

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Burundi** Govt and ruling party continued to repress opposition. Mayor of capital Bujumbura 2 March banned opening of national HQ of new opposition party National Congress for Freedom (CNL) in Bujumbura, planned for next day, citing “security reasons”; allowed opening 10 March at which representatives of opposition, ruling party and international community attended. In Matana commune, Bururi province, police detained for one day seventeen CNL members travelling to opening. Soldiers and police 11 March barricaded off area around CNL national HQ. Ruling party youth wing Imbonerakure arrested and/or beat at least twelve CNL members in Bubanza, Ngozi and Cibitoke provinces 6-16 March. A dozen bodies found late Feb in Lake Rweru that separates Burundi and Rwanda; local authorities said bodies had floated down river that comes from Rwanda, Rwanda denied responsibility. Four bodies found in two rivers in Cibitoke province 19 March. Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights closed its office in Burundi at govt’s request 5 March, following govt’s suspension of cooperation with it in Oct 2016 accusing it of “complicity with ... Burundi’s enemies”. After govt refused to withdraw more than 400 of the 1,000 troops African Union (AU) demanded it withdraw from AU Mission in Somalia in Feb, army spokesman 15 March conceded that 600 more troops would return to Burundi soon.

➔ **Cameroon** Insecurity persisted in Anglophone west, Boko Haram (BH) continued attacks in Far North, and U.S. and EU increased diplomatic pressure on govt. In Anglophone west, fighting continued between separatist militants and security forces, as well as violence against civilians. At least 30 violent incidents left at least 26 civilians and seven members of security forces dead 11-20 March. Notably, fighting between militants and security forces in Donga-Mantung and Bui in Northwest region 11-17 March reportedly left a dozen civilians dead. Suspected separatists abducted fifteen members of University of Buea football team on Buea-Kumba road 20 March. Clashes between separatists and security forces in Limbe, Southwest region 25 March left one civilian dead. Soldiers 27 March reportedly killed three civilians in Widikum, Northwest. BH killed one civilian in Logone and Chari department and six in Mayo Sava 11-19 March. BH 24 March killed two civilians in Goulouzivini, Mayo Tsanaga; same day soldiers arrested seventeen BH combatants in Amchide, Mayo Sava; and next day BH burnt primary school of Zeleved, Mayo Tsanaga. U.S. Assistant Sec State for African Affairs Tibor Nagy 4 March called on govt to release opposition leader Maurice Kamto and find peaceful solution to Anglophone crisis, 17-19 March visited Cameroon. EU High Representative Federica Mogherini 5 March made same calls, first time at such high level. Govt 5 and 6 March criticised U.S. and EU positions. Catholic Nuncio 18 March handed over to President Biya letter from Pope Francis regarding Anglophone crisis.

➔ **Central African Republic** As security situation remained tense, implementation of Feb agreement between govt and fourteen armed groups stumbled on formation of new govt. PM Ngrebada 3 March revealed new govt, which reinstated most ministers from previous govt and included representatives of only

six armed groups. Armed groups denounced what they saw as Ngrebada's failure to respect peace deal; in protest five armed groups renounced govt appointments and two – Patriotic Movement for the Central African Republic (MPC) and Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC) – announced they would withdraw from agreement. In bid to save deal, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui 18 March held talks with all fourteen armed groups and govt in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. Chergui 20 March said govt and armed groups had agreed that Ngrebada would form new govt offering increased number of ministries to armed groups. Second new govt, announced 22 March, included twelve armed group representatives, including FDPC leader Abdoulaye Miskine. Miskine later declined his post. President Touadéra 24 and 25 March appointed twelve members of armed groups to positions in PM's office, three at ministerial level and nine at advisor level, latter including UPC leader Ali Darassa, Mahamat al-Khatim of Central African Patriotic Movement (MPC) and 3R leader Bi Sidi Souleymane; two armed group leaders thereby put in charge of mixed security units foreseen in Feb agreement and of demobilisation. Interior minister 25 March named two new prefects and five new sub-prefects, all from armed groups. No major outbreaks of violence, but security situation remained tense.

↓ **Chad** Boko Haram (BH) killed over twenty soldiers in single attack near Lake Chad in south west and govt closed border with Libya in bid to enhance security in north. Militants from BH faction known as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) night of 21-22 March attacked military position at Dangdala near Lake Chad killing 23 soldiers and taking equipment before departing toward Niger. President Déby 22 March replaced army Chief of Staff Brahim Mahamat Seid with former police chief Taher Erda and made several appointments or replacements in top-level leadership of army and in president's office. While visiting Kouri Bougoudi gold mining area in north-western Tibesti region, Territorial Administration Minister Mahamat Abali Salah 3 March announced official closure of Chad-Libya border, planned disarmament of population in Tibesti region and ban on gold panning. Hundreds of militants reportedly defected or deserted from rebel coalition Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) in March. Also in north west, Tebu traditional leaders gathered in Miski early March to listen to grievances of local residents with view to resolve conflict between govt and Tebu self-defence committee over access to gold mining sites. Authorities banned two demonstrations planned for 14 March, to protest shortages of butane gas and use of CFA Franc respectively.

➔ **DR Congo** President Tshisekedi struck deal with former President Kabila's coalition on govt formation and took steps to open political space, as senatorial elections sparked protests and violence persisted in east and centre. Tshisekedi's coalition and Kabila's Common Front for Congo (FCC) alliance 6 March agreed Kabila will name "formateur" to appoint new govt. Tshisekedi 13 March pardoned some 700 political prisoners, released some and same day opposition leader Moïse Katumbi received passport, previously denied by Kabila govt. In 15 March senatorial election, FCC won 84 of 100 seats, triggering opposition protests in capital Kinshasa, Goma, Mbuji-Mayi and Lubumbashi. Consequently, electoral commission, national assembly, outgoing senate, prosecuting authority and presidency 17 March suspended senate's appointment and postponed provincial governor elections sine die; FCC contested decision. Tshisekedi 29 March lifted suspension following

investigation by court of cassation. Opposition electoral coalition Lamuka 24 March in Brussels said it would study possible transformation into political platform. Parliamentary and municipal polls, due Dec but delayed due to Ebola and insecurity, held 31 March in Beni and Butembo in North Kivu in east and Yumbi in Mai-Ndombe province in west. U.S. Assistant Sec State for African Affairs Tibor Nagy 13 and 15 March relayed U.S. support for Tshisekedi presidency; U.S. treasury 21 March imposed new sanctions on electoral commission leadership, constitutional court president and former national assembly speaker for reported involvement in corruption. After Belgium and DR Congo agreed late Feb to revive ties, including to increase flights between Kinshasa and Brussels, visa facility for Schengen area reopened 6 March after over a year. Violence persisted in east and centre, especially in Ituri, Tshopo, North Kivu, South Kivu, former Katanga provinces and Kasais. In Ituri, North and South Kivu, army clashed with Mai-Mai groups. In North Kivu, attacks continued to hamper Ebola response: militants 10 March attacked treatment centre in Butembo for second time, killing police officer. UN Security Council 29 March renewed mandate of UN stabilisation mission in Congo until 20 Dec.

➡ **Gabon** President Bongo 23 March reportedly returned to Gabon following five-month stay in Morocco to recuperate after stroke late Oct. Opposition and civil society collective continued to call on authorities to recognise power vacuum and on people to peacefully take action if govt does not remedy situation. Collective 28 March initiated proceedings to mandate medical examination of Bongo; govt 29 March “invited” judicial authorities to take measures against people seeking to destabilise country.

⬇ **Rwanda** Tensions between Rwanda and Uganda continued to rise after Rwanda restricted trade across shared border late Feb, closing two of three principal border crossings, at Katuna and Cyanika. FM Sezibera 14 March denied Uganda’s accusations that Rwanda had blocked exports from Uganda and established permit system for Rwandan traders exporting to Uganda; he reiterated that Uganda still needed to address its harassment of Rwandan citizens in Uganda through arbitrary arrests and irregular deportations, and its harbouring of Rwandan dissidents. A dozen bodies found late Feb on Burundian side of Lake Rweru that separates Burundi and Rwanda; local Burundian authorities said bodies had floated down river that comes from Rwanda, Rwanda denied responsibility.

Horn of Africa

➡ **Eritrea** President Afwerki 3 March hosted trilateral meeting of Kenyan and Ethiopian leaders to discuss regional and bilateral issues. President Afwerki and Ethiopian PM Abiy 4 March met South Sudanese President Kiir in South Sudan capital Juba to discuss country’s peace deal. Eritrean delegation 18 March met Somaliland President Bihi in Hargeisa, Somaliland, and agreed to step up bilateral relations.

➡ **Ethiopia** PM Abiy undertook intense diplomacy to mediate regional tensions and boost ties with Gulf states and France. Abiy 6 March mediated talks between Kenyan President Kenyatta and Somali President Farmajo in Nairobi, Kenya, on dispute over maritime border; parties failed to agree on how to settle dispute. French

President Macron visited Ethiopia and 12 March signed what he called “unprecedented defence cooperation agreement” providing for naval and air cooperation. Authorities 19 March postponed indefinitely pre-elections census scheduled for 7 April. In Oromia region, ethnic violence eased, but unidentified gunmen 19 March killed five miners, including two foreigners, near Nedjo.

➡ **Kenya** Communal violence continued in north and Kenya and Somalia leaders met but failed to agree on how to settle maritime border dispute. Clashes between ethnic communities erupted in several counties in north: Meru and Borana communities 7 March clashed on disputed Isiolo and Meru counties border, leaving three dead; 13 March, clashes between Gabra and Borana communities in Marsabit county left three dead; 19 March clashes between two groups of armed herders from Samburu and Borana communities in Kom area, Isiolo county left three dead; 22-24 March clashes between Borana and Somali herders in Janju area at border between Garissa and Isiolo counties left three dead. In Turkana county, unidentified armed men 18 March killed two National Police Reservists, raising tensions between Turkana and West Pokot communities. President Kenyatta and Somalia President Farmajo 6 March held talks on disputed maritime border mediated by Ethiopian PM Abiy in Nairobi; leaders failed to agree on how to settle dispute, but Abiy said both sides agreed “to work towards peace”. Kenyatta met Abiy in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa 1 March to open Ethiopia-Kenya Trade and Investment Forum and held talks with Abiy and Eritrean President Afwerki in Eritrea 3 March to discuss regional and bilateral issues.

➡ **Somalia** Al-Shabaab attacks continued in Mogadishu and rural areas, while govt stepped up diplomacy in bid to improve relations with neighbours and federal states. In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab car bomb attack 7 March left four people dead; Al-Shabaab detonated suicide car bomb and stormed govt building 23 March, at least fifteen reported killed including assistant labour minister. Road side bomb same day killed three, including one soldier, at security checkpoint in Mogadishu. Car bomb 28 March exploded near restaurant and hotel, reportedly killing at least fifteen. In Middle Shabelle, Al-Shabaab land mine targeted African Union (AU) mission (AMISOM) military convoy in Balcad 16 March, no casualties. In Lower Shabelle, Al-Shabaab 27 March executed five, including three Kenyans, for allegedly spying for AMISOM and U.S. military and 31 March clashed with security forces backed by AU troops, after militants ambushed military checkpoint in Qoryoley; number of casualties unclear. U.S. continued airstrikes targeting Al-Shabaab: airstrike killed eight militants in Gambole area, Middle Shabelle state 8 March, according to local media; in Lower Shabelle state, airstrikes killed eight 11 March, two 12 March and three 18 March; and in Malayle, Jubaland state, airstrike killed three militants 13 March. NGO Amnesty International 20 March called on U.S. to investigate “credible evidence” its air strikes have killed numerous civilians. In Jubaland, PM Khayre 13 March met Jubaland’s state leader in Kismayo to discuss restoration of cooperation between federal govt and federal member state; parties agreed to end standoff. In Galmudug state, clan fighting erupted 18 March in Xeraale, leaving thirteen civilians dead. President Farmajo discussed strengthening regional peace and security with Ethiopian PM Abiy in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa 5 March and held talks with Kenyan President Kenyatta mediated by Abiy to restore diplomatic ties 6 March after dispute over maritime border escalated in Feb; parties failed to agree on how to settle dispute.

➔ **Somaliland** Somaliland President Bihi 18 March met Eritrean delegation in Hargeisa and agreed to step up bilateral relations.

➔ **South Sudan** As security situation remained tense, severe delays in implementation of Sept 2018 peace deal threatened to provoke its collapse and regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) made efforts to bring on board non-signatory opposition groups. Head of UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) David Shearer 8 March briefed UN Security Council expressing concern with delayed implementation in three areas: delineation of internal state boundaries, creation of unified army and ensuring security of returning opposition leaders. IGAD Special Envoy Ismail Wais 12 March met leader of opposition group South Sudan United Front (SSUF/A) Paul Malong to discuss how he could join peace deal; in joint statement Malong expressed willingness to negotiate with govt. IGAD representatives met leader of rebel group National Salvation Front (NAS) Thomas Cirillo in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa 14 March, with no major breakthrough. Cattle raids and disputes over grazing lands in Epoto, east of capital Juba, left at least twenty dead 26-27 March. UN Security Council 15 March renewed mandate of UNMISS, including new language to enable peacekeepers to protect vulnerable returnees. President Kiir met Ethiopian PM Abiy and Eritrean President Afwerki 4 March in capital Juba to discuss peace deal.

↓ **Sudan** President Bashir hardened repression of continued nationwide protests calling for him to step down. Dozens of activists and senior members of opposition National Umma Party (NUP) arrested 10 March; emergency court sentenced NUP deputy chief Mariam al-Mahdi to a week in prison; appeals court 13 March released her. PM Mohammed Taher Eylal 13 March announced new cabinet; most new ministers belong to ruling National Congress Party (NCP). NCP 30 March suspended indefinitely its general convention planned for April at which party was to elect new chief after Bashir handed leadership to his deputy 1 March. State news service 17 March said govt had secured \$300mn in loans to address economic crisis; \$230mn from Arab Monetary Fund and \$70mn Arab Trade Financing Programme, both based in United Arab Emirates. U.S. Congressional delegation in capital Khartoum 16 March held series of meetings with govt officials including head of National Intelligence and Security Services Salah Gosh, opposition, civil society, journalists and rights defenders; called for release of political prisoners. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov during his visit to Khartoum 17 March said Russia would stand by Bashir.

↓ **Uganda** Tensions between Uganda and Rwanda continued to rise after Rwanda restricted trade across shared border late Feb, closing two of three principal border crossings, at Katuna and Cyanika. Rwanda 8 March reportedly destroyed all bridges crossing to Uganda at Katuna. Ugandan foreign ministry 13 March accused Rwanda of blocking exports from Uganda and establishing export permit system for Rwandan traders exporting to Uganda. Rwandan FM Sezibera 14 March denied accusations and reiterated that Uganda still needed to address its harassment of Rwandan citizens through arbitrary arrests and irregular deportations, and its harbouring of Rwandan dissidents.

Southern Africa

➔ **Angola** Following Feb arrest of supporters of Cabinda Independence Movement (MIC), who seek independence for Cabinda exclave in west, police 13 March released a dozen activists but some 50 remained in detention and began hunger strike in protest. Delegation from main opposition party National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) visited Cabinda early March to assess situation, with UNITA leader Adalberto Costa Júnior 11 March criticising security forces for arbitrary arrests.

↓ 🌐* **Comoros Islands** President Assoumani's win in disputed presidential elections sparked protests, his attempted ouster by opposition candidates and clash between dissident and loyal security forces raising risk of greater confrontation in April. Assoumani won re-election in disputed presidential poll 24 March with 60.77% of vote; nearest rival Ahamadi Mahamoudou secured 14.62%. Observers including from African Union 25 March said voting process was tainted by many irregularities and lacked credibility or transparency; Supreme Court in Feb had barred six opposition candidates from standing, including main contender. Police 25 March fired tear gas to disperse those demonstrating against result in capital Moroni, leading to some dozen injuries, and briefly detained two opposition candidates. Interior Minister 26 March accused opposition of causing unrest and ordered mayor of Moroni to prohibit public gatherings without prior permission; opposition 26 March announced plans for civil disobedience campaign to demand re-run of vote. Opposition candidates 28 March announced creation of National Transitional Council, led by former army chief of staff Mohamed Soilihi, to take over from Assoumani, "resolve the post-election crisis, [and] ensure a peaceful transition". Authorities reportedly arrested Soilihi soon after announcement. Same day, group of soldiers, jailed for involvement in attempted coup in 2018, broke out of prison and went to military base near Moroni seeking support; subsequent exchange of fire there between these renegade soldiers and other security forces left three dead, reportedly including leader of dissident soldiers, Major Fayssoil Abdoussalam.

➔ **Mozambique** Suspected Islamist militants continued attacks in Cabo Delgado province in far north. Militants 14-15 March killed some thirteen civilians in attacks in Mocimboa da Praia district, burning down 120 homes; 22-24 March carried out four attacks in Macomia, Ancuabe and Meluco districts, with reports of injuries but no deaths. NGO Amnesty International 5 March alleged police had denied food and medical treatment to journalist detained without charge since Jan while reporting on displacement of people due to attacks. President Nyusi 12 March denied assertion of former FM Pacheco that 400 officers from former armed opposition movement Renamo had been incorporated into armed forces, saying true number was fourteen. Tropical cyclone Idai hit 15 March, flooding much of central Mozambique and cutting off port city of Beira; over 700 reportedly killed and estimated 500,000 displaced; govt mounted humanitarian response amid reports of outbreaks of cholera and concerns that displacement could lead to widespread food insecurity.

➔ **Zimbabwe** Amid economic crisis and international criticism of political repression, govt continued to move toward reforms. President Mnangagwa 12 March said country would continue national dialogue started in Feb, in which main

opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and five smaller parties refused to participate. Govt early March reportedly established ministerial taskforce to accelerate political, electoral and legislative reforms. To address economic crisis, central bank 3 March announced govt had borrowed \$985mn from African banks including Mozambique's central bank and African Export and Import Bank. Govt and civil servants continued salary renegotiations as value of new currency known as Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) dollars further weakened against USD; govt mid-March offered to increase salaries for April-Dec 2019. NGO Human Rights Watch 12 March released report on security forces' suppression of Jan protests detailing their "killings, rape, torture and other grave abuses"; report noted that although protests have ended, "security force crackdown continues". Head of EU delegation 25 March said Jan crackdown soured EU-Zimbabwe relations and tainted country's image in Europe. U.S. President Trump 4 March extended sanctions for another year, saying sanctions will remain in place until govt relaxes laws on media freedom and protests. Mnangagwa 17 March again called for lifting of sanctions against ruling ZANU-PF party, proposal supported by regional partners including South African President Ramaphosa.

West Africa

♦ **Burkina Faso** Suspected jihadist militants increased attacks against security forces and civilians, especially in East, Sahel, North and Centre-North regions, and NGOs' accusations of security forces' abuses against civilians intensified pressure on govt. Suspected jihadists 9 March attacked police station in Koumbri, North region, killing police officer; 11 March abducted two teachers in Koutougou area, Sahel region and later killed them; 13 March killed one gendarme in Tougouri, Centre-North region; next day killed two Dozo vigilantes in Louta area, Boucle du Mouhoun region; 28 March killed four gendarmes in Barani, Boucle du Mouhoun region. In East region, security forces' vehicle 16 March detonated mine in Kabonga, Kompienga province, killing police officer and soldier; roadside bomb 17 March killed three soldiers in same area. Authorities imposed curfew in East region 7 March. Army 9 March launched new security operation "Otapuanu" in East and Centre-East regions. In Sahel region, unidentified gunmen 21 March kidnapped two civilians, including mayor of Markoye village in Oudalan province. Unidentified assailants 30 March attacked police station in Niangoloko area, Cascades region in west near border with Côte d'Ivoire; three civilians and two assailants reportedly killed. Govt 16 March said it was holding over 700 terrorists in high security prisons. Burkinabé Movement for Human and People's Rights (MBDHP) 14 March accused military of summary executing at least 60 people in operation early Feb in Kain and Banh districts, Yatenga and Loroum provinces of North region. NGO Human Rights Watch 22 March echoed MBDHP allegations, estimating 115 extrajudicial killed by security forces between April 2018 and January 2019. Constitutional commission 14 March confirmed referendum would be held on constitutional reform that would set presidential term limit of two five-year terms, increase PM's powers, abolish death penalty, and establish constitutional court which could remove president under certain conditions; although referendum initially scheduled for 24 March, was subsequently delayed sine die.

► **Côte d'Ivoire** Guillaume Soro, former rebel leader who resigned from post as parliamentary speaker in Feb, positioned himself as pivotal figure of opposition to President Ouattara ahead of 2020 presidential election. Following Soro's late Feb

meetings with opposition figures, including head of Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and former President Henri Konan Bédié, former pro-Ouattara youth movement Alliance for Change (APC) 2 March formed political party under same name in support of Soro. Ouattara's Rally of Republicans (RDR)'s former secretary general Amadou Soumahoro elected parliamentary speaker 7 March to replace Soro. Opposition boycotted session to contest 5 March revision of voting procedure. Twenty-four opposition parties, which call for reform of electoral commission to correct govt overrepresentation, 11 March proposed that commission presidency be entrusted to member of civil society and that institution be provided with administrative and financial autonomy. At trial of failed Sept 2015 coup in Burkina Faso 13 March, Burkinabé Defence Minister Chérif Sy said Soro had recognised authenticity of phone recordings on which Soro reportedly discussed plans for assassinations in support of putschists with former Burkinabé FM Djibrill Bassolé. Soro's spokesperson 16 March denied accusations.

➡ **Gambia** President Barrow reshuffled cabinet after months of tension with his party; 15 March sacked VP Ousainou Darboe and two ministers, appointed Health Minister Isatou Touray as new VP. New cabinet members sworn in 28 March.

➡ **Guinea** Possible candidacy of President Condé in 2020 presidential election divided society. Opponents of third mandate disturbed gathering of Condé supporters 14 March in capital Conakry. Supporters of Condé demonstrating in Kankan in east 16 March confronted opponents chanting "no to third term".

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Legislative elections took place 10 March after four years of political stalemate. In provisional results published 13 March, ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) came first with 47 of 102 seats. PAIGC 12 March forged agreement to form govt with other parties which hold seven seats. Teachers' unions 2 March ended public schools strike, saying govt had met demands, namely payment of salary arrears and publication of official status of teacher's career. Classes resumed 6 March. Security forces 9 March seized almost 800kg of cocaine near Safim, country's biggest ever seizure; arrested four men in connection with drugs, including adviser to Niger's parliamentary speaker.

➡ **Liberia** Three former Central Bank officials 4 March appeared at Monrovia City court, were charged with criminal conspiracy, economic sabotage and misuse of public money following probe into missing banknotes.

⚠️ **Mali** Communal violence intensified in centre raising risk of escalation in April, and suspected jihadists carried out more deadly attacks in north and centre, as govt tried to win support for constitutional reform. In centre, violence between ethnic Fulani herders on one side and Dogon and Bambara farmers on other in Mopti region left at least 173 dead: clash in Tan Coulle village 2 March left three Dozos (Dogon militants) dead; Dozos reportedly killed four Fulanis in Wendou village same day; at least 160 killed 23 March in attack reportedly by Dozos against Fulani villages of Ogossagou and Welingara, most deadly attack since crisis erupted in 2012; in suspected revenge attacks, armed assailants 25-26 March attacked two Dogon villages in Bankass circle, reportedly killing at least six. In response to Ogossagou attack, President Keita 24 March replaced army chief of staff and commander of land forces and officially disbanded Dogon self-defence group. Jihadist coalition Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM) 17 March attacked military camp in Dioura, Mopti region in centre, killing 23 soldiers; Keita 22 March blamed lack of

military discipline. Attack sparked protests against military and politicians. Protesters 21 March prevented army chief giving his condolences to families in Niore, Sahel region. Women-led demonstrations 22 March blocked access to military camp in Ségou region in centre. In Timbuktu region in north, unidentified assailants reportedly carried out three attacks against public transport along Timbuktu-Goundam axis 1-3 March, no casualties reported. Religious leaders 10 March and opposition platform Coalition of Patriotic Forces 14 March called on PM Maïga to step down. Govt continued talks with opposition and civil society to build support for constitutional reform process, which seeks to create new regions and restore state authority in north while recognising some groups' claims for greater autonomy. Community meetings took place in provincial cities to appease tensions or discuss constitutional reform process, including in Mopti 9 March and Gao in north 12 March.

➤ **Niger** Boko Haram (BH) attacks and military operations continued in south east. Military 8-9 March repelled BH attack on outskirts of Gueskéro, Diffa region, 38 BH militants and seven military killed. BH 21 March attacked Gueskéro village, eight civilians killed. BH 23 March attacked four villages in Diffa region, at least fourteen civilians killed. BH suicide bombers and gunmen 26 March staged coordinated attack on Nguigmi, Diffa region, killing at least ten. PM Brigi Rafini 14 March presided over peace forum in Foulatari, Diffa region, and met with local administrative, customary and religious leaders. Govt in March lifted ban on cultivating peppers and trading in fish in Diffa region, in place on and off since 2015 to avoid BH using these activities to finance insurgency. Coalition of local NGOs 16 March protested in capital Niamey against Western support to armed forces that aims to contain jihadist violence and migration flows across Sahel, and 2019 budget, which they deem too costly to the poor. Ruling Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS-Tarayya) 31 March elected Interior Minister Mohamed Bazoum as its candidate in 2021 presidential election. Adviser to parliamentary speaker arrested in Guinea-Bissau mid-March in connection with 9 March seizure by security forces of almost 800kg of cocaine near Safim, country's biggest ever seizure.

➤ **Nigeria** Elections-related tensions continued while ethnic and herder-farmer violence flared in north centre, banditry continued in north west and Boko Haram (BH) continued attacks in north east. Violence tainted 9 March governorship and state legislative elections; at least 27 killed on election day and four others during supplementary elections 23 March. President Buhari's ruling party won in fifteen states, main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) won in thirteen; election suspended in Rivers state following disruptions. PDP's presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar 18 March lodged legal challenge against Feb presidential result. In north centre, intercommunal and herder-farmer violence left at least 86 killed in Kaduna state and 26 in Benue. In intercommunal violence in Kaduna state, at least seven killed 2 March in Sabon Sara; seventeen killed 10 March in Ungwan Barde; 52 reportedly killed 11 March in Kajuru area; at least ten killed 16 March in Nandu-Gbok. In Benue state, armed attacks on farming villages left at least sixteen killed 2 March at Agagbe and ten killed 19 March in Tser Uorayev. In north east, BH continued attacks in Borno and Adamawa states, with Abubakar Shekau-led faction seemingly using more landmines and female suicide bombers. In Borno state, farmers' vehicle 6 March detonated landmine outside state capital Maiduguri, at least five killed; BH 19 March killed four farmers near Lassa; landmines around Warabe village in Gwoza area 18 March killed eight; military truck 25 March

detonated landmine in Gwoza area, at least thirteen soldiers killed; military mid-March caught 13-year-old girl in Maiduguri who said she was one of four female suicide bombers. In Adamawa state, female suicide bomber 10 March blew herself up in Madagali area. Military 8 and 11 March reportedly killed scores of BH fighters. In north west, banditry-related violence killed at least 95 people, notably in Anka and Shinkafi local govt areas (LGAs), Zamfara state 2 and 30 March; Isa LGA, Sokoto state 8 March; and Birnin Gwari LGA, Kaduna state 11-12 March.