from the outside” and accused “international community” of supporting rebels. As explosive package 16 Dec injured Dimitri Sytyi, head of Russian cultural centre in capital Bangui, Russian private military company Wagner Group owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, same day blamed attack on Paris, urged Moscow to declare France state sponsor of terrorism; France also 16 Dec denied allegation as “Russian propaganda”. Bangui 18 Dec denounced “terrorist attack” and launched investigation; 20 Dec claimed package was sent from Togo. Meanwhile, last contingent of French troops 15 Dec left country; Paris in June 2021 had suspended military cooperation with Bangui.

Security situation remained dire across country. Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) rebel groups continued to target civilians and military. Notably, Union for Peace in the Central African Republic 1 Dec launched attack on Bakouma town (Mbomou prefecture) which left seven civilians dead and six wounded. Unidentified CPC rebels 11-12 Dec targeted army positions in Lihoto and Bokolobo localities (Ouaka prefecture), with two civilians dead. Suspected 3R rebels overnight 23-24 Dec ambushed army patrol near Gallo locality (Nana-Mambéré prefecture), killing three soldiers. Armed forces 3-7 Dec reportedly arrested over 200 people, including many civilians, in search operations in towns of Paoua (Ouham-Pendé prefecture), Kaga Bandoro (Nana-Gribizi prefecture) and Bambari (Ouaka). In Haute-Kotto prefecture, govt forces and Wagner elements 12 Dec attacked CPC position at Kocho mine site, reportedly killing 36 rebels and capturing unknown number.

In other important developments. National Assembly 28 Dec adopted law regulating organisation of referendums in country. Opposition MP Joseph Bendounga same day said law would serve President Touadéra’s efforts to change constitution and run for third term.

➔ **Chad Court sentenced hundreds to years in prison for involvement in October anti-govt protests, and authorities detained dozen military officers amid rumours of coup plot.**

Hundreds sentenced to prison for involvement in anti-govt protests. Public prosecutor 5 Dec said court had condemned 262 people arrested in relation with 20 October opposition protests to two-to-three-year prison sentences; mass trial held 29 Nov-2 Dec in Koro-Toro maximum security prison (Borkou province, north). Authorities early Dec released 139 other people who were given suspended prison terms or found not guilty during same trial. Chadian Bar Association went on strike during trial to denounce “parody of justice”, citing absence of legal representation for defendants, prisoners’ detention conditions (including allegations of torture) and other procedural irregularities. Meanwhile, international commission of inquiry into violent suppression of 20 October protests – led by Economic Community of Central African States – 14 Dec started visit to country to define working framework; civil society including Chadian Bar Association late Dec questioned commission’s

independence, called for genuine participation of other international organisations including African Union and UN.

Military arrested dozen soldiers amid rumours of coup attempt. Military intelligence 9-11 Dec reportedly arrested dozen elements of elite anti-terrorist army unit trained and funded by U.S., and civilian human rights activist Baradine Berdey Targuio, sparking rumours of coup attempt. Army leadership 13 Dec denied coup plot, but said civilians used group of military officers to try to “destabilise the institutions of the Republic” and announced further investigations.

Jihadist and other violence persisted in west and north. In Lake province (west), Boko Haram militants 11-12 Dec killed seven civilians in attacks on Fougoh village and Fourkoulom camp for internally displaced persons. In Tibesti province (north), armed self-defence group, Tourkou surveillance Committee, 5 Dec reportedly fired at miners at Tourkou gold mine, killing two and injuring four.

East and Southern Africa

➔ **Kenya President Ruto suspended election commissioners who rejected his electoral victory as president, and Al-Shabaab carried out deadly attacks near Somalia border.**

President Ruto suspended several election commissioners. Ruto 2 Dec ordered suspension and investigation of four commissioners of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) who had refused to endorse his win in August presidential election, accusing them of trying to subvert election results in favour of runner-up Raila Odinga; Odinga same day condemned suspensions, saying move aimed to skew IEBC in favour of Ruto. Three commissioners facing dismissal resigned in following days, avoiding investigation into past conduct, while tribunal 20 Dec commenced hearings to consider petition for removal of fourth one.

Al-Shabaab launched deadly attacks near Somalia border. Suspected Al-Shabaab militants 11 Dec killed two civilians in ambush between Jabibar and Bambo villages in Mandera county. Al-Shabaab militants 21 Dec attacked police vehicle between Hayley Lapsset security camp and Garissa town in Garissa county, killing two officers and one civilian. In Lamu county, suspected Al-Shabaab militants overnight 24-25 Dec killed two villagers in Pandaguo area; bomb blast 30 Dec killed one soldier and injured at least four others in Mlima Faru area. Amid Somali offensive against Al-Shabaab in neighbouring Somalia, local media 10 Dec reported that additional security forces had deployed to border in anticipation of influx of militants.

In other important developments. In Meru county (important Ruto stronghold in Mount Kenya region), members of county assembly 14 Dec voted to impeach Governor Kawira Mwangaza over nepotism and other accusations; Senate committee 30 Dec rejected impeachment, said allegations not proven. Credit rating agency Fitch Ratings 14 Dec downgraded Kenya’s credit rating from B+ to B, due to high debt and diminishing foreign currency reserves.

➔ **Mozambique Islamic State-affiliated insurgents continued to stage attacks in Cabo Delgado province, challenging govt’s normalisation narrative.**

Insurgents remained active in northern and central districts of Cabo Delgado. In one of biggest insurgent attacks since foreign intervention started in mid-2021, Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) 6 Dec assaulted army outpost in Nguida village, Macomia district, killing three soldiers and forcing around 100 more to withdraw. After first, unsuccessful attempt 9 Dec, security forces and Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) troops 11-12 Dec launched assault on insurgents' position in Nguida and retook village. Reports around 12 Dec also emerged of ISMP attacks on nearby Nkoe and Nova Zambezia villages, while suspected ISMP insurgents 20 Dec raided army base near Chai locality, killing four including one soldier. In Mueda district, local militia 7 Dec pursued and killed four insurgents in remote area of Nangumbe forest. In Nangade district, SAMIM troops continued operations, reportedly clashing with suspected ISMP in Nangade Sede area on 6 Dec. In Muidumbe district, bodies of four beheaded civilians found 26 Dec close to Mandava village; two more bodies found same day in nearby Muambula locality; and insurgents 30 Dec killed at least two civilians in Namande village.

Local militia kept up anti-insurgency operations in southern Cabo Delgado. Local militia known as "Naparama", which has become prominent in fight against insurgents in southern Cabo Delgado since Nov, throughout Dec set up checkpoints and conducted searches in Namuno, Chiure, Balama and Montepuez districts. In Montepuez district, suspected ISMP 10-11 Dec beheaded at least five Naparama militiamen in Nairoto area.

RENAMO failed to complete demobilisation process. Last batch of approximately 350 RENAMO guerrilla fighters 19 Dec refused to demobilise as part of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration program in Gorongosa district, Sofala province, citing delays in payment of pensions and integration of eligible fighters into security forces. RENAMO however reaffirmed commitment to peace process. About 4,700 guerrillas, about 90% of estimated total, have demobilised to date.

➡ **Tanzania President Suluhu Hassan secured new term as ruling party chairperson and announced govt shake-up.**

Ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi party 7-8 Dec held national congress in capital Dodoma, re-elected President Suluhu Hassan for five-year term as chairperson. Hassan 8 Dec announced she would "shake up" govt to remove "detractors" and "languid" individuals ahead of 2025 general elections.

➡ **Zimbabwe Political atmosphere remained tense months away from general elections, and NGOs expressed concern that new anti-money-laundering bill could further shrink space for civil society.**

Political tensions remained high ahead of general elections. Police 10 Dec reportedly detained two members of main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) who were assaulted late Nov by suspected ruling Zanu-FP party supporters in Gutu district; mid-Dec banned two CCC rallies in capital Harare. Zanu-PF senior officials late Dec rejected electoral commission's recent report on delimitation of electoral boundaries, saying it favours opposition, and vowed to have it nullified in court. Opposition party People's Unity Party 30 Dec called on all

opposition parties to boycott general elections scheduled for July-August, citing fears polls will further divide country.

Parliament's lower house adopted bill which could further restrict civic space. National Assembly 16 Dec passed Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill granting govt unfettered access to NGOs and other voluntary organisations' operations, including budgets, plans and funding sources, and power to delist or enlist them; govt said bill, which still needs Senate's approval before President Mnangagwa signs it into law, is necessary to combat money laundering. Opposition lawmakers immediately requested further debate, saying bill had been passed without their knowledge, while civil society platform Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition around 18 Dec said text, if passed in its current form, would lead to closure of several NGOs, further restricting civil society space.

U.S. sanctioned president's son for corruption and human rights abuses. U.S. Treasury Dept 12 Dec announced new sanctions on four individuals and two Zimbabwean entities for corruption and human rights abuses, including Emmerson Mnangagwa Jr., son of President Mnangagwa.

Great Lakes

➔ **Burundi Authorities took steps to hold to account ruling party supporters as U.S. imposed sanctions on former PM for alleged human rights abuses; military operations against rebels continued near border with Rwanda.**

Ruling party supporters came under scrutiny for human rights record. Amid general atmosphere of impunity, several members of ruling party's youth militia Imbonerakure brought before courts for suspected role in acts of violence against civilians and opposition activists. Notably, Bubanza High Court 13 Dec sentenced one Imbonerakure to 20 years in prison for stabbing man to death in Bubanza province (west) on 7 Dec. Meanwhile, U.S. State Dept 13 Dec re-imposed sanctions, including asset freeze and travel ban, on notorious ruling party hardliner, former PM Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni, for alleged human rights violations during 2015 political crisis; U.S. had sanctioned Bunyoni in 2015, but lifted sanctions when he became PM in 2021.

President Ndayishimiye lashed out at officials as part of anti-corruption drive. Ndayishimiye 6 Dec vowed to combat corruption, notably accusing senior official responsible for public procurement control of alleged malpractices. Police in Rumonge province (south west) 7-10 Dec arrested three local officials and one governor adviser, all ruling party members, for alleged misappropriation of building materials.

Operations against Kinyarwanda-speaking rebels continued at Rwandan border. Amid ongoing fighting between govt forces and Kinyarwanda-speaking rebels in Kibira forest, Citiboke province (north west), forest rangers 2 Dec found nine bodies in Mabayi commune.

➡ **DR Congo M23 rebels announced withdrawal from strategic Kibumba town in east as fighting with govt forces and local militias continued.**

Situation remained dire in North Kivu as militias took up fight against M23 rebels. Coalition of local militias from late Nov took up arms against M23's westward advance in North Kivu province. Fighting involving M23, govt forces and local militias reported throughout month on western front of Rutshuru territory, including 6 Dec, 16-17 Dec, and 25-29 Dec in Bishusha and Tongo groupements; clashes 31 Dec also erupted in Kamatembe village in Masisi territory. Meanwhile, M23 rebels 23 Dec announced withdrawal from strategic Kibumba town (Nyiragongo territory) in "goodwill gesture", reportedly handed over position to East African Community (EAC)'s regional force; army next day described move as "decoy", saying rebels were strengthening positions elsewhere to occupy territory west of provincial capital Goma; local sources late Dec said M23 still present in Kibumba area. UN mission MONUSCO 7 Dec said M23 late Nov allegedly killed at least 131 civilians in Kishishe and Bambo villages of Rutshuru territory.

Other armed groups continued attacks notably in Ituri province. Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 10-13 Dec killed at least 15 civilians in Bahema Boga and Walese Vontuku chiefdoms, Irumu territory (Ituri). Congolese and Ugandan forces 11 Dec bombed ADF camp at North Kivu-Ituri border, killing at least 30. Suspected members of ethnic Hema Zaire militia 16 Dec killed 12 people, mostly from Lendu ethnic group, in Walendu Watsi chiefdom of Mahagi territory (Ituri). In retaliation, ethnic Lendu CODECO militia 28 Dec killed a dozen Hema people in Usigo village, also Mahagi. Third round of EAC-led Nairobi talks between Kinshasa and some armed groups active in east 28 Nov-6 Dec failed to agree on terms of disarmament.

Prominent politician announced presidential bid, broke alliance with president. After electoral commission late Nov scheduled presidential election for 20 Dec 2023, senior political figure Moïse Katumbi 16 Dec declared candidacy, criticised President Tshisekedi's "very bad, chaotic" record and announced departure from presidential "Sacred Union" coalition. Voter registration 24 Dec kicked off in ten western provinces (of country's 26).

➡ **Rwanda Kigali remained under international pressure to stop supporting M23 advances in eastern DR Congo.**

Kigali and Kinshasa continued to trade accusations over eastern DR Congo crisis. During state of nation address, DR Congo (DRC) President Tshisekedi 10 Dec said country was victim of "unequivocal aggression by Rwanda", denounced neighbouring country's "expansionist tendencies". In response, President Kagame 14 Dec said he "cannot be responsible for... Congolese of Rwandan descent in Congo who are being denied their rights as citizens". After UN mission in DRC 7 Dec said M23 rebels late Nov allegedly killed 131 civilians in North Kivu province (see DR Congo), Rwandan govt 21 Dec accused Kinshasa of "fabricating" massacre. Kigali 28 Dec said Kinshasa violated its airspace by flying fighter jet over its territory.

International concerns over Rwandan support for M23 rose further. In call with Kagame, U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 4 Dec reportedly said "Rwanda's support for M23" must stop. In response, Rwanda's FM Vincent Biruta next day accused U.S. of

“exacerbating” crisis in eastern DRC. Blinken mid-Dec again called on Rwanda to “use its influence” on M23 rebels to de-escalate crisis. UN experts’ report dated 16 Dec found “substantial evidence” of Rwandan forces crossing into eastern Congo since Jan 2022, either to reinforce M23 rebels or to conduct military operations. Kigali denied accusations. French embassy in Kinshasa 19 Dec condemned Rwanda’s support for M23, while European Union 31 Dec called on Rwanda to stop supporting insurgents.

➡ **Uganda** **President Museveni’s son lashed out at ruling party amid growing internal rift over Museveni’s succession; army repelled ADF incursion from DR Congo; and authorities rejected UN allegations that Uganda served as rear base for M23 rebels.**

Museveni’s son criticised ruling party, repression of opposition continued. In series of tweets, Museveni’s son Lt-Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba 2-3 Dec attacked his father’s National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, saying it “does not represent the people of Uganda”; 5 Dec condemned “those signing declaration against [us] in NRM”, possibly referring to recent calls for Museveni to run in 2026 election. In response, NRM Sec Gen Richard Todwong 14 Dec urged Kainerugaba to “respect” and stop “insulting” party. Parliament’s Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa same day criticised party’s old guard, saying NRM elders should not underestimate younger counterparts’ capacity to run state affairs. Security forces 30 Dec reportedly fired tear gas and arrested at least 30 people at rally of opposition leader Bobi Wine in capital Kampala.

ADF rebels raided villages close to DR Congo, attacks on security targets continued. Militants of Uganda-born, Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 13 Dec crossed border from DR Congo into western Ntoroko district and opened fire at civilians, killing two; army engaged assailants, reportedly leaving 17 killed and capturing 13 others. Meanwhile, attacks on security installations continued. Notably, unidentified gunmen 9 Dec raided Kyabadaza police station in central Butambala district, killing two civilians.

Kampala rejected UN allegations about M23 using Ugandan territory as rear base. In report to UN Security Council, UN experts 16 Dec alleged M23 rebel group wreaking havoc in eastern DRC since March 2022 has been able to recruit in Uganda and move through Ugandan territory unhindered; also noted that Kampala denied knowledge of M23 presence on its soil, said it would “not condone any of Uganda’s territory [being] used to destabilise any country”.

In other important developments. UK 9 Dec sanctioned former Police Chief Gen. Edward Kale Kayihura over alleged police abuses under his leadership between 2005 and 2018, adding to U.S. sanctions imposed on Kayihura in 2019.

Horn of Africa

↑ **Eritrea** **In significant development for Ethiopia’s delicate peace process, Eritrean forces began withdrawing from Tigray.**

Asmara began withdrawing its forces from Tigray late Dec. Following news early Dec of continued Eritrean abuses in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, news agency Reuters

30 Dec reported that Eritrean troops had retreated from several towns in Tigray, including strategically important Shire and Axum towns, in Central and North Western zones (see Ethiopia). Reported withdrawal, which coincided with 29 Dec launch of African Union monitoring mission in Tigray, marks significant development in Ethiopia's fragile peace process since Asmara's stance remains crucial factor in implementing accord. Earlier in month, reports emerged of Eritrean forces looting and attacking civilians in Tigray's north. Notably, senior Tigray official Getachew Reda 12 Dec alleged Eritrean soldiers were still carrying out "genocidal campaign"; media outlet Bloomberg late Nov accused Asmara of allowing its forces to continue attacking civilians, which Eritrean embassy in U.S. 5 Dec dismissed as little more than "crass disinformation".

In other important developments. First batch of Somali troops, who have participated in controversial training program in Eritrea since 2019, 21 Dec returned to Somalia. Kenyan President Ruto 9-10 Dec visited Eritrea at invitation of President Isaias; leaders agreed to abolish visa requirements and cooperate on regional peace, security and development.

➡ **Ethiopia Fragile calm prevailed in Tigray as Eritrean forces began withdrawing from region and efforts to implement peace deal continued; escalating violence in Oromia aggravated Oromo-Amhara tensions.**

Tigray's peace deal held and Eritrean forces began withdrawing. 2 Nov peace agreement between federal govt and Tigray People's Liberation Front continued to hold, although implementation of agreement was slow, particularly on security and political arrangements; notably, sides 3 Dec missed original deadline for Tigray's disarmament. Tigray's top commander Tadesse Werede 6 Dec reiterated that disarmament depended on region's security, adding that continued Eritrean and Amhara troop presence would impede implementation. However, efforts to sustain momentum on peace deal continued and sides 22 Dec agreed to establish joint African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance mission to oversee implementation; days later, high-level delegation from federal govt 26 Dec arrived in Mekelle, which Tigray leaders hailed as "milestone"; monitoring mission launched 29 Dec. In another positive development, news agency Reuters 30 Dec reported that Eritrean troops had left several towns in Tigray's Central and North Western Zones (see Eritrea). Meanwhile, UN humanitarian agency 6 Dec said humanitarian access had improved, federal govt began partially restoring phone and electricity lines and commercial flights 28 Dec resumed between Addis and Mekelle.

Conflict in Oromia intensified, fuelling intercommunal tensions. Fighting raged in western Oromia as Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) expanded operations and Amhara militias known as Fano deepened their involvement; all actors targeted civilians. Hostilities occurred throughout month in Horo Guduru Zone, East, Kellem and West Wollega Zones and South West and East Shewa Zones. Notably, clashes 3-4 Dec between Fano and Oromia regional special forces around Gutin town in East Wollega killed dozens and displaced thousands; Oromo residents and officials blamed Fano, while Amhara residents said Oromia Special Police initiated attacks. Deteriorating situation heightened Oromo-Amhara tensions elsewhere, notably in capital Addis Ababa, where several disputes related to display of Oromia flag and singing of Oromia anthem in public schools led to protests early Nov in several schools.

Relations with Sudan continued to improve. Ethiopia and Sudan 24 Dec signed cooperation agreement on peace and security issues.

➔ **Somalia Govt offensive against Al-Shabaab made significant advances notably in Hirshabelle state; political dispute in South West state turned violent.**

Govt forces and allies solidified gains against Al-Shabaab in central regions. Middle Shabelle region of Hirshabelle state cleared from Al-Shabaab after govt forces and local clan militiamen around 3 Dec captured group's regional headquarters at Adan Yabal town and 22 Dec took over Runirgod town (Al-Shabaab's last remaining stronghold in Middle Shabelle). PM Hamza Abdi Barre 14 Dec visited Adan Yabal, most significant town taken from Al-Shabaab to date. Capture of Runirgod allowed forces to move further into Galmudug state by late Dec, including to Galcad area (Galgaduud region) 27 Dec; other fronts in Galmudug however saw little progress. In South West state, govt forces in Dec recaptured Daynuunay village and Goofgaduud town (Bay region) after recent Al-Shabaab advances, but situation remained precarious with Al-Shabaab 28 Dec temporarily occupying Goofgaduud again.

Violence erupted in South West state amid dispute over president's term extension. Clashes 23 Dec broke out in South West state's largest city, Baidoa, between state security forces and militia protecting local opposition figure who argues President Lafta-Gareen's term has expired; at least two civilians killed. After mediation by Lower House Speaker Adan Madobe, Lafta-Gareen and leading state opposition figures agreed to reconciliation meeting on 5 Jan.

Federal govt pursued rapprochement with member states, sought foreign support. During National Consultative Council meeting, President Mohamud and federal member states 25-28 Dec agreed on federalising judiciary, sharing power in line with federal constitution and strengthening operations against Al-Shabaab; Puntland state requested more time to study proposals. Mohamud solicited further foreign support to fight Al-Shabaab, travelling to Djibouti 6 Dec to attend regional forum; to Saudi Arabia 9 Dec for China-Arab summit, and to U.S. 13-15 Dec for U.S.-Africa Leaders summit.

In other important developments. Mohamud early Dec discussed resuming Somalia-Somaliland reconciliation talks with Norway-Türkyie delegation, and deadly clashes late Dec erupted between Somaliland security forces and protesters in area claimed by Puntland (see Somaliland). UN experts 13 Dec said over 8mn Somalis badly food insecure, and 700,000 at risk of famine between April and June.

↓ **Somaliland Clashes between security forces and protesters left at least 20 dead in contested area near Somalia's Puntland region.**

Deadly clashes erupted in contested area near Somalia's Puntland region. Clashes between protesters and security forces late Dec erupted in Las Anod town in contested Sool region, with at least 20 civilians killed; protesters complained about lack of security in town, which has been beset by regular assassinations in recent years including 26 Dec killing of local leader and member of opposition Waddani Party, Abdifatah Abdullahi Abdi (alias Hadrawi). Information Minister Saleebaan Cali Koore 31 Dec urged protesters to stop demonstrations and start negotiations

with govt. Dispute also ratcheted up tensions between Somaliland and Puntland, both of which claim Sool region. Puntland's President Said Abdullahi Deni 31 Dec said Puntland stands with people of Las Anod and urged Somaliland forces to stop crackdown.

President Bihi set preconditions for reconciliation talks with Somalia. Joint Norway-Türkyie delegation 5-6 Dec met with Bihi in Somaliland's capital Hargeisa and Somalia's President Mohamud in capital Mogadishu to discuss prospects of resuming Somalia-Somaliland reconciliation talks; both presidents expressed support, but Bihi later issued set of seven preconditions, making any immediate resumption unlikely.

Election crisis remained unresolved. President Bihi's initial five-year term 13 Dec came to close without resolution of dispute which pits govt and opposition against each other about sequencing of presidential and so-called "political parties" elections (parliament's Upper House in Oct extended Bihi's term by two years). Yet electoral groundwork continued as voter registration 28 Dec kicked off.

↓ South Sudan As fighting wreaked havoc in Upper Nile state, violence escalated in Jonglei, killing dozens and forcing around 30,000 civilians to flee.

Violence raged in Upper Nile state, displacing thousands. Fighting pitting ethnic Shilluk "Agwalek" under Gen. Johnson Olony against Nuer forces, predominantly backed by Gen. Simon Gatwech, continued unabated in Fashoda county. Thousands of civilians early Dec fled to Kodok town and Malakal civilian protection camp after Nuer forces late Nov razed Aburoc village in Fashoda county's north. Nuer forces began surrounding Kodok, prompting Agwalek militia early Dec to reinforce town as fears of imminent attack grew. President Kiir 7 Dec sent ammunition and additional soldiers to push back Nuer forces, compelling them to retreat south; UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) same day deployed 30 additional troops to deter attacks on civilians. Agwalek troops and President Kiir's South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) 13 Dec attempted to intercept Nuer forces near Wau Shilluk village, but Nuer forces reportedly won battle.

Hostilities in Jonglei killed dozens and displaced thousands. In Jonglei state, armed Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor armed youth 26-27 Dec attacked Murle community in Gumuruk and Likuangole towns of Greater Pibor Administrative Area, killing at least 50 and forcing SSPDF forces to withdraw from Gumuruk; SSPDF 28 Dec recaptured town. UN humanitarian agency 29 Dec reported around 30,000 people displaced by violence. Escalation marks collapse of local peace deal signed in 2021 in Pieri town under UN auspices. UNMISS and international partners, including Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Troika (U.S., UK and Norway), 28 Dec urged govt to address spiralling violence.

Economy deteriorated further, ruling party began preparations for 2024 elections. In sign that hundreds of millions of dollars in International Monetary Fund support have failed to stabilise economy, South Sudanese pound further depreciated against U.S. dollar. UN Panel of Experts on South Sudan 1 Dec said Central Bank "printed in excess of 270 billion South Sudanese pounds (\$423 million)", effectively doubling currency in circulation and driving inflationary spiral. Meanwhile, ruling Sudan

People's Liberation Movement 6 Dec endorsed President Salva Kiir as candidate for 2024 presidential elections.

↑ **Sudan Military and civilian groups signed framework agreement, paving way for all-civilian govt to end political impasse; deal received mixed reactions.**

Sudan's military and key civilian actors signed deal to restore civilian rule. Following months of negotiations, major civilian political parties and other civil forces, mostly under main civilian opposition bloc Forces for Freedom and Change-Central Council (FFC-CC), 5 Dec signed "political framework" deal with military to install all-civilian govt, end political stalemate and initiate two-year transition period ending in elections. Transition period is to begin with appointment of PM, nominated by civilian signatories, after second phase of negotiations concludes. These negotiations will focus on five particularly sensitive issues, namely transitional justice, security sector reform, Juba Peace Agreement, status of ex-regime dismantling committee and crisis in eastern Sudan. They were set to conclude by end of Dec but have been postponed until 5 Feb.

Public opinion on agreement remained divided. Although agreement aims to end political role of military in Sudan, implementation faces significant challenges as military expects their power to remain unchecked and deal is not yet supported by wider public or number of key stakeholders. Most notably, grassroots network Resistance Committees continues to reject deal and has vowed to sustain protests in capital Khartoum; three 2020 Juba Peace Agreement signatories also opposed deal. Still, over 50 political and civil groups week after deal was signed submitted request to sign agreement, which FFC-CC is reviewing to ensure none are affiliates of Bashir-era ruling National Congress Party.

Violence persisted in West Kordofan and South Darfur. Clashes between Humer and Misseriya groups over cattle rustlers 10-11 Dec killed at least 30 in Abu Koa area, West Kordofan state. Clashes between Arab herders, Daju farmers and other groups 21-23 Dec left at least 11 dead and around 16,000 people displaced in villages outside Nyala state capital, South Darfur.

In other important developments. UN humanitarian agency 14 Dec released 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan noting that 15.8mn people, almost one third of country's population, will need humanitarian assistance next year. Meanwhile, relations with Ethiopia continued to improve, with both sides 24 Dec signing cooperation agreement on peace and security issues.

Sahel

➔ **Burkina Faso Jihadist violence remained widespread, while ruling junta sought to control flow of information amid rumours of coup attempt and deal with Russian paramilitaries.**

Insecurity remained rampant across country. In Sahel region, alleged Islamic State Sahel Province (IS-Sahel) militants 5 Dec attacked civilian convoy near Peteguerse locality (Seno province), killing four. In North region, govt forces and volunteer fighters (VDPs) 9 Dec conducted operation in Youba village (Yatenga province);

between ten and 40 people reported dead, with some sources alleging victims were civilians. In Centre-North region, al-Qaeda affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 7 Dec killed at least 12 people in Boala village (Namentenga province). In Boucle du Mouhoun region (west), govt forces 2 Dec engaged suspected JNIM militants near Bondokuy village (Mouhoun province), leaving ten dead; 7 Dec killed 23 suspected jihadists in Bondokuy and Ouarkoye departments (Mouhoun), and 30 presumed JNIM fighters in Banwa province. Also in Boucle du Mouhoun, locals alleged VDPs overnight 30-31 Dec killed 28 civilians in Nouna city (Kossi province); govt announced investigation. In East region, passenger bus 25 Dec hit explosive device near Fada N’Gourma (Gourma province), leaving ten dead.

Authorities suspended French media outlet amid reports of coup attempt. Local and international media outlets 2 Dec reported govt forces had foiled coup plot; interim govt immediately denied claim, next day suspended French media outlet RFI for releasing “misleading information” about alleged coup attempt. Authorities 30 Dec reportedly reinforced military presence around presidential headquarters in response to “security alert”.

Ghana alleged Wagner presence in Burkina Faso, sparking diplomatic spat. In meeting with U.S. Sec State Blinken, Ghana’s President Akufo-Addo 14 Dec accused transitional President Capt. Traoré of hiring Russian paramilitary Wagner Group to fight jihadists near border with Ghana. Interim govt 16 Dec called allegations “grave and inaccurate” and summoned Ghanaian ambassador to Burkina Faso. Ghana’s national security minister 21 Dec travelled to capital Ouagadougou, met with Traoré in apparent attempt to mend ties.

In other important developments. Govt 23 Dec ordered expulsion of UN coordinator Barbara Manzi; UN Sec Gen António Guterres next day said Ouagadougou had no authority to expel UN officials.

➔ **Mali Northern armed groups suspended participation in peace process to protest junta’s lack of political will to implement 2015 Algiers agreement; security situation remained volatile in north and centre.**

Northern armed groups pulled out of Algiers peace process. Coalition of northern armed groups including Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) 22 Dec suspended participation in monitoring and implementation mechanisms of 2015 Algiers peace agreement with govt, citing “lack of political will on the part of the transitional authorities to implement” accord. Earlier in month, CMA had deplored peace deal’s “decay” and requested emergency meeting with Algerian-led International Mediation outside Mali to examine accord’s “viability”.

Rival jihadist groups engaged in intense fighting in north. In Gao region, clashes 3-10 Dec erupted between al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (IS-Sahel) militants near Tagarangabot, Tadjalalt and Haroum localities, leaving dozens dead. Also in Gao, JNIM 4 Dec reportedly killed around 16 ethnic Fulani or Dawsahak people near In Aoutel locality. In Timbuktu city (Timbuktu region), unidentified gunman 16 Dec fired at UN peacekeepers, leaving two dead.

Govt faced accusations of serious abuses against civilians in centre. Amid ongoing operations against JNIM in country’s centre, govt forces, along with Dan Na

Ambassagou militia and Russian allies, reportedly carried out human rights abuses against civilians, including arbitrary killings. Notably, govt forces and Russian paramilitary Wagner Group 6 Dec conducted air and ground operation in Kita town (Mopti region); authorities claimed to have killed one jihadist and arrested eight others, while locals said operation left five civilians dead, three wounded, and nine others detained.

In other important developments. Choguel Maïga 4 Dec reinstated as PM after three-month absence following stroke. Transitional govt continued to tighten control of NGOs, issuing new reporting obligations 15 Dec after banning NGOs funded or supported by France in Nov. After Interim President Col. Goïta 22 Dec reportedly agreed with Ivorian delegation to release 46 Ivorian soldiers detained since July, court in Bamako 30 Dec sentenced detained soldiers to 20 years in prison on charges of undermining state security (see Côte d'Ivoire).

📌 **Niger Govt secured major international financial support for development plan, with pledges exceeding initial expectations; jihadist violence persisted, albeit at lower levels.**

Govt's development plan garnered financial support from international partners. President Bazoum 5-6 Dec travelled to French capital Paris for fundraising event to finance Niger's 2022-2026 socio-economic development plan, which aims to reduce poverty rate from 43% in 2022 to 35% in 2026. Public and private donors including World Bank, African Development Bank and UN reportedly promised €31.4bn in support, twice as much as initially hoped for, confirming that Niger is now international institutions' primary partner in Sahel region.

Levels of violence decreased in Tillabery and Diffa regions. In Tillabery region (south west), suspected Islamic State Sahel Province combatants 2 Dec killed four people near Kokorbe village (Ouallam department); suspected al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims attack on police position in Say town (Say department) 5 Dec left one militant and two civilians dead; unidentified gunmen next day reportedly killed national guard in Ayorou town (Tillabery department). In Diffa region (south east), unidentified gunmen 5 Dec killed national guard in Diffa town (Diffa department); Boko Haram militants (likely JAS faction) 22 Dec clashed with armed forces between Bagué and Tchoungoua localities (N'Guimi department), leaving five jihadists dead and two soldiers wounded.

In other important developments. National Commission on Human Rights 27 Dec concluded armed forces did not commit abuses during late Oct counter-insurgency operation in Tamou village (Say department, Tillabery region), despite allegations by civil society movement M62 that airstrikes had killed many civilians.

West Africa

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire Authorities reported progress in negotiations with Mali for release of Ivorian soldiers who faced 20-year prison sentence, senior political figures continued to position themselves for 2025 election, and Grand-Bassam trial concluded.**

Soldiers sentenced to prison in Mali, amid reports of agreement for their release. West African regional bloc ECOWAS 4 Dec called on Malian authorities to release 46 Ivorian soldiers detained since July “by 1 Jan 2023” or face sanctions. Ivorian delegation 22 Dec met with Malian President Col. Goïta in capital Bamako and reportedly agreed on memorandum for soldiers’ release. Meanwhile, court in Bamako 30 Dec sentenced all 46 soldiers to 20-year prison term, and three released in Sept to death in absentia, for seeking to undermine state security. Ouattara next day said he was confident soldiers will “soon return to Ivorian soil”, hinting at possibility of pardon.

Political manoeuvring continued ahead of 2025 presidential election. Two weeks after returning to Côte d’Ivoire, former President Gbagbo’s Youth Minister Charles Blé Goudé 8 Dec registered on electoral roll; yet Goudé faces 20-year sentence for role in 2010-2011 post-election violence, making his eligibility for election unclear. Opposition Democratic Party of Côte d’Ivoire (PDCI) same day released contradictory statements on holding of extraordinary congress, possibly reflecting internal tensions over long-time party leader Henri Konan Bédié’s anticipated presidential bid in 2025; prominent Franco-Ivorian financier Tidjane Thiam 19 Dec registered on electoral roll during second visit to Côte d’Ivoire since Aug after more than 20 years in exile, adding to speculations over PDCI’s presidential candidate.

Court handed life imprisonment for 2016 jihadist attack. Court in Abidjan city 28 Dec sentenced at least ten people (including six in absentia) to life imprisonment for involvement in jihadist attack which killed 19 people in Grand-Bassam town in 2016.

➔ **Gambia Authorities reported foiling coup attempt to topple President Barrow, arrested several junior officers.**

Govt 21 Dec announced authorities previous day thwarted military plot to overthrow President Barrow. Authorities 20-25 Dec reportedly arrested several junior officers for alleged involvement in coup attempt. Govt 27 Dec set up panel to investigate incident comprised of members of armed forces, police, intelligence services and justice ministry. National Security Adviser Abubakarr Suleiman Jeng 29 Dec alleged plot was sponsored by “civilian collaborators ... both within and outside of the country”. Economic Community of West African States and African Union 21 Dec condemned attempted coup.

➔ **Guinea Regional leaders insisted two-year transition to civilian rule must end in Oct 2024, while national dialogue concluded despite boycott by main opposition groups.**

ECOWAS clarified transition timetable, national dialogue concluded. West African regional bloc ECOWAS 4 Dec said 24-month transition to civilian rule must start “immediately”, understandably referring to Oct 2022 when transition timetable was agreed upon, and not in Jan 2023 as Interim President Col. Doumbouya is advocating for. Meanwhile, PM Bernard Gomou 14 Dec castigated main opposition coalition’s “express refusal” to take part in national dialogue; dialogue’s participants 21 Dec presented conclusions and final recommendations to Doumbouya, including introducing 75-year age limit for presidential candidates and maintaining ban on street protests until transition ends. Opposition coalition 30 Dec rejected dialogue’s conclusions as unilateral.

Authorities targeted President Condé-era figures in anti-corruption drive. After public prosecutor's office 2 Dec blocked former PM Ibrahima Kassory Fofana's conditional release for fourth time since his April arrest on corruption charges, ECOWAS leaders 4 Dec expressed concern over Fofana and other former ministers' continued detention. Doumbouya 11 Dec and 28 Dec retired over 2,000 public servants and 22 magistrates, respectively. Justice ministry 12 Dec sought proceedings against president of Guinean Financial Information Processing Unit and security forces 15 Dec detained former Constitutional Court president, both on corruption allegations. Meanwhile, U.S. Treasury 9 Dec imposed sanctions, including asset freeze, on Condé for alleged human rights abuses by govt forces in 2020.

Former junta leader accused Condé of 2009 stadium massacre. In long-awaited testimony in trial of 2009 massacre of over 150 people in Conakry stadium, then-junta leader Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara 12 Dec said former Presidents Condé and Konaté (at the time opposition leader and defence minister, respectively), planned massacre as part of "plot" to oust him; also accused former aide-de-camp, Lt. Aboubacar Sidiki "Toumba" Diakité, of "executing" plan; Diakité's lawyer immediately denounced "conspiracy theories".

► **Nigeria Insecurity continued to pose major challenge for running and credibility of 2023 general elections; govt faced allegations of human rights violations in counter-insurgency operations.**

Political violence continued ahead of 2023 polls. In Rivers state, thugs 8 Dec stormed residence of People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential campaign manager, Senator Lee Maeba, and gunmen 14 Dec shot and wounded local PDP youth leader. In Imo state, three attacks on electoral commission premises reported 1-12 Dec, while gunmen 16 Dec killed Labour Party candidate for state parliament, Christopher Eleghu.

Rival jihadists clashed, army's human rights record under scrutiny in North East. In Borno state's Sambisa forest, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) early Dec killed Boko Haram (BH) commander Aboubakar Munzir; in apparent retaliation, BH fighters around 3 Dec ambushed ISWAP militants, killing at least 12, and stormed ISWAP camp, reportedly killing 33 women. Suspected BH militants 24 Dec also killed 17 herders in Mafa area (also Borno). International news agency Reuters 7-12 Dec reported army had killed thousands of children and run forced abortion program as part of counter-insurgency campaign since 2013.

Attacks continued despite military operations in North West and North Central. In Katsina state, gunmen 3 Dec attacked mosque in Funtua area, abducting over a dozen worshippers. In Kaduna state, air force 1 and 4 Dec targeted some groups' hideouts in Igabi, Birnin Gwari and Giwa areas, inflicting "heavy casualties". Also in Kaduna, gunmen 15-18 Dec killed around 38 people in Kaura area, and 25 Dec abducted 45 persons in Kajuru area.

Biafra agitation and other violence persisted in South East. Wave of killings and arson reported across South East after Finland-based factional leader and self-declared spokesman of separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra, Simon Ekpa, issued five-day sit-at-home order starting 9 Dec. Notably, gunmen 9-10 Dec killed at least ten people in Anambra, Enugu and Imo states. Meanwhile in Enugu, armed

men 8 Dec killed at least 25 people in Isi-Uzo areas; residents blamed Fulani herders and members of Igala ethnic group coming from Kogi state.