

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Burundi Ruling party continued to stifle opposition and armed forces launched offensives on Hutu rebels at border with Rwanda.** In Karusi province's Buhiga and Gitaramuka communes, ruling party CNDD-FDD youth wing Imbonerakure 14 March assaulted four members of opposition party National Congress for Freedom. In effort to reduce prison overcrowding, President Ndayishimiye 5 March issued presidential decree granting amnesty to over 5,000 prisoners, but left out many political prisoners detained over accusations of "participating in armed gangs" or "endangering security of the state". NGO Human Rights Watch 8 March called on govt to drop charges and release eight former Burundian refugees – whom Tanzania forcibly returned in July 2020 – on trial for allegedly "attacking the integrity of the national territory and participating in armed gangs"; two additional refugees reported missing 6-7 March. In address to UN Human Rights Council, UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi 11 March acknowledged some steps taken by authorities to improve human rights record but concluded that current situation "too complex and uncertain to be referred to as genuine improvement"; Burundian representative decried briefing as "politically motivated". Meanwhile, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, set up as part of 2000 Arusha peace accords and tasked with investigating past violence, 19 March presented results of its findings in Bururi province to parliament; results sparked mixed reactions as some accused Commission of focusing on killings of Hutu ethnic group members only. Amid recent diplomatic rapprochement with Rwanda, Burundian armed forces late Feb-1 March launched offensive against Rwandan Hutu rebel group Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, remnant of Rwandan Hutu militia that killed much of the Tutsi minority and many moderate Hutu during Rwanda's 1994 genocide; clashes in Mabayi commune, Cibitoke province left at least two rebels dead and 15 soldiers injured. Also in Mabayi commune, Burundian authorities 18 March arrested two civilians suspected of complicity with Kinyarwanda-speaking armed group.

➔ **Cameroon Violence between govt forces and separatists continued unabated in Anglophone regions and jihadists stepped up attacks in Far North.** In North West region, separatists 10 March killed two soldiers in regional capital Bamenda, and clashes between armed forces and separatists 7 March killed four civilians along Bamenda-Babadjou road in Akum town. Meanwhile pro-govt groups launched attacks on civilians; notably, Fulani gunmen 10 March killed community leader in North West's Ndu town. In South West region, separatist commander Goddy Elangwe 2 March surrendered to authorities in Kumba city, and armed forces 8 March captured separatist commander General Nokia in Konye area. Armed forces 18 March killed at least six separatists, including commander in Foé Bakundu village, Meme division. Separatists 22 March ambushed govt forces in Eyumojock subdivision, Manyu division, allegedly killing three. After NGO Human Rights Watch 26 Feb accused state forces of raping at least 20 women during attack in Ebam village, Manyu division, in South West in March 2020, defence ministry 2 March acknowledged attack but rejected rape allegations. In interview with weekly

newspaper *Jeune Afrique*, imprisoned leader of faction of Ambazonia Interim Govt, Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, 12 March restated conditions for talks, including govt troops returning to barracks, amnesty for separatists and internationally mediated dialogue in neutral venue. In South West region's capital Buea, former separatists enrolled in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration program 19 March protested poor conditions and slow reintegration. In Far North region, despite ongoing joint operations by Multinational Joint Task Force, Boko Haram (BH) stepped up attacks. Notably, BH 10 and 14 March killed three civilians in Mora town; 11 March killed another one in Blassaley village. BH 20 March killed two soldiers in Soueram village and one civilian in Nguetchewe village, overnight 21-22 March killed three in Bla-Gossi Tourou village and 27 March attacked Dabanga village killing at least three civilians and one soldier; in retaliation, govt forces same day killed at least six BH, seizing ammunition and vehicles. Military 30 March said it had deployed additional troops to northern border with Nigeria after BH recently intensified attacks.

➔ **Central African Republic Second round of legislative polls, along with rerun in some constituencies, held without major disruption; military operations against rebels continued.** Despite initial concerns that renewed fighting could erupt around 14 March votes, second round of elections for National Assembly and rerun of first round contests held in 118 of 140 total constituencies without major security incidents; some voting irregularities however reported. AU election observer mission 16 March welcomed smooth conduct of vote in its preliminary findings. Polls highlighted divisions within opposition; notably, Democratic Opposition Coalition (COD-2020), largest coalition of opposition parties, had several of its members participating in polls despite coalition's Feb decision to boycott them. National electoral authority 21 March announced that Ruling United Hearts Movement (MCU) won 25 out of 92 seats, leaving it far from having absolute majority in National Assembly. President Touadéra 30 March sworn in for second term after winning Dec 2020 presidential election, vowed to eliminate all armed groups by end of his term. Govt pursued military offensive against rebel Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) and rejected talks, while rebels appeared to resort to criminal activities as sign of CPC weakening. Notably, CPC 7 March robbed UN truck on Bossangoa-Paoua route, Ouham-Pendé prefecture; CPC-led attacks 11 and 13 March left two civilians killed in Kemo and Ouham-Pendé prefectures, respectively. CPC 21 March confirmed former President Bozizé new CPC general coordinator. Amid ongoing efforts by Angola and Economic Community of Central African States to support dialogue with rebels, govt continued to reject talks; Touadéra 18 March however announced for second time national dialogue with opposition parties and civil society groups, with informal talks held last week of March. UN Security Council 12 March authorised deployment of 2,750 additional troops and 940 police to help UN mission (MINUSCA) protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access. UN humanitarian office 19 March estimated that recent crisis had displaced more than 240,000 people since Dec, bringing total number of Central Africans displaced (IDPs and refugees) to over 1.5mn, third of country's total population.

➔ **Chad Political tensions ran high as main opposition leader called for boycott of 11 April presidential election.** Following late Feb raid on home of presidential candidate and former rebel leader Yaya Dillo, which reportedly left

five dead including two soldiers, main opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo 1 March withdrew his presidential candidacy citing “climate of insecurity”. French FM Jean-Yves Le Drian 2 March and AU Commission Chair Moussa Faki 5 March asked authorities to launch independent investigation into deadly raid at Dillo’s home and hold those responsible for killings accountable. UN Sec-Gen Guterres 1 March called on govt to “favour political dialogue ahead of forthcoming elections and continue efforts to foster inclusive political process”. Supreme Court 3 March approved ten of 17 candidacies for presidential election, including Kebzabo and two other candidates who also decided to withdraw, and presidential campaign started 11 March. Some opposition parties, civil society, unions and youth groups next day launched “Wakit Tama” (Now Is The Time) platform against President Déby’s sixth term bid. Déby 16 March met Succès Masra, leader of opposition party Les Transformateurs, whose presidential candidacy was rejected by Supreme Court for failing to meet cut-off age requirement; Masra reportedly called for postponement of vote to allow time for “dialogue between all actors” prior to election; following meeting, Masra obtained long-awaited official recognition of his party – allowing it to run in next legislative and communal elections. Kebzabo 19 March called on supporters to boycott election and on all opposition candidates to withdraw. Hundreds of opposition and civil society members next day demonstrated against Déby’s sixth term bid in capital N’Djamena; police arrested at least 40; most released same day. After soldier 23 March shot and killed two teachers in N’Djamena while allegedly trying to intercept thieves, public prosecutor 26 March said soldier had been arrested and investigation was under way. Police 28 March dispersed demonstration in N’Djamena calling for justice and reparation for bereaved families. Farmer-herder clashes 18 March allegedly killed at least four in Babourou locality, Tandjilé region (south).

➔ **DR Congo Political contestation for power exposed fractures in President Tshisekedi’s Sacred Union; meanwhile, armed group violence continued in east.** PM Sama Lukonde had yet to form govt by end of month, as members of newly formed Sacred Union competed for ministerial posts throughout March, including opposition heavyweights Moïse Katumbi and Jean-Pierre Bemba; Lukonde 18 March urged local population to remain calm amid continuing political wrangling. Modeste Bahati Lukwebo, a supporter of Tshisekedi, 2 March elected as new Senate president with 89 out of 109 votes; election ensured Tshisekedi supporters control three key institutions: Senate, National Assembly and Prime Ministership. U.S. State Department 10 March designated armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) as Foreign Terrorist Organisation and its leader Seka Musa Baluku as Specially Designated Global Terrorist, referring to ADF as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC); Human Rights Minister André Lite 11 March welcomed designation and urged other countries to follow suit. ADF continued to destabilise rural areas in east, as it expanded its operational zones from North Kivu province toward Ituri province. In North Kivu, ADF rebels 10 March killed three during raid on Matombo village; 15 March killed 17 in Bulongo city; 22 and 29 March reportedly killed at least 15 in Samboko-Chanichani village. Also in North Kivu, Mai-Mai militia 25 March abducted 20 people in Kalonge village, Lubero territory. In Ituri, ADF launched several attacks in and around Walese Vonkutu chiefdom, Irumu territory: 14 killed in Mambelenga village 2 March; at least ten killed in Ndimbo and Apende villages 7-8 March; and seven suspected ADF rebels killed in clash with army in Mahala village 29 March. Also in Ituri, six militia members of Patriotic and Integrationist Force of Congo 7

March killed in clashes with army in Kunda village in Irumu's Babelbe chiefdom; at least 30 people including 11 civilians, two soldiers and one policeman killed during 15 March clashes between army and Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) militia in Djugu territory.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Djibouti** **Al-Shabaab called for attacks on country's foreign military bases and independent candidate announced presidential bid.** Ahead of presidential election scheduled for 9 April, Al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Umar Abu Ubaidah 27 March called for "lone wolf" attacks against "American and French interests in Djibouti", accused President Guelleh of turning country into "military base from where every war against Muslims in East Africa is planned and executed". In response, U.S Africa Command said it "takes these statements seriously" and is "postured to respond to threats". Meanwhile, independent candidate Zakaria Ismael Farah 10 March submitted his candidacy for presidential poll; move comes after opposition parties in Feb announced boycott of election in protest at Guelleh's fifth term bid and increasingly constrained political space. Govt and Ethiopia 11 March signed memorandum of understanding to scale up cooperation on common security threats, agreed to establish joint task force stationed in eastern Ethiopian city of Dire Dawa and in Djibouti.

➔ **Eritrea** **Amid ongoing accusations of serious international crimes, authorities reportedly agreed to withdraw troops from Ethiopia's Tigray regional state.** As fighting persisted between troops of Ethiopia's federal gov't and regional state of Tigray (see Ethiopia), UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock 4 March said Eritrean forces are operating throughout Ethiopia's Tigray and "countless well-corroborated reports suggest their culpability for atrocities"; UN Sec-Gen Guterres and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield same day called on Eritrean troops to leave Tigray. Echoing allegations made by NGO Amnesty International in Feb, NGO Human Rights Watch 5 March accused Eritrean forces of killing hundreds of civilians, mostly men and young boys, in Tigrayan city of Axum in Nov 2020, and called on UN to establish independent inquiry into war crimes and possible crimes against humanity by all parties in Tigray. For first time since conflict started in Nov 2020, Ethiopian PM Ahmed Abiy 23 March acknowledged presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray; 26 March said Eritrea had agreed to withdraw troops. Meanwhile, UN humanitarian office 22 March said Eritrean forces had been deployed alongside Ethiopian troops and ethnic Amhara militias in disputed Al-Fashqa border area between Ethiopia and Sudan. EU 22 March announced sanctions on National Security Office and its leader, Maj Gen Abraha Kassa, "for serious human rights violations in Eritrea, in particular arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances of persons and torture"; authorities immediately denounced "malicious" move. Govt continued to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia: Saudi delegation 28 Feb-2 March visited Eritrea to discuss political, economic and security cooperation.

➔ **Ethiopia** **Govt faced mounting international pressure to address serious crimes in Tigray regional state; violence erupted in centre and clashes with Sudan continued in disputed area.** Amid ongoing fighting

between Tigray's and federal govt's forces in Tigray regional state in north, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet 4 March said multiple conflict parties had committed grave violations that could amount to "war crimes and crimes against humanity" in Tigray since Nov 2020. PM Abiy 9 March said govt had taken "concrete steps to address alleged human rights abuses". U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken next day denounced "acts of ethnic cleansing" in Tigray, which govt 13 March "vehemently" denied. Abiy 23 March admitted for first time that Eritrea had deployed troops in Tigray since conflict broke out; 26 March said Eritrea had agreed to withdraw its forces. Govt-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and UN human rights office 25 March said they would jointly investigate alleged abuses by all parties. In Oromia region in centre, suspected armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) insurgents 6-9 March reportedly killed at least 42 ethnic Amhara civilians in Horo Guduru Welega area and 30 March reportedly killed another 30 civilians in West Welega area; OLA later denied responsibility. Opposition party Oromo Liberation Front 8 March said it would not participate in 5 June general elections, citing continued harassment and detention of its members by federal and Oromia regional state authorities. Army 1-2 March reportedly clashed with Sudanese forces near Barkhat settlement, last area still under Ethiopia's control in disputed Al-Fashqa border zone; death toll unknown. Sudan 17 March demanded all Ethiopian forces withdraw from "Sudanese territory", tied negotiations over land dispute to Addis Ababa's recognition of Sudan's sovereignty over it. UN humanitarian office 22 March said Eritrean forces had been deployed alongside Ethiopian troops and ethnic Amhara militias near Barkhat. Govt remained at loggerheads with Sudan and Egypt over Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Blue Nile river (see Nile Waters).

➔ **Kenya Political jockeying continued ahead of 2022 general election, while Al-Shabaab staged further attacks in east and north east.** Amid power struggle between President Kenyatta and his de facto ally, nominal opposition leader Raila Odinga, on one hand, and Deputy President Ruto on the other, ruling Jubilee Party's National Management Committee 15 March voted to remove Ruto as party deputy leader; Kenyatta 22 March blocked Ruto's ouster. Ruto 25 March said he was prepared, if tensions persist, to leave Jubilee Party for its coalition partner United Democratic Alliance. Suspected Al-Shabaab IEDs killed one civilian in Lamu county in east 23 March and four others in Mandera county in north east next day. U.S. aviation authority 2 March warned civilian airlines flying in Kenyan airspace of possible Al-Shabaab attacks, said group possesses weapons that can hit low-flying aircrafts; Police 30 March warned Al-Shabaab militant – believed to be currently in Somalia – who trained as pilot in Philippines, sought to carry out attack in Kenya. Govt 24 March gave UN refugee agency two-week ultimatum to present plan for closure of Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps – host to some 410,000 refugees, mostly from South Sudan and Somalia – within four months, reportedly over national security concerns. Kenya 11 March pulled out of upcoming International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing on Kenya-Somalia maritime border dispute, citing ICJ's "bias" and refusal to delay hearing as requested by Nairobi in Feb; hearings started without Kenya 15 March.

➔ **Nile Waters Ethiopia confirmed plans to fill Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) for second time in July as negotiations with Sudan and Egypt remained deadlocked; rhetoric among conflict parties**

grew increasingly tense. Following Sudan's Egypt-backed proposal in Feb for quadripartite mediation by AU, EU, U.S. and UN to break deadlock in AU-led negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over GERD, Khartoum and Cairo 2 March signed agreement to boost military cooperation, next day renewed calls for relaunching "serious and effective" negotiations to reach "fair, balanced and legally binding" agreement. Ethiopia 3 March said attempts to involve other mediators "demeaned" AU efforts. Sudan mid-March submitted formal request for international quartet to mediate GERD dispute; Ethiopia 16 March reiterated opposition to involving outside parties and renewed call for resumption of stalled AU-led tripartite talks, next day confirmed it would conduct second GERD water filling in July. Khartoum 23 March backed proposal by United Arab Emirates to mediate both its border and dam disputes with Addis Ababa; 29 March said U.S. and EU were willing to mediate dam dispute, after UN 5 March already said it was ready to support process. Cairo 28 March warned unilateral actions taken by Addis Ababa over filling and operation of GERD would have "massive negative repercussions"; 30 March said its share of Nile Waters was "untouchable", and any reduction in Egypt's water supply caused by GERD would bring "inconceivable instability" in region. Sudan next day said Ethiopia's unilateral actions had undermined trust between both countries and explained it had proposed international quartet mediation after "learning Addis Ababa was eluding to buy time" to complete second filling of dam in coming months.

➔ **Somalia Electoral process remained stalled, and Al-Shabaab launched deadly attacks in capital Mogadishu, demonstrating potential to disrupt electoral proceedings.** Following constitutional expiration of President Farmajo's mandate and deadly clashes between opposition supporters and security forces in Feb, third round of talks between PM Roble and opposition bloc of 15 presidential candidates on organisation of parliamentary and presidential elections broke down 4 March, after bloc insisted on being part of national consultative council (NCC) talks on elections. NCC talks involving federal govt and member states 22-23 March concluded without meaningful progress as presidents of Puntland and Jubaland states did not attend, reportedly over security concerns. Govt faced mounting international pressure to hold election. Notably, UN Security Council 12 March unanimously urged govt to organise elections "without delay", 31 March reiterated call; U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 19 March expressed "deep concern" at electoral impasse and called on political leadership to "immediately" organise elections. Parliament Speaker Mohamed Mursal Abdirahman 27 March called off same day parliamentary session after opposition MPs reportedly disrupted session over allegations that Abdirahman and pro-govt MPs were planning to pass term extension for Farmajo. Former Jubaland state Security Minister Abdirashid Janan, who escaped in 2020 from jail in Mogadishu, 24 March surrendered to federal govt. Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab launched deadly attacks in Mogadishu. Notably, Al-Shabaab suicide bombing 5 March killed over 20 and roadside bomb targeting local govt official 29 March killed at least five civilians; first mortar attacks in Mogadishu since mid-2020 9 and 25 March targeted airport compound that houses African Union mission (AMISOM) base in Mogadishu, killing at least two civilians. In Puntland state in north, Al-Shabaab 5 March raided Bosaso central prison, breaking out hundreds of prisoners; at least seven soldiers reportedly killed. In Lower Shabelle region in south, army 27 March killed 11 Al-Shabaab militants, including senior commander known as Ismail Jiis, in Bula Haji village. UN Security

Council 12 March renewed AMISOM mandate until 31 Dec. International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearings on maritime border row between Somalia and Kenya 15 March started without Kenya after latter 11 March pulled out citing ICJ's "bias" and refusal to delay hearing.

➔ **Somaliland Preparations for parliamentary and local elections scheduled for 31 May continued.** Electoral commission, ruling Kulmiye party and opposition parties Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) and Waddani 25 March signed electoral code of conduct, notably committing to facilitating free and peaceful campaigning and public debate, and respecting human rights. Electoral commission late March reportedly rejected 28 local council candidates from all three parties for not meeting candidacy requirement; 30 March said it would start distributing voter cards next day. Authorities 7 March released two UCID candidates for parliament and Hargeisa city council seats, after police arrested them in Feb. In state of nation address, President Bihi 8 March said govt will continue to strengthen ties with African countries as part of its efforts toward recognition of Somaliland as a state.

➔ **South Sudan Fighting resumed between govt and holdout rebel group in south, President Kiir achieved formation of state govts amid mounting calls to resign, and intercommunal violence persisted.** Deadly clashes resumed in south between govt and National Salvation Front (NAS), which refused to be part of 2018 peace deal. Notably, NAS 14-15 and 18 March reportedly clashed with govt's South Sudan People's Defence Forces in Central Equatoria state and Western Equatoria state's Movolo area; death toll unknown. Following four-day negotiations in Kenya's Naivasha town, govt and factions of South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (coalition of non-signatory rebel groups) led by Paul Malong and Pagan Amum 11 March signed Declaration of Principles, which forms basis for subsequent political dialogue. Kiir 2 March appointed Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria's govts, concluding formation of all ten state govts; national legislative assembly, council of states and some local govts yet to be formed. Meanwhile, Kiir faced rising pressure to step down from senior figures within his political base. Notably, former presidential adviser and prominent ruling party figure Daniel Awet Akot 14 March called on Kiir to hand over power to Presidential Affairs Minister Nhial Deng Nhial. Intercommunal violence persisted in several states. Notably, in Lakes state, clashes between ethnic Pakam and Gok 9 March left ten dead in Mabor cattle camp, Rumbek North county, and fighting between Gok community's Ayiel and Pagok sections next day killed 17 people in Ngap village, Cueibet county. Unidentified gunmen 28 March killed at least 14 people in Budi county, Eastern Equatoria state; state governor 28 March reportedly survived assassination attempt on Budi-Buya axis that left two people dead. EU 22 March announced sanctions on Kiir-aligned Maj Gen Gabriel Moses Lokujo over his alleged role in abduction and execution of three officers of VP Riek Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition in May 2020. UN Human Rights Council 24 March renewed mandate of UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan for one year.

➔ **Sudan Clashes persisted in disputed border area with Ethiopia, intercommunal violence continued in North and South Darfur states, and govt signed agreement with holdout rebel group.** Army 1-2 March reportedly launched offensive against Ethiopian forces near Barkhat settlement, last area still under Ethiopia's control in disputed Al-Fashqa border zone, leaving

unknown number dead. Sovereign Council head Abdel Fattah al-Burhan 17 March accused Ethiopia of deploying additional forces to area in past two weeks, demanded withdrawal of all troops from “Sudanese territory”, and negotiations to resolve land dispute tied to Ethiopia’s recognition of Sudan’s sovereignty over area. UN humanitarian office 22 March said Eritrean forces had been deployed alongside Ethiopian troops and ethnic Amhara militias near Barkhat. At border between Ethiopia and Sudanese states of Gadaref and Sennar, south of Al-Fashqa, army 24 March reportedly repelled attack by Ethiopian militia backed by Ethiopian army in Basinda area; 29 March allegedly clashed with Ethiopian militia after latter attempted to alter border markers in Sudan’s al-Dinder National Park, one combatant killed on each side. In North Darfur state, intercommunal clashes between Fur and Tama communities 3 March left 11 dead in Saraf Omra locality. In South Darfur state, fighting between ethnic Fellata and Masalit 1-2 March killed 11 in Gireida locality. Holdout rebel group Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North of Abdel Aziz al-Hilu 28 March signed Declaration of Principles with govt in South Sudan’s capital Juba; document commits govt to unification of armed forces, and further edges al-Hilu toward agreement bringing his faction into govt. Sovereign Council 11 March pardoned former Janjaweed militia leader and current head of armed militia Sudan Revolutionary Awakening Council Musa Hilal, detained since 2017 for allegedly resisting govt-led disarmament campaign, prompting local uproar; deputy head of Sovereign Council and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces leader Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” reportedly instrumental in Hilal’s release. Meanwhile, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt remained at loggerheads over Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Blue Nile river (see Nile Waters).

➔ **Tanzania Following President Magufuli’s death, VP Samia Suluhu Hassan sworn in as new president until 2025.** Authorities 17 March said Magufuli had died of heart attack. Announcement followed weeks of speculation over Magufuli’s health since his last public appearance in late Feb. Notably, opposition leader Tundu Lissu 11 March claimed Magufuli was receiving COVID-19 treatment abroad; govt next day denied claim, insisting Magufuli was “around, healthy, working hard”, and authorities 12-15 March arrested at least four people for allegedly spreading false information about Magufuli’s health. VP Samia Suluhu Hassan 19 March sworn in as president – to serve remainder of Magufuli’s term until 2025. MPs 30 March approved Finance and Planning Minister Philip Mpango as new VP; Mpango sworn in next day. Stampede 21 March left at least 45 killed as tens of thousands attempted to enter capital Dar es Salaam’s Uhuru stadium to view Magufuli’s body. Hassan 28 March suspended Tanzania Ports Authority Director General Deusdedit Kakoko over corruption allegations; authorities next day arrested Kakoko in Morogoro city in east. Meanwhile, U.S. State Department 11 March sanctioned Tanzanian national Abu Yasir Hassan for allegedly leading Islamist insurgency in neighbouring Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado province (see Mozambique).

➔ **Uganda Opposition continued to challenge results of Jan presidential election as crackdown on dissent persisted.** Opposition National Unity Platform (NUP) leader Bobi Wine 9 March called for peaceful protest against President Museveni’s re-election, claimed NUP’s own tally showed Wine had won 54.19% of votes in Jan election. In capital Kampala, security forces 15 March briefly arrested Wine during protest against continued detention of NUP supporters

and later heavily surrounded Wine's home. Wine next day petitioned Chief of Defence Forces Gen David Muhoozi to release NUP members under military detention and end military trials of civilians. High Court in Kampala 16 March dismissed torture claims by 49 jailed NUP supporters, citing lack of evidence. NGO Human Rights Watch 11 March called on govt "to end the ongoing abductions by suspected state agents and cease the unlawful detention without trial of opposition supporters". Museveni 18 March filed defamation case against local media Daily Monitor, which had alleged that Museveni and inner circle had received COVID-19 vaccines in Feb, prior to vaccination of health-care workers and vulnerable groups. Police 21 March detained U.S. citizen in Kitebutura village in west for suspected involvement in "anti-govt subversive activities". In north, armed forces 7 March killed at least ten semi-nomadic Karamojong cattle raiders in Moroto district.

Southern Africa

↓ **Mozambique Islamist insurgents launched major attack on strategic port town of Palma in far north, leaving scores dead and triggering mass exodus as govt forces struggled to respond.** Hours after French oil and gas company Total announced it was resuming full operations at Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project site in Palma district, Cabo Delgado province, Islamist insurgents 24 March launched large-scale assault on district capital Palma. In following days, coordinated attacks in and around Palma reportedly killed scores of civilians including for first time foreigners, and displaced thousands. Reports of major killings started to emerge by month's end. Notably, assault on Amarula hotel prompted dozens, including foreigners, to flee in 17-vehicle convoy; insurgents 26 March ambushed convoy, reportedly leaving unknown number dead and at least 50 missing. Meanwhile, security forces moved to flush insurgents out of Palma, with govt 25 March saying troops were "pursing the enemy's movement" and "working tirelessly to restore security" in Palma. Islamic State 29 March claimed responsibility, said its combatants had seized town and killed 55 including "western citizens". In Nangade district, Islamist insurgents 1-3 March set roadblocks between district capital Nangade and garrison town of Mueda pushing west near Muiha village, and killed at least three soldiers and four civilians in several attacks in area; in response, govt forces 6 March raided insurgent encampment at Nkongga village, and next day reportedly reopened Nangade-Mueda road. In Macomia district, insurgents 24 March struck administrative posts of Mucojo and Quiterajo, taking unknown number hostage and killing others. NGO Amnesty International 2 March accused insurgents, govt and South African private military company Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) of violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, in Cabo Delgado in 2020. U.S State Department 10 March designated Cabo Delgado insurgents as foreign terrorist organisation linked to Islamic State and Tanzanian national Abu Yasir Hassan as leader. President Nyusi 12 March appointed Joaquim Rivas Mangrassa as armed forces chief of staff. Mariano Nhongo, leader of Renamo Military Junta (armed dissident faction of opposition Renamo party) 11 March ruled out amnesty as first step toward negotiations with govt.

➔ **Zimbabwe Govt continued to harass opposition and civil society, and infighting between main opposition party factions reached new heights.** In capital Harare, authorities 5 March arrested three female members of

Nelson Chamisa-led faction (MDC-A) of main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) for third time in less than a year on charges of breaching COVID-19 regulations; one granted bail 10 March. In second largest city Bulawayo, security forces 10 March arrested nine members of opposition Mthwakazi Republic Party who were protesting police raid on home of party leader Mqondiso Moyo previous night. In Raffingora town, authorities 27 March arrested three MDC-A members for allegedly violating COVID-19 regulations; court 29 March granted them bail. After Chamisa 12 March accused President Mnangagwa of “rising authoritarianism”, ruling party ZANU-PF next day said Chamisa was making “veiled attempts to unseat a constitutionally elected government”. ZANU-PF 24 March removed its political commissar Victor Matemadanda over alleged mishandling of district coordinating committee elections in Dec 2020 and “reckless” remarks after Matemadanda said ZANU-PF was responsible for crippling MDC-A. Meanwhile, infighting between two competing factions of opposition MDC party intensified. Parliament 17 March expelled six MDC-A MPs, including MDC-A VP Tendai Biti, after competing faction of MDC claimed they no longer belonged to party; move came after High Court 11 March ruled that joining MDC-A translated to “self-expulsion” from party. U.S. 23 March said it is following events “closely” and accused ZANU-PF of “misusing the levers of government to silence critics and entrench its political power”. U.S. 3 March renewed sanctions against Mnangagwa and other top officials for one year, citing security services’ violent repression of citizens throughout 2020 and lack of reforms needed “to ensure the rule of law, democratic governance and the protection of human rights”. VP Kembo Mohadi 1 March resigned amid allegations of sexual misconduct.

Sahel

➔ **Burkina Faso** **Jihadist attacks persisted in north and east, leaving scores dead, while govt denied negotiating with jihadists.** Spate of jihadist attacks reported across Sahel region (north) early March. In Oudalan province, suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) 10 March clashed with soldiers and volunteers fighting alongside security forces (VDPs) in Tin-Agadel village, leaving two ISGS and one civilian dead. In Soum province, ambulance 2 March struck improvised explosive device (IED) likely placed by al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) on Mansila-Solhan road, killing six; unidentified gunmen next day killed five ethnic Fulani civilians including village chief and his son in Kabaoua. In Seno province, several incidents reported in Gorgadji department: suspected ISGS combatants 9 March attacked Guidé village, killing one civilian and seizing livestock; security forces 20 March clashed with suspected jihadists in Gorgadji commune, reportedly leaving five militants and one VDP killed. Meanwhile, clashes between JNIM and ISGS, notably near Ayagorou village, Oudalan province, 6-7 March continued to weaken ISGS’s positions in Sahel region. Centre-North region saw significant clashes between VDPs and jihadists. Notably, suspected ISGS 1 March killed two VDPs and one civilian in Poussoumpoudou mining site, Namentenga province; suspected JNIM combatants 5-6 March attacked VDPs and security forces convoy in Kourao area, Bam province, killing one soldier and five VDPs; further clashes 20 March reportedly left five suspected jihadists and one VDP dead in Ourfaré village, Namentenga province.

Jihadist groups continued to demonstrate growing influence in East region: suspected jihadists 7 March abducted two, including member of Koglweogo self-defence group, in Kompienga village, next day killed one civilian in Tagou village, also Kompienga province. In Cascades region in south west, presumed JNIM-affiliated Katiba Macina militants 10 March attacked Gontiedougou village, Comoe province, wounding several residents. Govt 4 March denied it was negotiating with “terrorist groups”, after investigative newspaper *L'Évènement* late Feb claimed JNIM leader Iyad Ag Ghali negotiated release of 20 JNIM members with national intelligence agency.

➔ **Mali Jihadists launched deadly attack on govt forces and temporarily lifted months-long siege of Farabougou village in centre, while French forces accused of killing civilians.** In Gao region (north), suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) militants 15 March ambushed army patrol near Tessit town, Ansongo district, killing at least 33 in deadliest attack on security forces in months. In Mopti region (centre), suspected al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 4 March attacked army position in Dinangorou village, Koro district; one soldier and eight militants reportedly killed. Also in Mopti, govt troops 1-3 March allegedly killed six ethnic Fulani civilians in Douentza and Youwarou districts. National reconciliation minister, Col-Maj Ismaël Wagué, 9 March met with Youssouf Toloba, leader of prominent ethnic Dogon self-defence group Dana Ambassagou to discuss intercommunal tensions and fight against jihadists in Mopti region; move comes after group late Feb refused to sign Fulani-Dogon peace agreement in Koro district. In neighbouring Ségou region, JNIM-affiliated Katiba Macina and Bambara communal “Donso” militias 15 March reached ceasefire agreement; jihadists agreed to lift months-long siege of Farabougou village, Niono district, for one month. French Operation Barkhane faced new accusations of killing civilians. Local officials 26 March said Barkhane airstrike previous day had killed at least five civilians in Indelimane area, Gao region; Barkhane immediately denied allegation. Media reports 30 March claimed UN investigation concluded Barkhane airstrike near Bounti village in Mopti region in Jan had killed 19 civilians. Interim legislative body National Transitional Council VP Issa Kaou Djim 6 March called on transition’s VP Colonel Assimi Goïta to contest next presidential election despite transition’s charter barring interim leaders from doing so. Influential cleric Mahmoud Dicko next day criticised interim govt’s handling of transition. Bamako Court of Appeals 2 March dismissed charges of “plot against the state” against five politicians, including former PM Boubou Cissé, arrested in Dec 2020 for allegedly planning to “destabilise” transitional govt; attorney general same day appealed decision to Supreme Court. Mauritanian diplomat El-Ghassim Wane appointed new head of UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) 15 March.

↓ **Niger Jihadist violence escalated as spate of attacks left over 200 civilians dead in south west, and authorities foiled coup attempt days before inauguration of president-elect.** Suspected jihadist combatants 21 March raided villages of Intazayene, Bakorat and Wistane near Mali border in Tahoua region (south west), killing at least 141 civilians, and further fuelling intercommunal tensions. In neighbouring Tillabery region (also south west), suspected Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) 15 March ambushed passenger vehicles near Chinagoder locality and Darey-Dey village, Ouallam department,

reportedly leaving at least 66 mainly ethnic Zarma civilians dead; govt next day said killings were “targeted”. Suspected ISGS also launched other raids in Ouallam, notably killing eight in Dinara village 9 March and six in Kaourakeri village next day. Unidentified assailants 10 March killed at least 11 in three villages in Tillabery. In Diffa region in south east, suspected Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) or Boko Haram faction led by Abubakar Shekau (JAS) 1 March killed four civilians near Garin Wanzam settlement, Gueskéroù commune; overnight 2-3 March attacked gendarmerie in Mainé-Soroa town, killing two gendarmes. Meanwhile, presidential runner-up Mahamane Ousmane 8 March filed appeal with Constitutional Court to contest preliminary results of 21 Feb run-off vote, citing irregularities including abnormally high participation in nomadic communes and electoral officials forced to sign records at gunpoint. Constitutional Court 21 March however confirmed ruling party candidate Mohamed Bazoum as next president; Bazoum due to take office 2 April in first democratic transition of power in country’s history. Ousmane next day denounced “violation” of constitution, saying his appeal had not been examined. Military unit overnight 30-31 March reportedly assaulted presidential palace, but presidential guard repelled assault; govt 31 March said several people had been arrested and condemned attack on “democracy and the rule of law”. U.S.-trained police unit 2 March seized 17 tons cannabis resin worth FCFA 20bn in capital Niamey; authorities subsequently arrested 11 Nigerien nationals and two Algerians in connection with seizure, including former Tuareg rebel and tribal chief El Hadj Ghoumour Atouwa alias “Bidika”.

West Africa

➔ **Côte d’Ivoire Suspected jihadists launched deadly attack on security forces; ruling party won majority in parliament, while PM Bakayoko’s death sparked protests.** In north near border with Burkina Faso, suspected jihadists overnight 28-29 March launched twin attacks on army post in Kafolo town and gendarmerie in Kolobougou locality, reportedly leaving at least three dead; several assailants also killed. Legislative elections held peacefully 6 March, but turnout low at 37.88%. Electoral commission 9 March released preliminary results, with ruling party Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace taking 137 of 255 seats, strengthening President Ouattara’s hand to pursue his political agenda. Mainstream opposition made up of platform Together for Democracy and Sovereignty, close to former President Gbagbo, and main opposition party, Henri Konan Bédié’s Democratic Party of Côte d’Ivoire, won 81 seats. Second opposition coalition, made up of Pascal Affi N’Guessan’s branch of Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) and Albert Mabri Toikeusse’s Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d’Ivoire, gained ten seats. Constitutional Council 25 March confirmed results. PM Hamed Bakayoko (aka Hambak) 10 March died in Germany, reportedly of cancer; Hambak had been main architect of political dialogue following Oct 2020 violent presidential vote. News of his passing immediately sparked protests in Séguéla town in west, with Hambak’s followers and members of his ethnic Koyaka community claiming ethnic Senufo supporters of late PM Amadou Gon Coulibaly poisoned him. National Assembly Speaker Amadou Soumahoro 12 March called for appeasement. Ouattara 26 March appointed Presidency’s Sec Gen Patrick Achi as new PM. NGO Amnesty International same day said hundreds still in prison after being arrested

during election-related protests and violence in 2020, denounced use of pre-trial detention as “punishment for people who have not been – and may never be – found guilty”, called for immediate investigation into torture allegations of detainees. Meanwhile, International Criminal Court 31 March rejected prosecutor’s appeal against Gbagbo’s acquittal on charges of crimes against humanity during 2010 political crisis, paving way for his return to Côte d’Ivoire.

➔ **Guinea Authorities continued to stifle dissent, and opposition appeared increasingly divided.** Authorities 1 March charged journalist Amadou Diouldé Diallo – detained late Feb after he criticised President Condé in radio broadcast in Jan – with “offence to the president”; NGO Reporters without Borders 17 March called for his immediate release. Court of Appeal in capital Conakry 4 March confirmed Dixinn Court’s early Feb decision to keep main opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG)’s headquarters closed; offices were shut down in Oct 2020. UFDG 16 March said authorities same day prevented party leader Cellou Dalein Diallo from leaving country and seized his passport. Legal team of five opposition figures imprisoned for over four months on several charges, including “infringement of the fundamental interests of the nation” and “inciting violence”, 12 March lodged complaint with West African regional bloc ECOWAS Court of Justice, citing irregularities in judicial procedure. NGO Human Rights Watch 17 March said four opposition supporters died in detention between Nov 2020 and Jan 2021; NGO Amnesty International had disclosed similar findings in Feb. Meanwhile, Condé 1 March pardoned seven individuals imprisoned for “illegal gathering”, but hundreds of opposition supporters arrested around March 2020 constitutional referendum and Oct 2020 presidential election still in pre-trial detention. Condé next day received Mamadou Sylla, nominally leader of parliamentary opposition, and allowed him to visit imprisoned opponents; prominent figure of civil society coalition National Front for the Defence of the Constitution Oumar Sylla, alias Foniké Mengué, who has been detained in Conakry prison since Sept 2020, 11 March refused to meet him, accusing him of playing into Condé’s hands.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau NGOs accused authorities of suppressing dissent.** NGO Committee to Protect Journalists 16 March said four unidentified gunmen 9 March abducted journalist António Aly Silva in capital Bissau and later beat him unconscious; President Embaló had reportedly called Silva few days before to complain about article critical of govt. NGO National Network of Human Rights Defenders in Guinea-Bissau 26 March denounced increasing violence against human rights activists, especially in country’s south.

➔ **Nigeria Jihadists mounted significant attacks in north east, criminal violence continued unabated in north west, and suspected Biafra secessionists’ attacks on security forces persisted in south east.** In Borno state in north east, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) targeted major humanitarian hub and military base despite military operations. Insurgents 1-2 March attacked Dikwa town, setting UN office ablaze and forcing evacuation of aid workers from Dikwa, Monguno and Ngala towns. ISWAP 11 March ambushed military convoy near Gudumbali town, reportedly killing 15 soldiers and four Multinational Joint Task Force troops, and 14 March attacked army’s super camp in Damasak town, killing at least 12 soldiers. Special forces 15 March reportedly killed

41 jihadists in operations near Gamboru and Ngala towns; 27 March killed 48 members of Boko Haram faction led by Abubakar Shekau (JAS) around Chibok and Askira towns. UN humanitarian office 16 March reported “worst [humanitarian] outlook in four years” in north east, with close to 2mn people internally displaced and up to 5.1mn facing hunger during lean season. In north west, armed group violence remained high. Notably, in Zamfara state, unidentified gunmen 16 March attacked Kabasa village, killing at least ten, including three soldiers; army said troops thwarted attack, killing scores. Also in Zamfara, 279 female students kidnapped late Feb released 2 March. In neighbouring Kaduna state, unidentified gunmen 11 March abducted 39 students in Afaka town; 15 March abducted several students and three teachers at primary school in Birnin Gwari area, later freed all children; 18 March killed 13 and burnt 56 houses in Zangon Kataf, Kuru and Chikun areas. Herder-farmer relations continued to deteriorate in south, with many incidents of violence, notably 27 people killed 28-29 March in attacks on four farming villages in Ebonyi state (south east) by suspected herders. Also in south east, attacks on police personnel and facilities by suspected members of Eastern Security Network (ESN), paramilitary wing of secessionist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), continued; troops 24 March killed 16 ESN in Aba town, Abia state.

↓ **Senegal Arrest of opposition leader sparked deadliest political unrest in years.** Authorities 3 March arrested main opposition leader and MP Ousmane Sonko – whose parliamentary immunity was removed late Feb – over rape allegations. Hours earlier, hundreds of youths protested in support of Sonko outside his house and at Cheikh Anta Diop University in capital Dakar, decrying charges as politically motivated; protesters clashed with police, leaving at least three injured. Sonko 5 March appeared in court on additional charge of disrupting public order. Protesters in Dakar same day set up street barricades, burned tyres and threw stones at police who fired tear gas and stunt grenades; Interior Minister Antoine Félix Abdoulaye Diome same day said six had died in violence, while authorities curbed internet access, suspended TV broadcasts covering protests and banned use of motorcycles and mopeds in capital as part of attempt to discourage mobilisation of Sonko’s young supporter base. Protesters 6 March burned down military police station and ransacked govt buildings in southern town of Diaobe; at least one 17-year-old killed and six others injured. Mediator of the Republic Alioune Badara Cissé next day called on authorities to “pause and speak with our youth” and warned that country was “on the verge of an apocalypse”, while education ministry announced school closures until 15 March. Unrest subsided after Sonko charged with rape and released on bail 8 March. President Sall 10 March declared day of national mourning and said COVID-19 restrictions would be lifted 19 March. NGO Human Rights Watch 12 March called for independent investigation into “reported deaths of at least ten people and injuries of hundreds” during early March protests.