

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Burundi Reports of ongoing army operations in eastern DR Congo (DRC), including alleged serious abuses, continued; President Ndayishimiye pursued diplomatic engagement as EU lifted financial sanctions.** Although authorities denied presence in eastern DRC, reliable reports indicated that Burundian army (FNDB) stepped up its operations in DRC's South Kivu with an estimated 600 Burundian soldiers 31 Jan-3 Feb reportedly crossing Lake Tanganyika into Fizi territory; many soldiers reportedly killed on battlefield or in attempts to reach it. Congolese armed forces (FARDC) 2 Feb killed 33 Mai Mai militiamen allied with Burundian rebels of Résistance pour un Etat de Droit (RED-Tabara) and National Liberation Front (FNL) in Uvira territory. Local media 3 Feb reported that Burundian military intelligence services allegedly executed at least 20 soldiers who were seeking official recognition of their mission in Uvira territory. Congolese civil society 2 Feb denounced grave human rights violations at hands of FNDB likely intensified by operations' secretive and unofficial nature, notably said FNDB have killed over 70 civilians and caused 80,000 to flee villages since operations started in Dec. Intelligence services and ruling party youth wing Imbonerakure continued to terrorise civilians and political opposition; notably, two armed men in police uniforms 8 Feb arrested opposition party National Freedom Congress (CNL) member in Bujumbura province's Kanyosha commune. Accusations over collaboration with rebels created new opportunities for state-sanctioned violence; suspected RED-Tabara supporter 6 Feb died, reportedly after being tortured by intelligence agents in Cibitoke province. Meanwhile, Gitega pursued continental and multilateral diplomacy; notably, President Evariste Ndayishimiye 7 Feb met with Ethiopian counterpart and next day announced adherence to African Peer Review Mechanism, which he said showed country's contribution to good governance. Rwandan President Paul Kagame same day declared upcoming normalisation of bilateral relations. Ndayishimiye 15 Feb attended AU-EU summit in Belgian capital Brussels, first European visit since 2014; visit follows EU's 8 Feb lift of financial sanctions imposed in March 2016 on Burundian administration; civil society groups 12 Feb criticised decision fearing it could further embolden repressive practices.

➔ **Cameroon Separatists launched attacks in Anglophone regions during country's Youth Day, concerns rose over Biya's succession plans, and jihadist kept up attacks in Far North.** In Anglophone regions, violence ran high, notably when separatists 10-11 Feb sought to disrupt Youth Day, national day marking 1961 plebiscite for independence in British Southern Cameroons. Armed militiamen 10 Feb set fire to girl's secondary school dormitory in Okoyong, Mamfe, South West (SW), announcing ghost town and threatening defaulters to prevent celebrations next day. International diplomats 14 Feb jointly condemned attack and Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC) same day called for attacks on schools to stop. In most Anglophone towns, few people demonstrated on Youth Day in fear of reprisals while marches took place in Francophone regions; President Paul Biya 11 Feb delivered speech without reference to situation in Anglophone areas. Armed

separatists conducted attacks throughout month; notably, separatists 1 Feb carried out attacks in North West (NW) in Bui's division capital Kumbo killing at least three; 7 Feb killed govt soldier in Kumba city. Unidentified armed men 8 Feb also set fire to primary school in SW's capital Buea. Desertions among security forces increased; notably, police 5 and 16 Feb announced total of twelve officials failed to report in different parts of NW. Govt forces 16 Feb killed lead separatist commander "General" Ebube in Alabukam village (NW). Separatist Interim Govt of Ambazonia faction based in Maryland, U.S., saw rift during month with leader Samuel Sako dismissed but refusing to leave. Several other groups held meetings towards unity: AGovC's Ayabo Cho (armed wing: Ambazonia Defence Forces) and African Peoples Liberation Front's Ebenezer Akwanga (armed wing: Southern Cameroon Defence Forces, SOCADEF) 11-12 Feb met in Ireland, discussed common approach to fighting and negotiation; AGovC 26 Feb met representatives of 11 other groups from Ambazonia Coalition for Talks, then jointly agreed to negotiated settlement and pursuit of independence. Amid 13 Feb Biya's 89th anniversary, speculations arose about succession plans including first lady Chantal Biya's growing power. Meanwhile, jihadist insurgency continued in north east with attacks on military position; notably, Boko Haram fighters 9-14 Feb killed four civilians in Mayo Tsanaga department.

➔ **Central African Republic President Touadéra appointed Félix Moloua as new PM, opposition agreed to return to national dialogue, and armed clashes with rebels continued.** Touadéra 7 Feb appointed Félix Moloua as new PM following Henri-Marie Dondra's resignation; Mouloua seen as longstanding Touadéra ally, trusted technocrat by international donors and with more conciliant views on Russian paramilitary group Wagner than Dondra. Dondra now reportedly preparing exit to take over Rassemblement Démocratique Centrafricain (RDC) party, although his political ambitions may be challenged in near future as he is reportedly facing criminal charges for embezzlement of public funds while he was minister of finance and budget (2016-2021). In major step forward, opposition parties 3 Feb announced steering committee return to national dialogue after withdrawal in late Oct 2021; decision followed cancellation of procedure by National Assembly President Simplicie Mathieu Sarandji to lift parliamentary immunity of three opposition leaders accused of collusion with Rebel Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC). Cancellation became automatic after general prosecutor 10 Feb suspended judicial investigations against opposition leaders. Dialogue agenda likely to become another contentious issue with opposition parties as they call for inclusion of armed groups and equal number of representatives from govt, civil society and opposition in steering committee along with list of topics to discuss including transparency of electoral system ahead of Sept 2022 elections. Meanwhile, armed forces and Wagner paramilitary continued to pursue (their) efforts to eradicate Ali Darassa's armed group Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique; notably armed clashes 2 Feb killed 12 people, including at least six civilians, in Boyo locality (Ouaka prefecture). Wagner reportedly now concentrated around mining sites and relying more on armed forces and local militias to control other zones to make intervention cost-effective. Russian mercenaries 12 Feb executed Rassemblement pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPCR) leader Zakaria Damane along with a dozen of his men and family members in Sam-Ouandja town (Haute-Kotto prefecture). Damane's stronghold was seen as key mining area and

transit route for illegal traffic with Sudan; his death could incite some RPRC combatants to abandon disarmament process and join the rebellion.

↓ **Chad Pre-dialogue initiative with armed groups faced setback and delay, tensions with Central African Republic rose and intercommunal violence left dozen dead.** Pre-dialogue with armed groups planned for 27 Feb in Qatar's capital Doha delayed, possibly rescheduled to mid-March due to logistical issues. Pre-dialogue also faced major challenge after controversial phone conversation between Chadian rebel group Union des forces de la Résistance (UFR) leader Timan Erdimi and former Special Adviser for Central African Republic (CAR) Aboukassim Algoni Tidjani Annour 15 Feb surfaced on social media; in call, leaders discussed plan to destabilise Chad, with Erdimi saying he wished to convince Russian paramilitary group Wagner to oust Transitional Military Council (TMC) leader Mahamat Idriss Déby and drive France out of Chad. Govt and parliament members immediately condemned plot, with govt stating refusal to host man planning "war" at dialogue talks with armed groups, while some MPs called for cancellation of amnesty law enacted in late Dec. UFR 18 Feb reaffirmed willingness to participate in dialogue and denounced attempt to exclude them. Déby 21 Feb reaffirmed that no armed group will be excluded from pre-dialogue. Tensions between CAR and Chad rose over leaked audio recording; CAR presidency 17 Feb denied involvement in plot and said Tidjani had been dismissed as presidential adviser in Feb 2021. Meanwhile, various stakeholders including Déby and civil society coalition Wakit Tama 9 Feb discussed conditions for dialogue participation; Groupe de Réflexion et d'Action pour l'Appel du 1er juin 2021 – group composed of former officials and longstanding opponents – also same day published document with recommendations on dialogue agenda and proposals on ways to identify participants. Meanwhile, intercommunal violence persisted. In east, tensions remained high despite non-aggression pact 2 Feb signed between Arab and Ouaddaïan communities following late-Jan incidents in Abéché city in Ouaddaï region. In south, farmer-herder tensions erupted: herder group 10 Feb launched reprisal attack which left 12 dead in Sandana area after they found dead body of community member. Demonstrations held during month in southern cities and in capital N'djamena against corruption, impunity and injustice.

➔ **DR Congo Authorities arrested President Félix Tshisekedi's special security adviser while rebel attacks continued in east.** National Intelligence Agency (ANR) 5 Feb arrested Tshisekedi's special security adviser, François Beya, in capital Kinshasa; Beya had served last four presidents and had played instrumental role in 2018 election deal between Tshisekedi and former President Joseph Kabila. ANR 8 Feb said arrest related to attempted threat to national security, while many debated exact reasons. Tshisekedi 4 Feb extended state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu despite intensifying discontent. Police 8 Feb arrested National Deputy Josué Mufula after he criticised measure, next day released him. North Kivu provincial deputies 14 Feb asked for state of siege to be replaced with state of limited security emergency for hot zones like Beni and rehabilitation of democratic institutions. Civil society groups 16 Feb requested Ituri General Governor Johnny Luboya be replaced due to his inability to stop attacks. Militia attacks persisted in east. In Ituri, Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) resumed and extended attacks near Djugu territory and toward Mungwalu gold-bearing areas. Most notably, CODECO 2 Feb attacked Djugu's Plaine Savo camp for internally displaced

persons, killing 62 people. CODECO militia faction linked to Lendu community 16 Feb took delegation of former Ituri warlords hostage in Gutsi locality, Djugu; ex-warlords tasked by Tshisekedi to conduct negotiations on disarmament with various militias active in Ituri. Militia set conditions for delegation's release, including immediate ceasefire, release of Lendu prisoners, and end of Ituri state of siege; negotiations still under way by end of month. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continued to launch attacks. Notably, ADF 20 Feb killed three civilians in Irumu territory's Biane town; 3 Feb killed four civilians and freed about 20 detainees from police station bordering Uganda's Nobili village in North Kivu. In speech before Rwandan parliament, Rwandan President Paul Kagame 12 Feb evoked possible military intervention to neutralise armed groups in eastern DRC that represent threat to Rwanda, in particular Hutu rebels of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and ADF.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea** Govt continued to face accusations of military involvement in Ethiopia's civil war, and Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia suffered new attacks. Tigray govt 4 Feb accused Eritrea's military of backing Afar forces' alleged attacks on Tigrayan civilians at Tigray-Afar border in late Dec and Jan; Asmara did not respond. UN refugee agency (UNHCR) 18 Feb said attack by unidentified gunmen on Afar region's Barahle refugee camp 3 Feb killed five and displaced at least 14,000 Eritrean refugees; also expressed concern about "safety and wellbeing of thousands of Eritrean refugees" caught up in conflict in northern Ethiopia.

➔ **Ethiopia** Fighting continued in northern areas, particularly in Afar region, further hindering humanitarian operations; widespread insecurity persisted in other regions. In Afar region, clashes between Tigray forces on one hand, and Afar special forces and militias backed by Ethiopian air force on the other, early to mid-Feb spread from border town of Abala into other areas of Kilbati Rasu-Zone 2. Afar regional govt 7 Feb reported Tigray forces advancing toward Serdo checkpoint, which regulates traffic to Ethiopia's only access to sea via Djibouti port. Amid ongoing violence in Afar, delivery of humanitarian supplies into Tigray via Semera-Abala-Mekelle road remained suspended. In Amhara region, Tigray forces and federal and Amhara regional forces late Feb reportedly clashed in Raya Kobo Woreda in North Wollo Zone; also in Amhara, unidentified gunmen 7 Feb attacked prison in South Gondar Zone, breaking prisoners out of jail; 16 gunmen reportedly killed. UN Deputy Sec-Gen Amina Mohammed 9 Feb completed five-day visit to Ethiopia, said country in "much better place" than months ago to resolve Tigray conflict. Federal govt 15 Feb lifted state of emergency imposed last Nov. Security situation in Oromia region continued to deteriorate. Insurgent group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) 3 Feb killed at least three in ambush on Oromia President Shimelis Abdissa's security detail near Bule Hora in West Guji Zone; several encounters reported 19-21 Feb between OLA and federal forces in West Guji and Guji Zones. Also in Oromia, ethnic Amhara militias launched attacks on civilians, notably killing at least 31 in Horo Guduru Wollega and East Wollega Zones 12-25 Feb. Political tensions ran high in Somali region as ex-regional officials early Feb challenged rule of region's President Mustafa Omar; regional govt mid-Feb accused "anti-peace elements" of seeking to disrupt peace and stoke unrest. In

Gambela region, members of ethnic Murle militia from South Sudan 9-11 Feb killed at least four people and abducted three children in Agnewak Zone. Meanwhile, three parties – Oromo Federalist Congress, Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Front – 4 Feb said national dialogue lacked impartiality, transparency and inclusivity, making boycott of process likely.

➔ **Kenya Violence continued near Somali border and govt launched security operation amid spate of deadly attacks in Rift Valley; preparations for August elections continued.** Suspected Al-Shabaab attacks 2-19 Feb killed at least ten people in country's east near Somali border: explosive devices 2 and 10 Feb killed eight in Wajir and Garissa counties; attacks on military convoys in Lamu and Garissa counties 12 Feb left at least two dead. Army 26 Feb reportedly killed four alleged Al-Shabaab militants in Boni forest, Lamu county. Kenya and Ethiopia 15 Feb signed agreement to start joint counter-terrorism operation along shared border within a month. Amid spate of deadly attacks in Rift Valley province, govt 6 Feb launched security operation in West Pokot, Baringo and Elgeyo Marakwet counties of Rift Valley; 18 Feb blamed violence on ethnic Pokot militia and announced plans to outlaw group. Violence continued, however, notably in Elgeyo Marakwet county: suspected ethnic Pokot militia 17 Feb reportedly attacked school bus convoy on Aror-Mogil road, killing driver and injuring 15; 20 Feb reportedly killed man in Kipyebbo area; intercommunal clashes 26 Feb reportedly killed eight in Chesetan area. Ahead of presidential elections in Aug, electoral commission registered around one mn additional voters in extended registration drive ending 6 Feb, falling short of 4.5mn target. TIFA opinion poll, which surveyed 1,541 people, 17 Feb placed Deputy President William Ruto in front with 38.7%, and opposition leader Raila Odinga at 27%. President Kenyatta 23 Feb officially endorsed Odinga as presidential candidate. Ruling Jubilee Party 26 Feb formally removed Ruto as deputy party leader and announced it would join Odinga's coalition.

➔ **Nile Waters Ethiopia launched power production from Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), lowering hopes of renewed dialogue between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan.** Addis Ababa 20 Feb announced it had started producing electricity at GERD. In response, Egypt's FM Sameh Shoukry same day accused Ethiopia of violating 2015 Declaration of Principles signed by all three countries. Cairo in letter to UN Security Council around 25 Feb said Ethiopia bears "full responsibility" for "any damage caused to Egypt" as a result. Sudan's acting Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Daw Al-Bait Abdul-Rahman 21 Feb rejected "unacceptable move" and "unilateral step" by Ethiopia.

➔ **Somalia Authorities extended lower house elections deadline amid ongoing manipulation and interference; Al-Shabaab stepped up attacks in bid to disrupt electoral process.** As federal and member state leaders focused on installing loyalists as future MPs, including active intelligence and security officials, dispute emerged over selection of former intelligence agency (NISA) chief Fahad Yasin as new MP in Hiraan region's capital Beledweyne: federal electoral commission mid-Feb suspended voting for seat citing allegations of interference, but state commission went ahead resulting in Yasin's selection 20 Feb; federal commission next day declared vote null and void. Voting in Feb shifted from state capitals to secondary locations, with first vote outside state capitals held 9-10 Feb in South West state's Barawe city; Jubaland govt officials and MPs 13 Feb said elections

cannot take place under current conditions in Gedo region's Garbaharey city, citing challenges including alleged presence of NISA agents there. Meanwhile, tensions persisted in Beledweyne after federal security forces late Jan deployed to city to facilitate Hirshabelle President Ali Guudlaawe's visit and initiation of polls: clash between federal Police Special Operations Battalion (Haramcad) and local police forces 17 Feb left local police commander dead. As authorities failed to complete lower house elections by 25 Feb deadline, National Consultative Council (which comprises federal and state govt leaders) 24 Feb extended electoral deadline to 15 March. In response, U.S. 25 Feb imposed visa restrictions on individuals accused of undermining elections "to promote accountability for their obstructionist actions". Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab stepped up violence targeting electoral participants and election venues. Notably, mortars 9 Feb temporarily disrupted voting in Barawe city. In capital Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab suicide bomber 10 Feb targeted convoy of Somaliland election delegates near presidential palace, killing eight people; Al-Shabaab 16 Feb launched series of attacks – its most coordinated in capital in at least a year – targeting police stations, security checkpoints and govt officials, killing dozen people. Suicide blast 19 Feb killed at least 13 people including one lower house election candidate in Beledweyne. U.S. 22 Feb conducted first drone strike against Al-Shabaab in Somalia since Aug, in Duduble area, north west of Mogadishu.

➔ **Somaliland Govt carried out series of foreign policy engagements.**

FM Essa Kayd 9-11 Feb led senior ministerial delegation's visit to Taiwan, described ties with Taiwan as "special and historical relationship between two champions of democracies in Africa and Asia"; China 9 Feb condemned visit, and Kayd 11 Feb said "China cannot dictate" to "born free" Somaliland. President Bihi 21 Feb started multiple-day visit to neighbouring Djibouti to discuss strengthening bilateral ties. Diplomatic offensive follows Bihi's notable 18 Jan visit to Ethiopia.

➔ **South Sudan Fighting continued between VP Riek Machar's forces and breakaway Kitgwang faction; rebel group National Salvation Front faced military pressure in Equatoria region; intercommunal and other violence persisted.**

Clashes between Machar's Sudan's People Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) on one hand, and breakaway Kitgwang faction headed by Simon Gatwech and govt-aligned forces on the other, 6 Feb reportedly killed ten in Nasir and Longechuk counties of Upper Nile state. Fighting mid- to late Feb also pitted Machar loyalists against either Kitgwang or President Kiir's Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Government forces in several counties of Unity state. Repeated clashes between Thomas Cirillo's National Salvation Front (NAS) and South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) reported late Jan and early Feb in Lainya and Wonduruba areas of Central Equatoria state, and in Western Equatoria state. Gen Paul Malong's holdout rebel group South Sudan United Front (SSUF) and SSPDF soldiers 9 Feb also reportedly clashed near Lakes state's capital Rumbek; SSUF 11 Feb claimed to have killed six govt soldiers. Intercommunal and other violence continued in several states. Cattle-related violence 7 Feb killed five in Uror county of Jonglei state. Lakes state police reported security forces and suspected criminals 9 Feb clashed, leaving at least six killed in Cueibet county. Assailants believed to come from Twic county (Warrap state) 10 Feb reportedly killed four people in Rumamer county of Abyei Administrative Area. Violent clashes between youth from Ruweng Administrative Area and youth from Guit county (Unity state) 12 Feb left at least 23 dead near Longlei village, Unity state. Jonglei state

authorities said armed men from Ayod and Nyirol counties 18 Feb attacked cattle camp in Uror county leaving 16 people dead and sparking several days of intercommunal clashes. Eastern Equatoria state officials said clashes between cattle raiders and pastoralists 27 Feb left at least 20 people dead in Magwi county. Unidentified gunmen 28 Feb attacked UN food convoy in Gadiang area, Jonglei state, leaving at least one injured.

➡ **Sudan First stage of UN-led mediation to salvage political transition inconclusive, while violent crackdown on protests continued; situation remained tense in Darfur.** In first interview on national TV since Oct, coup leader and head of Sovereign Council Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan 12 Feb said “military will quit politics” after elections, denied need for security sector reform and dismissed Western threats of sanctions. UN mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) next day concluded first stage of mediation between army and civilian actors with no clear outcome; consultations failed to bring all actors to negotiation table, with powerful civil society group Sudanese Professional Association 4 Feb accusing UNITAMS of implicitly recognising coup leaders and violating its mandate. Grassroots networks Khartoum Resistance Committees 27 Feb published political charter laying out key demands, including two-year transition under PM appointed by document’s signatories. Mass protests against military rule continued. Notably, tens of thousands 14 Feb took to streets across country and inhabitants of Northern state early to mid-Feb blocked road to Egypt in protest against increase in electricity prices; security forces’ crackdown throughout month killed five and injured hundreds, bringing number of protesters killed since Oct coup to at least 84. Amid wave of detentions, authorities 9 Feb arrested former minister and two members of Empowerment Removal Committee, which aims to dismantle remnants of former President Bashir’s regime; 13 Feb detained former civilian member of Sovereign Council Mohamed al-Faki. UN official 24 Feb said authorities had released 115 anti-coup protesters from weeks-long detention. Amid deadly clashes involving tribal militias in Darfur, Burhan and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces head Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo “Hemedti” 2 Feb presided over meeting on implementation of security arrangements in North Darfur’s capital El Fasher; Burhan reportedly ordered armed groups to leave major towns in Darfur to make way for implementation of 2020 Juba Peace Agreement; security forces reportedly injured five demonstrators protesting visit. Clashes between military forces and armed groups around former AU-UN peacekeeping mission UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher 5 Feb killed at least four.

➡ **Tanzania Govt lifted former President Magufuli-era bans on four newspapers and President Suluhu Hassan met opposition leader abroad.** Following resignation of parliament speaker amid feud with Suluhu Hassan in Jan, parliament 1 Feb elected Tulia Ackson as new speaker. Govt 10 Feb announced removing ban on four newspapers imposed under Magufuli’s rule. Suluhu Hassan 16 Feb met Deputy Chairman of opposition Chadema party Tundu Lissu in Belgian capital Brussels, where Lissu is in self-imposed exile, to discuss opposition’s call for new constitution and independent electoral body; Lissu also reportedly requested terrorism charges facing Chadema Chairman Freeman Mbowe be dropped. Court 18 Feb however confirmed Mbowe will stand trial. Mtwara regional police commander 16 Feb reported discovery 6, 12 and 15 Feb of bodies of

three missing motorcycle taxi drivers in southern Mtwara region near Mozambican border.

➔ **Uganda Rapprochement with Rwanda continued, torture allegations sparked condemnation, and military pursued operations in DR Congo.** Following late Jan border reopening between Rwanda and Uganda after three-year closure, cautious rapprochement between neighbouring countries held. Case of novelist Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, who reported he was tortured during detention, including in presence of President Museveni's son, Lt Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, continued to spark outcry. Notably, over 100 opposition lawmakers 3 Feb began two-week parliamentary boycott; U.S. embassy 4 Feb demanded accountability for those responsible for abuse, and EU delegation 7 Feb expressed concern over "increase of reports of torture". Govt 8 Feb denied using torture, and in defiance of international criticism, Museveni 9 Feb appointed Maj Gen Abel Kandoho, who is blacklisted by U.S. for human rights violations, as head of police force; move reverted previous gesture toward Rwanda when Museveni 25 Jan relieved Kandoho (long accused by Kigali of kidnapping and torturing Rwandans in Uganda) from his duties and ordered his transfer to South Sudan. Rukirabashaija 9 Feb fled Uganda for Germany to get medical treatment. Meanwhile, Ugandan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s militaries 1, 9 Feb opened second and third offensive route against Allied Democratic Forces in eastern DRC. Police 14 Feb announced arrest of seven terror suspects in Butambala and Kalungu districts for alleged role in late 2021 Kampala attacks. International Court of Justice 9 Feb ordered Uganda to pay \$325mn in reparations to DRC for occupation of DRC's eastern Ituri province during 1998-2003 war; govt rejected ruling. Arrest of *boda boda* driver 23 Feb sparked riot in Koboko district, which prompted clashes that left one dead and three injured.

Southern Africa

➔ **Mozambique In far north, Islamist militant attacks continued along N380 corridor in Macomia district; insurgent and pro-govt operations also centred around Cabo Delgado province's northern districts.** Islamist militants 1 Feb attacked Matemo Island, Ibo district, killing three civilians before leaving next day following govt airstrike. Militants 5 Feb launched series of raids in southern Macomia, moving from south to north along N380 road that connects Macomia town to Pemba city: four civilians killed in ambush near Nacate village on Macomia-Quissanga border; one man killed and at least ten women and girls kidnapped in Rafique village; Bangala 2 village, 10km south of Macomia city, also under attack. Militants same day ambushed patrol reportedly made up of Mozambican, Rwandan and southern African regional bloc SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) soldiers near Macomia's Nova Zambezia village; resulting firefight left five assailants and one Mozambican soldier dead. Islamic State Central Africa Province 25 Feb claimed militants killed several Mozambican troops in three Macomia villages 23 Feb. International Organization for Migration 8 Feb recorded 3,504 people displaced by violence in Meluco district since 2 Feb. Insurgent and pro-govt operations also took place in Cabo Delgado's northern districts of Nangade and Palma. In Nangade, suspected militants 6 Feb attacked Nambedo village, reportedly killing one civilian and one local militia member and kidnapping six women; next

day killed one civilian in Namuembe village, prompting firefight with local militia and vigilantes: seven insurgents, three local vigilantes and one militiaman reportedly killed. Local militia 9 Feb also killed six insurgents in ambush near Namuembe. Joint force made up of Rwandan military and police and Mozambican military personnel 7-8 Feb launched clearing operations in western Palma district; several insurgents reportedly killed or captured. Rwandan President Kagame subsequently said at least 80% of Rwandan forces' area of responsibility in northern Mozambique cleared of insurgents. Columns of insurgents pushed out of their bases in western Palma 18 Feb arrived in Nangade district, immediately attacked two villages killing at least six civilians. Militants in following days moved across district and attacked several villages while SAMIM forces stationed in Nangade town reportedly failed to respond.

↓ 🇿🇼 **Zimbabwe** **Deadly political violence erupted as political parties geared up for March elections; situation could escalate around voting day.** President Mnangagwa 12 Feb launched ruling party ZANU-PF's campaign for long-delayed legislative and municipal by-elections scheduled for 26 March, addressing thousands of supporters at rally near capital Harare. Throughout Feb, main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) and civil society organisations denounced raft of attacks against CCC supporters by ruling party members or police. CCC accused ZANU-PF supporters of beating up CCC members with iron bars during campaign rally of opposition party's VP Tendai Biti in Harare East constituency 16 Feb; ZANU-PF same day denounced unfounded allegations. Video of policemen allegedly assaulting CCC supporters in Harare 18 Feb surfaced on social media; church leaders same day urged govt institutions to conduct peaceful polls and called on security forces to avoid misconduct. CCC said police 19 Feb detained at least 80 opposition supporters who were campaigning in Masvingo city (Masvingo province). Police 20 Feb mounted roadblocks on major axes in Harare in alleged attempt to disrupt CCC's star rally; addressing thousands of supporters, opposition leader Nelson Chamisa same day accused electoral commission of attempting to rig by-elections by manipulating electoral roll. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum 24 Feb denounced increase in politically motivated violence over past month. Suspected ZANU-PF supporters 27 Feb attacked CCC rally in Kwekwe city (Midlands province), reportedly leaving two dead and over 20 wounded; police arrested 16 people suspected of involvement in violence.

Sahel

➡ **Burkina Faso** **Military junta approved three-year transition before elections; French and Burkinabé forces conducted airstrikes against jihadists in north and east.** Lt Col Henri-Paul Sandaogo Damiba sworn in as president 16 Feb, pledged to "preserve, respect, uphold and defend the Constitution". Junta early Feb set up 15-member technical commission tasked with outlining transition charter and roadmap; commission 23 Feb proposed 30-month transition led by Damiba before elections. After military junta 28 Feb opened "national consultation" to debate commission's proposals, Damiba overnight 28 Feb-1 March signed charter outlining three-year transition. Amid lull in jihadist violence in Sahel region (north), military 2-3 and 11-13 Feb carried out airstrikes in Soum, Oudalan and Seno provinces. Centre-North region saw significant clashes between volunteers fighting alongside security forces (VDPs) and al-Qaeda affiliated Group for the

Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) or Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) jihadists: at least four VDPs and one civilian killed in Namentenga province 2 and 11 Feb; seven dead including one civilian in Sanmatenga province 2-3 Feb. Explosive device attack on military convoy 8 Feb killed two soldiers in Centre-North's Bam province. In North region, air force 11 Feb carried out two airstrikes on presumed JNIM positions in Yatenga province, causing unknown casualties. Also in Yatenga, French Barkhane forces 7 Feb launched airstrike on camp of JNIM-affiliated Ansarul Islam combatants suspected of involvement in Nov 2021 Inata attack; ten jihadists and four civilians reportedly killed. East region from late-Jan witnessed significant upsurge in violence. Barkhane forces 10 Feb carried out three airstrikes and one drone strike against presumed JNIM convoys in Tapoa province, killing around 40 militants; strikes reportedly targeted militants suspected of involvement in 8 Feb attacks in Benin (see Benin). Jihadists also flexed their muscles across East region despite stiff resistance from local volunteer defence groups; notably, presumed JNIM militants 11 Feb burned schools in several villages of Gnagna province.

➔ **Mali France and European partners announced troop withdrawal amid heightened tensions with Bamako, while jihadist violence persisted.** France and allied European countries 17 Feb announced full withdrawal of French Barkhane and European Takuba forces from Mali within six months. Transitional authorities next day denounced "unilateral" decision in breach of bilateral agreements, asked France and European countries to pull out forces "without delay"; French President Macron immediately rejected request, demanded "respect", saying "France has been, equipping, training" Malian army for nine years. Transition's trajectory stoked domestic tensions. Main political and civil society umbrella group Cadre d'échange des partis politiques pour une transition réussie 9 Feb announced it would no longer recognise transitional authorities beyond 25 March – end of initially agreed 18-month transition; coalition also warned it would reject transition charter's revision. Legislative body National Transitional Council 21 Feb however approved amendment to transition's charter extending transition period for up to five years. Meanwhile, EU 4 Feb imposed travel bans and asset freezes on five prominent members of transitional govt including PM Choguel Maïga. West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS delegation 25 Feb left Bamako after inconclusive talks with military junta over transition's duration. Violence continued notably in Gao region's Ansongo district; joint operation between Takuba task force and Malian army 1-6 Feb reportedly killed 30 Islamist militants in Indelimane area; Takuba 9-13 Feb also killed eight suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) combatants in Inchakamak area; Malian army 18 Feb said it had killed 57 jihadists and lost eight soldiers in Tessit area. Meanwhile, ISGS militants 13-15 Feb killed about 40 civilians in several villages of Ansongo district. Amid recent influx of ISGS fighters from neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso, clashes continued between al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and ISGS. Notably, fighting 5-6 Feb left at least ten ISGS combatants dead in Ansongo district. Amid ongoing accusations of army abuses against civilians, reports emerged of army airstrike killing 13 civilians in Ségou region's Niono district 7 Feb.

➔ **Niger Niger set to take on enhanced role in regional security architecture amid departure of French and other forces from Mali; insecurity remained widespread in Tillabery and Diffa regions.** French Defence Minister Florence Parly 2-3 Feb visited Niger to assure Niamey of Paris's

“unfailing support” in fight against jihadists amid reconfiguration of France’s security presence in Sahel. France and partners 17 Feb announced full withdrawal of French Barkhane and European Takuba forces from Mali within six months, also stated intent to build new regional security architecture focusing on Niger and West African coastal countries by June. President Bazoum same day confirmed Niger will welcome part of Takuba troops leaving Mali but did not mention Barkhane. Possible reinforcement of French military presence stoked domestic tensions. Authorities 10 Feb banned demonstration scheduled for next day by civil society coalition Tournons La Page against French presence and deployed law enforcement forces in capital Niamey to prevent gathering. Meanwhile, several deadly attacks targeted civilians, local self-defence groups and military forces in Tillabery region (south west). Notably, army vehicle 16 Feb struck explosive device near Téra department’s Samira gold-mining site, leaving five killed and two wounded; unidentified assailants 20 Feb attacked truck in Banibangou department killing at least 18 civilians. In Diffa region (south east), series of abductions by suspected Boko Haram (BH) Bakura faction or Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) continued. Notably, ISWAP or Bakura faction 8 Feb killed one person and abducted 16 including women and children in Bosso department. Banditry activity and several abductions recorded in Maradi region (south). Unidentified gunmen 1 Feb attacked civilians in Koakora village (Guidan Roumdji department) and abducted four women; next day clashed with local defence militia and abducted woman in Tchadi village (also Guidan Roumdji). Also in Maradi, Nigerian army airstrike targeting armed bandits 18 Feb reportedly killed seven children in Nachadé village (Madarounfa department) bordering Nigeria.

West Africa

➔ **Benin Deadly attacks in northern wildlife reserve confirmed spillover of jihadist violence into West African coastal countries.**

Suspected al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims 8 Feb launched attacks involving improvised explosive devices on two park ranger patrols in W National Park near border with Niger and Burkina Faso; eight reportedly killed, including five park rangers, one park official, one soldier and one French instructor accompanying them. Reconnaissance patrol 10 Feb hit another explosive in same area, killing one park official. France 12 Feb said it had killed 40 militants allegedly linked to 8 and 10 Feb attacks in airstrikes in Burkina Faso.

➔ **Côte d’Ivoire Authorities and international partners hinted at increased role for Côte d’Ivoire in region’s security architecture in wake of French forces’ withdrawal from Mali.**

French Chief of Defence Staff Gen Thierry Burkhard and Ivorian Defence Minister Téné Birahima Ouattara 7 Feb met in economic capital Abidjan to discuss security cooperation; Burkhard pledged to help “consolidate the autonomy of the Ivorian army to fight terrorism”. President Ouattara 16 Feb said planned departure of French and European forces from Mali “creates a vacuum”, and confirmed ongoing discussions to host additional French troops. French President Macron 17 Feb stated France and European partners “consider extending [...] support” to ad hoc security coalition of West African states, Accra Initiative, which aims to address transnational organised crime and violent extremism in member countries’ border areas. Authorities 21-28 Feb hosted U.S.-led

annual military training program for African forces. Amid strained relations with Mali, Ouattara 17 Feb said Mali's transitional leaders should "comply with the demands of the Economic Community of West African States" for sanctions to be lifted. In phone call leaked 11 Feb, Ouattara and former Malian PM Boubou Cissé made harsh remarks on Malian interim President Goïta and inner circle. Meanwhile, political dialogue between govt and political opposition resumed 14 Feb; delegates explored ways to consolidate sociopolitical appeasement measures, including return of political dissidents in exile and release of those arrested during 2010-2011 post-electoral violence.

➡ **Guinea Tensions ran high between political class and military over transition's trajectory.** Legislative body National Transitional Council (CNT) 5 Feb met for inaugural session and 7 Feb held first plenary session in capital Conakry. Coalition of opposition parties Forum des Partis Politiques, which includes former PM Sidya Touré's Union of Republican Forces, 10 Feb decried as "inappropriate" population's hearing tour planned by CNT President Dansa Kourouma and peers. Amid rumours that transition's President Doumbouya wants CNT to set age limit for presidential candidates, septuagenarian Touré 12 Feb urged Doumbouya to "abstain from excluding political leaders" from upcoming elections. New Prosecutor Alphonse Charles Wright 3 Feb referred embezzlement case against prominent politician Cellou Dalein Diallo to newly created Court for the Repression of Economic and Financial Crimes; Diallo 5 Feb painted move as "another manoeuvre to harm him". Wright 13 Feb launched investigations into crimes committed under former President Condé between 2010 and 2020, including killings. Meanwhile, regional bloc Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 3 Feb voiced renewed concern over lack of electoral calendar to restore constitutional rule. Joint ECOWAS-UN delegation 27 Feb landed in Conakry to discuss electoral schedule with transitional authorities.

⚡ **Guinea-Bissau Murky attack on govt palace exposed fragility of President Sissoco Embaló's seat and gave rise to competing narratives.** Heavy gunfire 1 Feb broke out in capital Bissau near govt premises where Embaló and PM Nuno Nabiam were chairing cabinet meeting; Embaló hours later said govt forces had repelled attackers and declared situation under control; also suggested apparent "assassination attempt" aimed to end his fight against drug trafficking. Govt 2 Feb said 11 people killed in firefight, including four civilians; media reported seven security personnel, three civilians and one assailant killed; medical sources mentioned only eight killed. Embaló 10 Feb said three people previously detained by U.S. authorities on drug-trafficking charges were behind coup plot, including ex-Navy chief Bubo na Tchuto; also said all three had been arrested. Main opposition party African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) in following days expressed skepticism about president's narrative, with party leader Domingos Simoes Pereira 3 Feb telling Deutsche Welle "such a coup would be an ideal pretext to intensify his purge of internal critics and opposition figures"; Prosecutor General's Office 22 Feb barred Pereira from leaving country, citing legal cases against him. West Africa's regional bloc, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 1 Feb condemned "coup attempt" and 3 Feb said it will deploy stabilising force to country.

➡ **Nigeria Bandits displaced by airstrikes in North West could pose new threats elsewhere, and jihadists established stronger presence in Niger state.** In North West, govt airstrikes 2 and 16 Feb killed at least 83 suspected gunmen including three local kingpins in Katsina state. Deadly attacks on civilians however continued. In Kaduna state, armed groups killed 11 people in Kaura area 4 Feb, ten in Zangon Kataf area 9 and 15 Feb and at least ten in Birnin Gwari area 26 Feb. In Katsina, bandits 4 and 8 Feb killed at least 16 people and kidnapped scores in Jibiya and Bakori areas. In Zamfara state, bandits 3-6 Feb killed about 30 civilians in Tsafe and Bungudu areas; 18-19 Feb killed at least 18 in Anka area. Violence raged in Niger state adjoining North West: armed groups 7 and 18-19 Feb killed at least 52 and kidnapped 42 villagers in Shiroro and Munya areas; 26 Feb killed at least 17 in Mashegu, Lavun and Wushishi areas. Meanwhile, local think-tank SB Morgen Intelligence 8 Feb said bandits from Zamfara had moved into Kwara state (south of Niger state) to escape military. Boko Haram or Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) launched attacks in Niger state, killing 37 people, mainly civilians, in Shiroro area 5 and 20-21 Feb. Both groups remained active in North East's Borno state despite suffering major losses. Explosive device attack 4 Feb killed around 20 soldiers in Abadam area; ISWAP 25-26 Feb killed at least 25 people in Chibok, Damboa and Biu areas. Govt airstrikes 3-4 Feb killed 45 suspected jihadists in Monguno and Marte areas, 13 Feb killed ISWAP commander Mallam Buba Danfulani in Kukawa area. Troops and vigilantes 10 Feb killed around 20 jihadists in Gubio area. In South East, gunmen 11-12 Feb killed seven policemen in Enugu state capital; 15 Feb killed at least eight civilians in Abia state's Ukwu West area; 20 Feb killed four policemen in Imo and Anambra states; police blamed attacks on Biafra separatist group's armed wing Eastern Security Network. In Anambra, gunmen 26 Feb killed 20 in Awka North area, reportedly due to cult rivalry.