

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➔ **Bosnia** Netherlands Supreme Court 19 July ruled that, due to failure by Dutch UN peacekeepers to adequately protect 350 Bosnian Muslims killed in 1995 Srebrenica massacre, state was liable for 10% of damages suffered by surviving relatives; decision reduced different court's previous assessment of 30% responsibility, disappointing victims' organisation which sued for compensation. Bosnian who joined Islamic State (ISIS) in 2014 charged for terrorism 15 July.

↓ **Kosovo** Kosovo-Serbia tensions rose as Kosovo reportedly banned Serbian officials from entering country, and PM Haradinaj resigned after war crimes tribunal summoned him as suspect, triggering uncertainty over govt's legal competency to continue governing. Shopkeepers in Kosovo's northern Serb-led municipalities reportedly went on strike 1-3 July in protest against Kosovo's 100% customs tariff on imports from Serbia imposed in Nov 2018. PM Haradinaj 2 July accused Serbian President Vučić of trying to "destabilise" northern Kosovo. Kosovo foreign ministry spokesperson 4 July said govt had banned Serbian officials from entering Kosovo because Serbia published "constant propaganda and false news" about Kosovo. Next day, govt denied ban. Serbia's defence minister 10 July said Kosovo had prevented him from entering country and called Kosovo's leaders "liars". Haradinaj 19 July announced he would resign as PM citing summons to appear as suspect in war crimes court in The Hague and called for early polls. After resigning 22 July, he appeared in court in The Hague 24 July but refused to answer prosecutor's questions; Haradinaj was previously acquitted of wartime crimes in 2012 and 2018. Haradinaj's resignation created uncertainty over legality of govt's continued rule; Haradinaj 29 July reportedly requested Constitutional Court to rule on matter.

➔ **North Macedonia** President Pendarovski 15 July said he expected North Macedonia to become NATO member by end of 2019. FMs of Cyprus and North Macedonia at conference in Greece 17 July said two countries would establish diplomatic relations at next EU Foreign Affairs Council summit in Aug 2019. U.S. Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian affairs visited North Macedonia and Greece 21-27 July and reportedly discussed issue of former's desire to become member of NATO and EU.

Caucasus

➔ **Armenia** Constitutional Court 18 July said it had requested advice from European Court of Human Rights and Venice Commission of Council of Europe regarding case of former President Robert Kocharyan, who was arrested for third time in June for ordering violent crackdown against opposition protesters after 2008 election. Kocharyan's team reportedly welcomed decision; hearing set for 29 Aug. European Council President Donald Tusk visited Azerbaijan and Armenia 9-10 July; 10 July met PM Pashinyan, highlighted Armenia's effective implementation of EU-Armenia partnership agreement that supports Armenian modernisation, and

reconfirmed that “EU will continue providing technical and financial assistance for its implementation”.

➡ **Azerbaijan** European Council President Donald Tusk visited Azerbaijan and Armenia 9-10 July; 9 July met President Aliyev, reconfirmed EU’s “readiness to further deepen [its] cooperation with Azerbaijan”, said Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can only be resolved by political settlement in accordance with international law and expressed EU’s readiness to further support concrete peacebuilding activities to prepare population for peace.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Security along front lines improved slightly after late June meeting between Armenian and Azerbaijani FMs, but both sides continued to report security incidents mainly along state borders, which increased in frequency in second half of July. Azerbaijan 18 July said Armenian sniper fire injured one of its border guards on shared border; Armenia did not confirm. Armenian defence ministry said Azerbaijan injured one of its soldiers 27 July and killed another 28 July, Azerbaijan did not confirm either incident. Armenian FM 5 July visited de facto Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), met local leadership and signed annual plan to consult with de facto foreign ministry. U.S. House of Representatives 10 July adopted two amendments related to NK conflict as part of its National Defense Authorization Act; first blocks U.S. spending on transfer of defence articles or services to Azerbaijan that could strengthen its air capabilities, and second calls on both sides to strengthen NK ceasefire at Line of Contact by refraining from deploying “snipers, heavy arms, and new weaponry”, deploying “gun-fire locator systems”, and increasing OSCE observers along line. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly members 8 July adopted Luxembourg declaration; document endorses multilateral approach to addressing challenges, including arms control and conflict resolution, and encourages dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan within mediation process led by OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and calls on both sides to take “specific and tangible measures to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict”.

➡ **Georgia** Following large-scale street protests and rise in Georgia-Russia tensions in June, protests eased and Russian President Putin blocked sanctions against Georgia. Presenter on opposition TV channel 8 July broadcast obscenity-filled message directed at Putin, sparking outrage and leading senior govt officials to condemn message and some politicians to publicly express their regret to Russian leader. To calm situation Putin 9 July said that “out of respect for the Georgian people” he would not support new economic sanctions against Georgia which members of Russian State Duma 8 July proposed, including suspending import of wine and mineral water from Georgia. Statement prompted parliamentarians to halt drafting any new sanction bill. Street protests that erupted in capital Tbilisi in June lost momentum. Interior Minister Giorgi Gakharia, whom protesters held responsible for heavy-handed police crackdown on rally in June, 12 July promised to investigate crackdown and punish those responsible but said he would not resign. Leader of Georgian dream party supported interior minister’s decision and 17 July said resignation would have been betrayal of state. Prosecutor’s office 15 and 17 July arrested two policemen involved in crackdown on protesters, and interior ministry suspended ten police officers and head of interior ministry’s Special Task Department. Authorities 15 July arrested four protesters for instigating violence in

June. In South Ossetia, de facto special security service 8 July arrested former staff member and his spouse and two current employees for passing secret information to Georgia. Abkhaz opposition leader Aslan Bzhania, still in hospital after alleged poisoning in April, 19 July withdrew his candidacy for Abkhazia's presidential elections scheduled for Aug and urged voters to support opposition candidate Alkhas Kvitsinia.

➡ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Govt's barring of most independent candidates from Sept local elections sparked mass protests in capital Moscow, which police violently suppressed, arresting over 1,300 protesters. After authorities banned over 30 independent candidates from running in 8 Sept elections for Moscow's city legislature, protests began mid-July. Authorities night of 24-25 July arrested opposition party leaders, including main opposition leader Aleksei Navalny, detained for 30 days, for planning to lead non-authorized protests. Shortly after his arrest, Navalny was hospitalised for one day 28 July for severe swelling; doctor said he had been exposed to "toxic agent". Police suppressed mass protests in Moscow 27 July, assaulting protesters and arresting over 1,300. In North Caucasus region, Islamic State (ISIS) claimed deadly grenade attack at police station in Chechnya and authorities continued to arrest journalists and activists. In Chechnya, unidentified assailant 1 July attacked police post in Achkoi-Martan district with knife and grenade, killing one police officer and injuring several others, before police shot him dead; ISIS claimed responsibility. In Ingushetia, authorities in Nazran 12 July arrested and detained for possessing drugs Rashin Maysigov, reporter for investigative news site Fortanga. According to his lawyer, Maysigov was tortured during interrogation. Russia 14-21 July reportedly blocked access to Fortanga. At Russia's request, authorities in Sweden 8 July reportedly detained self-exiled Chechen human rights activist but later released him after refusing to extradite him to Russia. Russia 8 July appointed to post of deputy defence minister Ynus-Bek Yevkurov, former leader of Ingushetia who resigned in June amid tension over Sept 2018 border delineation deal between Ingushetia and Chechnya.

Eastern Europe

➡ **Moldova** Following creation of coalition govt in June, European Commission 15 July said it would unlock €14.5mn in financial aid citing "progress on issues which are linked to the disbursement of money", and proceeded to disburse funds 23 July. During 24 July visit to Brussels, new PM Maia Sandu signed three financial assistance agreements worth total of €40.25mn with EU enlargement commissioner Johannes Hahn, who lauded new anti-corruption efforts; EU had cut aid to govt in Nov amid concerns of democratic backsliding. Authorities 26 July issued national arrest warrant for oligarch Ilan Shor, who allegedly organised theft of €0.9bn from banking sector in 2014.

➡ **Ukraine** Following escalation in fighting between govt forces and Russian-backed separatists in Donbas in east, parties renewed ceasefire 21 July, and President Zelensky's party won snap parliamentary elections. In Donbas, fighting intensified in first half of July with both sides using heavy weapons along contact line; at least eight separatist fighters, twelve members of Ukrainian army and national guard, and five civilians killed. Talks made progress on several fronts. At 17

July Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) meeting in Minsk, capital of Belarus, parties agreed on how to rebuild pedestrian bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska checkpoint, critical for humanitarian access, and not to use it for military purposes. At 18 July TCG meeting, sides agreed to implement renewed ceasefire from 21 July in Donbas, for first time specifying “ban on any sort of fire”, and made progress toward “all-for-all” prisoner exchange. After military 19 July allegedly suggested it would reject TCG ban on defensive fire, Ukraine’s envoy to talks clarified ceasefire would not prohibit return fire in case of attack. Parliamentary elections held peacefully 21 July but turnout low at 49.8%; Zelensky’s Sluha Narodu party won with 42% of vote, pro-Russian Opozytsiyna Platforma-Za Zhyttya came second with 13%. Ukraine-Russia relations remained strained. Zelensky and Russian President Putin in phone call 11 July (their first direct interaction) reportedly discussed 24 Ukrainian sailors whom Russian security forces captured in Nov 2018. After Russian state investigators finalised charges against sailors of violating country’s borders, Moscow court 17 July approved investigators’ request to prolong their pre-trial detention for two additional months until late Oct. Putin 17 July signed order to expand eligibility for expedited Russian citizenship; in addition to those registered in areas controlled by Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, all residents and former residents of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts will be able to apply; Ukraine condemned move. During U.S. and Ukrainian-led multinational maritime exercise in north west Black Sea. Ukraine navy said Russian destroyer 10 July created “dangerous situation” by sailing into area restricted for live-fire drills, which Russia denied. Ukrainian authorities 24 July in Odessa region detained Russian tanker allegedly used to block Kerch Strait prior to Russian seizure of Ukrainian boats and their crews 25 Nov; Russian crew released that day.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➡ **Cyprus** Tensions persisted between Republic of Cyprus and EU on one side and Turkey and Turkish Cypriot leadership on other over efforts to extract hydrocarbons off Cypriot coast. Turkey early July deployed a second drilling ship, called Yavuz, to East Mediterranean. Turkish FM Çavuşoğlu 10 July warned that EU’s siding with Republic of Cyprus would hamper resolution of Cyprus issue. Turkish Cypriot leadership 11 July proposed joint committee with Greek Cypriots on natural gas; Cypriot govt dismissed proposal. Citing Turkey’s violation of Cyprus’s sovereignty, EU’s Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) 15 July cut pre-accession assistance to Turkey for 2020 by €145.8mn, suspended talks for aviation agreement with Ankara and reviewed sovereign-backed lending to Turkey. Turkish energy minister 16 July said Turkey would deploy a second seismic exploration vessel to East Mediterranean, bringing total number of Turkish ships in area to four.

➡ **Northern Ireland (UK)** Amid growing concerns over possible escalation of dissident violence following UK’s planned departure from EU, police responding to reports of explosion in Craigavon, County Armagh night of 26-27 July found booby-trapped explosive device made to look like fired mortar near bus stop; police accused dissident republicans of laying device in attempt to kill police officers.

➡ **Turkey** Fighting continued between security forces and Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), tensions rose between Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees, and govt’s

purchase of Russian missile defence system continued to fuel tensions with U.S.. Military continued to carry out air and land operations against PKK in Turkey's south east and northern Iraq; senior PKK figures were among members killed. In Iraqi Kurdistan's regional capital Erbil, unidentified assailants 17 July killed two people, including Turkish diplomat; Turkish state blamed attack on PKK while PKK leadership denied direct involvement. Authorities maintained crackdown on members of pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Following 29 June violent protests against Syrian refugees in Istanbul, authorities 2 July detained sixteen people for inciting hatred on social media. Istanbul governor's office 22 July set 20 Aug as deadline for Syrian refugees to return to Turkish province in which they registered or face forced return. Syrian opposition activists 22 July reported that Turkish authorities had in July deported 1,000 Syrian refugees to Syria's Idlib province; Turkish govt 31 July denied reports. Islamic State (ISIS) 10 July released propaganda video in Turkish threatening Turkey and U.S.; authorities 9-18 July arrested 34 suspected ISIS members in Istanbul and Adana, including alleged emir of ISIS's Turkey branch. After Russia 12 July began delivery of its S-400 surface-to-air missile defence system to Turkey, U.S. President Trump 16 July banned Turkey from buying American F-35 fighter jets. U.S. administration and Congress deliberated over set of sanctions to impose on Turkey under Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). In response to Turkey's continued efforts to locate and extract hydrocarbons off Cyprus in East Mediterranean, EU's Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) 15 July imposed sanctions on Turkey including cut in pre-accession assistance for 2020 by €145.8mn citing Ankara's violation of Republic of Cyprus's sovereignty (see Cyprus).

Central Asia

➡ **Kazakhstan** Authorities continued to repress nationwide anti-govt protests spurred by June's presidential election, which foreign observers rated far short of democratic standards. Sporadic protests and detentions continued throughout month; notably, authorities 6 July reportedly detained at least 70 anti-govt protesters in capital Nur-Sultan and almost 100 in Almaty.

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** Violence erupted on contested Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border and tensions persisted between President Jeenbekov and his predecessor former President Atambayev. Ahead of meeting of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan presidents to resolve border dispute planned for 26 July in Isfara in Tajikistan, residents of Tajikistan's exclave Vorukh erected Tajik flag near Kyrgyz village of Ak-Sai; move sparked fighting between Kyrgyz and Tajik locals that left one Tajik citizen dead 22 July. Further clashes reportedly erupted 24 July in Batken region of Kyrgyzstan, which surrounds Vorukh. Two presidents met in Vorukh 26 July and spoke to local residents, Jeenbekov urged "more dynamism and progress in negotiations". Former President Atambayev 19 July rejected for third time interior ministry's summons for questioning in unspecified criminal investigation. Atambayev 24 July travelled by private jet to Moscow where he met Russian President Putin. He returned next day and said Putin intended to talk to Jeenbekov about "political prosecution of opponents".

➡ **Tajikistan** Violence erupted on contested Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border. Ahead of meeting of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan presidents to resolve border dispute planned for 26 July in Isfara in Tajikistan, residents of Tajikistan's exclave Vorukh erected Tajik flag near Kyrgyz village of Ak-Sai; move sparked fighting between Kyrgyz and Tajik locals in which one Tajik citizen killed 22 July. Further clashes reportedly erupted 24 July in Batken region of Kyrgyzstan, which surrounds Vorukh. Two presidents met in Vorukh 26 July, Kyrgyzstan President Jeenbekov urged "more dynamism and progress in negotiations".

➡ **Turkmenistan** After rumours emerged of President Berdymukhamedov's death late July, govt denied his death and 24 July reported that he had spoken with his Uzbek counterpart on occasion of latter's birthday. Soon after, state television showed new clips of Berdymukhamedov, although date of their filming was not provided.