



CrisisWatch 2023 – April Trends and May Alerts

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Cameroon** Amid sustained fighting between army and separatists, local authorities in Anglophone regions warned of renewed herder-farmer tensions; jihadist violence increased in Far North region.

Anglophone separatists and govt forces continued to engage in clashes. In North-West region (NW), army 4 April ambushed and killed three armed separatists in Bafut commune (Mezam division); separatist militia 27 April detonated IEDs in Bamenda city, with unknown number of casualties. In South West region (SW), suspected separatist combatants 5 April killed two soldiers in Mamfe city (Manyu division); govt forces 18 April killed two separatist fighters and arrested eight civilians suspected of working with separatists during raid in Mamfe.

Tensions between Nigerian pastoralists and Cameroonian farmers rose again. In NW, armed men 1-2 April abducted about 25 people and destroyed properties in Ako town (Donga-Mantung division) near border with Nigeria's Taraba state; local officials blamed attack on Fulani herders from Nigeria, who have crossed border into Cameroon and clashed with local farmers in the past. Local authorities in neighbouring SW region had in March warned of similar incursions in Akwaya town (Manyu division).

Jihadists stepped up attacks in Far North region. Boko Haram militants overnight 5-6 April clashed with army and vigilantes in Malika and Kerawa localities (both Mayo-Sava division), leaving two militants dead; 16 April attacked Zeleved military post (Mayo-Tsanaga division), killing at least one soldier and displacing hundreds of civilians; 18 April killed at least one civilian and set houses ablaze in Mozogo town (Mayo-Tsanaga) before being pushed back by military. IED planted by Boko Haram 24 April killed six soldiers in Tchébé-Tchébé village (Mayo-Tsanaga).

Senate elections cemented one-party rule, media freedom remained under threat. After ruling party in March won all 70 Senate seats open for election, Biya 31 March appointed another 30 senators, with only five from opposition parties, meaning ruling party now holds 95% of Senate seats. Meanwhile, Cameroon Journalists' Trade Union 8 April accused Maroua city (Far North region) mayor of threatening to kill journalists investigating corruption in road construction projects.

➔ **Central African Republic** Amid persistent rebel violence, conflict in Sudan started affecting border region; emergence of self-defence militia increased risk of intercommunal tensions in south east.

Rebels sustained offensive notably in west and north east. In west, 3R rebel group, a member of Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), 4 April wounded three soldiers and seven Russian paramilitaries in Bossemtélé town (Ouham-Pendé prefecture). CPC fighters 7 April killed three soldiers and wounded another in ambush near Boda town, confirming rebels' redeployment in Lobaye prefecture where they have not been present since 2021. In north-eastern Vakaga prefecture, CPC rebels 1 April wounded two artisanal miners 60km from Ouanda-Djallé town, while armed forces 16 April lost five soldiers in clash with pastoralists near Sikikédé locality. In neighbouring Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, CPC 11 April killed two soldiers near border with Chad.

Conflict in Sudan affected dynamics in border region. After conflict erupted in neighbouring Sudan between Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Vakaga prefecture (located along border) recorded increased presence of Sudanese militiamen. Notably, about 40 RSF fighters 25 April reportedly crossed into CAR near Amdafock village. Conflict hampered RSF's capacity to protect border, offering greater latitude to CPC rebels smuggling weapons and men into CAR going forward. Meanwhile, 500 people fleeing violence in Sudan 26 April arrived in Amdafock.

New self-defence militia launched first attack against govt forces in south east. In Haut-Mbomou prefecture (south east), Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé militia, newly created to protect Zandé ethnic group (the majority locally) from Union for Peace (UPC) rebels, launched first attack on armed forces positions in Obo town, leading to population displacement. Intercommunal tensions could intensify in area, as Zandé militia is hostile to Muslim traders and Fulani herders it perceives as affiliated with UPC. Militia 22-23 April reportedly engaged in fighting with South Sudanese soldiers near Bambouti, leaving unknown number of people dead.

International NGO denounced democratic regression. NGO Human Rights Watch 4 April warned of "potential for human rights violations and the narrowing of democratic space and free expression" as President Touadéra continues to push for constitutional change that would let him run for third term in 2025.

➔ **Chad Conflict in neighbouring Sudan sparked concern of regional destabilisation, and intercommunal violence resurged in southern regions.**

Violent power struggle in Sudan raised risk of heightened instability in Chad. After fighting 15 April erupted in neighbouring Sudan between Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, Chad same day closed shared border in attempt to reduce risk of movement of rebel groups and militias that might support either side. Defence ministry 19 April however announced 320 Sudanese soldiers had fled into Chad, while UN refugee agency around 21 April reported up to 20,000 people had found refuge in Chad since conflict started in Sudan. Influx raised concern about humanitarian crisis as World Food Programme 14 April announced it would from May onward not be able to feed hundreds of thousands of refugees already in Chad.

Intercommunal violence flared in country's south. Suspected herders 8 April attacked Kagbé village (Mandoul region), leaving two people killed and six injured. Clashes between Fulani herders and Kodo farmers around 18 April left at least 22

people dead in several villages of Monts de Lam department (Logone Oriental region).

Govt entered diplomatic spat with Germany. Authorities 7 April expelled German ambassador to N'Djamena, citing latter's "discourteous attitude" and actions "incompatible with diplomatic practice"; expulsion reportedly followed ambassador's comments condemning authorities' decision to allow interim president, Mahamat Déby, to run for permanent office in next election. In response, Germany 11 April expelled Chadian ambassador, and European Union next day condemned N'Djamena's "hostile gesture".

In other important developments. French media outlet RFI 15 April said committee in charge of organising constitutional referendum was expecting to hold vote on 19 Nov, though report cast doubt on timeline's feasibility. Cabinet 24 April adopted electoral bill relating to organisation of referendum.

Great Lakes

➔ **Burundi** Politically motivated violence continued, while relations with Rwanda improved further.

Political opposition continued to face harassment and violence. Locals 6 April discovered lifeless body of main opposition party National Congress for Freedom (CNL) activist, Gilbert Ndacayisaba, in Ngozi province (north); witnesses claimed Ndacayisaba had been under pressure from ruling party's youth militia Imbonerakure to join their ranks. CNL was also subject to bureaucratic obstruction: party congress scheduled for 14 April was postponed after govt refused permission due to administrative error.

Burundi's relations with Rwanda thawed further. Ruling party 2 April sent high-level delegation to Kigali to attend 35th anniversary celebration of Rwandan President Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF); visit marked new step toward reconciliation following series of high-level bilateral talks (see Rwanda).

In other important developments. Security forces 18 April discovered three bodies reportedly tied together in Cibitoke province (north west); locals said bodies might be those of anti-Kigali rebels from National Liberation Forces. Also in Cibitoke, locals 22 April found two bodies wearing army uniforms. Authorities 21 April detained former PM Alain Guillaume Bunyoni (2020-2022) on accusations of "undermining state security"; NGO Amnesty International 26 April welcomed "opportunity for the Burundian authorities to ensure accountability for serious human rights violations", however expressed concern over "lack of transparency" around detention.

➔ **DR Congo** ADF and CODECO attacks surged in eastern provinces, while full deployment of regional force coincided with lull in fighting between govt forces and M23 rebels in North Kivu.

ADF and CODECO attacks killed scores of civilians in Ituri and North-Kivu. UN humanitarian office 18 April said "persistent attacks" by armed groups in Ituri province's Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories had killed around 150 civilians

since early April. Most notably, Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 2-3 April killed 30 civilians in several attacks on border between Mambasa and Irumu, while CODECO coalition of mostly Lendu militias 13-14 April killed nearly 50 people in Banyali-Kilo sector, Djugu. Meanwhile in neighbouring North Kivu province, ADF 7-20 April killed at least 30 people and took multiple hostages in Beni and Lubero territories.

M23 continued to vacate positions as ECA force completed deployment. North Kivu experienced fragile lull in fighting between M23 rebels and govt forces as East African Community regional force early April completed deployment (see Uganda). Notably, Ugandan contingent late March-early April took control of Bunagana border town, Rutshuru city, and Kiwanja town after M23 withdrawal. Claims of M23 attacks on civilians however resurfaced. Local authorities in Rutshuru territory 26 April claimed M23 in previous days killed 60 civilians in Bwito area. Kenya 27 April replaced regional force commander amid rising tensions with Kinshasa over force's mandate.

Tensions between Kinshasa and Kigali remained elevated. After President Tshisekedi 13 April excluded direct negotiations with M23, group same day responded that "there will also be no cantonment, disarmament and demobilisation until there is direct political dialogue". Kagame 15 April blamed M23 crisis on colonial era border delineation, saying "a big part of Rwanda was left outside in eastern Congo and southwestern Uganda". In response, Kinshasa blamed Kagame for "all the problems" in eastern provinces over last 20 years (see Rwanda).

In other important developments. Ahead of general elections scheduled for Dec 2023, prominent opposition presidential candidates 14 April pledged to work together and scheduled march for 13 May in capital Kinshasa to protest "chaotic electoral process". Voter registration 25 April closed countrywide; election commission however mentioned possibility of additional registration drives in conflict-ridden territories.

➡ **Rwanda Tensions with DR Congo continued to run high, while Kigali offered military support to help Benin counter jihadist threat.**

Kigali and Kinshasa continued to trade blame for conflict in eastern DR Congo. President Kagame 15 April blamed M23 crisis on colonial era border delineation, stating that "a big part of Rwanda was left outside in eastern Congo and southwestern Uganda"; also defended M23 rebels stating "these people continue to be denied their rights in Congo" and "the Congo problem, the regional problem, or the Rwanda problem is not M23". In response, Kinshasa denounced "new provocation", saying Kagame was responsible for "all the problems" in the east over last 20 years and "must never forget that [DR Congo] will defend every inch of territory". Earlier in month, Kagame and Kenyan President Ruto 4 April pledged "to find a lasting solution to the conflict" in eastern DR Congo during Ruto's visit to Rwanda (see DR Congo).

In other important developments. Kagame re-elected 2 April as chairman of ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Burundi's ruling party delegation same day attended RPF's 35th anniversary ceremony in capital Kigali, confirming improved relations between neighbours (see Burundi). During visit to Benin, Kagame 15 April

met with Beninese President Talon; two leaders signed agreement for Rwandan military help in securing Benin's borders (see Benin).

➔ **Uganda Far-reaching iron sheets corruption case resulted in arrest of govt officials; military reported progress against armed groups in eastern DR Congo.**

Iron sheets corruption case continued to engulf govt. Authorities 4-18 April detained and charged Karamoja affairs minister, Mary Goretti Kitutu, her deputy Agnes Nandutu, and finance minister, Amos Lugolobi, for allegedly diverting iron sheets that were part of \$10mn relief package originally intended for locals in Karamoja sub-region. President Museveni 3 April pledged to "take political action" against govt officials found guilty of "theft".

Authorities cracked down on Kenyan herders, causing tension with Nairobi. Ugandan forces 8 April conducted raid against Kenyan nationals suspected to be holding guns in Moroto district; Kenya claimed seven killed while Uganda confirmed one death and six injuries. Additionally, Ugandan military court around 12 April sentenced 32 Kenyan herders to 20-year prison terms for illegally possessing firearms; pastoralists from Kenya's Turkana county often cross to Uganda during dry spell in search of water and pasture. Turkana officials 13 April protested sentence, saying there was "no fairness and justice for our people".

Ugandan forces reported gains against M23 and ADF in eastern DR Congo. Ugandan forces 10 April said they had recovered three towns vacated by M23 rebels in Rutshuru territory since 1,000-strong contingent of East African Community regional force late March deployed to North Kivu (see DR Congo). Meanwhile, Uganda's Chief of Defence Forces, Gen. Wilson Mbasu Mbadi, 6 April hailed achievements made by Uganda-DR Congo joint operations against Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in eastern DR Congo, saying "ADF is now scattered in smaller groups" and "can no longer come together".

In other important developments. DR Congo nationals allegedly led by local chief from Ituri province's Mahagi territory around 20 April entered Zombo district and claimed three Ugandan villages; Zombo and Mahadi officials in following days held talks, agreed to respect border demarcations.

East and Southern Africa

➔ **Kenya Major points of contention persisted between govt and opposition despite positive steps toward de-escalating tensions; resource conflict fuelled by drought continued in northern counties.**

Opposition entered fragile talks with govt but called for new protests. Opposition leader Raila Odinga 2 March suspended anti-govt protests after President Ruto same day agreed to form bipartisan committee to review selection process for election commissioners. Country's top prosecutor next day dropped charges of unlawful assembly levelled in March at several opposition lawmakers; govt however refused to engage on other opposition demands, including cost of living and audit of Aug 2022 election servers. In attempt to increase pressure, Odinga 13 April announced protests would resume after holy month of Ramadan, and 23 April scheduled protest

for 2 May. Bilateral talks 20 April kicked off but Odinga's coalition 25 April suspended participation amid disagreement over composition of negotiating delegations and topics to be discussed.

Violence over cattle and land resources continued in north amid historic drought. Cattle theft and banditry continued in Rift Valley despite military operation. Notably, raiders believed to be from Turkana county 6 April killed five people and injured another in Lami Nyeusi village in West Pokot county, also stealing goats.

In other important developments. President Ruto's senior economic adviser David Ndi 8 April suggested govt might need to take further austerity measures to avoid debt default and stabilise economy; govt is struggling to pay public servants' salaries and basic imports as debt service consumes over 60% of govt revenue. Ruto 4-5 April visited Rwandan capital Kigali for talks on eastern Democratic Republic of Congo with Rwandan counterpart Kagame (see DR Congo). Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional bloc 16 April appointed Ruto to mediate conflict in Sudan, along with South Sudanese and Djibouti counterparts (see Sudan).

➔ **Mozambique Relative calm persisted in northern Cabo Delgado province during rainy season and holy month of Ramadan; govt legalised local militia to help fight jihadists.**

Islamic State insurgents staged limited number of attacks in Cabo Delgado. In first fatal attack since mid-March, Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) 15 April assaulted two positions of govt forces and Local Forces (militias fighting alongside govt) around Miangalewa village in Muidumbe district; at least one Local Forces member was killed, despite Rwandan forces' intervention. Attacks took place days after group of displaced people returned to Miangalewa, suggesting that holding territory and sustaining return of residents in Muidumbe will be significant challenge. Insurgents had been sighted in area in days prior to attack. Notably, Local Forces patrol 13 April encountered group of insurgents outside Litapata village, killing five; insurgents next day raided nearby Mandava village. Meanwhile, reports in April continued to emerge indicating that insurgent groups – sometimes numbering as many as 50 – are present along coast and trying to establish good relations with villagers, notably 19 April in Nazimoja village south of Mocímboa da Praia district capital, and around 20 April near Quiterajo and Ntoni villages (Macomia district); with new strategy, militants could secure durable support from communities, as national security forces are feared and distrusted.

Govt formalised relations with local militia fighting insurgents in Cabo Delgado. Council of Ministers 5 April approved decree providing legal authority to and regulating functioning of Local Forces in Cabo Delgado to help push back insurgents; step concludes legalisation process after parliament in late 2022 passed law recognising militia as govt-linked force. NGO Human Rights Watch 26 April expressed concern over partnership with “untrained and seemingly uncontrollable militia”, urged govt to prevent violations of international humanitarian laws.

Renamo called for exclusion of Mocímboa da Praia from municipal elections. Main opposition party Renamo continued to press electoral authorities to exclude Mocímboa da Praia district from municipal elections set for 11 Oct as voter registration 20 April started. With voting expected to be limited to municipal area of Mocímboa da Praia town due to security risks in rest of district, Renamo claims

concentration of govt security forces in town could influence voter behaviour in ruling party's favour.

➔ **Zimbabwe** **Calls for postponement of upcoming general elections persisted, and authorities continued to criminalise dissent.**

Controversy over constituency delimitation report cast doubt on 2023 vote. Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) party leader Douglas Mwonozora (opposition) 3 April said electoral commission's constituency delimitation report would produce "unfair and un-credible elections"; statement comes after MDC-T in March filed Constitutional Court application seeking postponement of general elections scheduled for summer. Local advocacy group Election Resource Centre 12 April said suspending elections would threaten country's democracy, and constitution provides that old boundaries apply if new delimitation report is completed less than six months before elections or deemed unconstitutional. President Mnangagwa 19 April vowed to proclaim election date in late May. Ruling party Zanu-PF second secretary Kembo Mohadi 20 April said party had reached agreements with traditional leaders to secure votes. Main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) deputy spokesperson Gift "Ostallo" Siziba few days later expressed concern about vote buying and exploitation of traditional leaders.

Opposition continued to face judicial harassment. Court 5 April sentenced CCC lawmaker and spokesperson, Fadzayi Mahere, to pay fine on charges of "communicating falsehoods"; however acquitted her of "promoting and inciting public violence". NGO Amnesty International next day said sentence showed "escalating assault on freedom of expression", 18 April lamented "rapidly shrinking civic space", including criminalisation of dissent and targeting of political activists and human rights defenders. Mahere 26 April filed appeal. Court in Harare 28 April sentenced Transform Zimbabwe opposition party activist Jacob Ngarivhume to four years in prison (including one suspended) for "inciting public violence" in 2020.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea** **Military delegation travelled to Ethiopia amid stepped-up regional engagement.**

High-level delegation visited Ethiopia as Asmara sought to consolidate ties. Military delegation led by National Security Agency chief Abraha Kassa 3-5 April visited Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. Possibly seeking to demonstrate strong bilateral ties following Ethiopia's peace deal in Tigray, Minister of Information Yemane Gebremeskel 5 April said Ethiopian military chief Birhanu Jula praised Eritrea's support during Tigray war, saying it "can never be compensated", while Abraha Kassa 5 April said Eritrea's "aspirations" are for "durable peace" in Ethiopia. Trust-building visit could presage further Eritrean troop withdrawals from Tigray region, provided Asmara is satisfied with progress on disarmament of Tigray People's Liberation Front.

Engagement with other regional actors continued. Delegation led by FM Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab 3 April arrived in South Sudanese

capital, Juba, meeting with country's President Salva Kiir. Sides reportedly focused on bilateral ties and regional developments amid worrying deterioration in Sudan (see Sudan), as well as Eritrea's interest in promoting "peace and reconciliation among the people of South Sudan". Same delegation 11 April met with Kenyan President William Ruto in Kenya's capital, Nairobi.

➔ **Ethiopia Violence spiked in Amhara over federal decision to dissolve regional paramilitaries, govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) held peace talks, and Tigray-federal relations continued to improve.**

Plans to disband regional paramilitary sparked deadly violence in Amhara region. Federal govt 6 April announced decision to dissolve regional special forces and integrate them into national army and police. Many in Amhara viewed move as threat to region amid concerns that PM Abiy allying with Oromo nationalists and strengthening ties with Tigray is isolating Amhara. Some special forces refused to comply with order, instead allying with Amhara nationalist militia known as Fano and clashing with federal soldiers in number of zones. Demonstrations also erupted, spreading throughout region, as protesters blocked roads, burned tires and chanted slogans against Abiy and ruling Prosperity Party. Abiy 9 April vowed to press ahead with plan as govt deployed troops, imposed curfew and cut off mobile internet services in parts of Amhara. Dozens were killed in unrest, which began to subside mid-April. Unidentified gunmen 27 April assassinated Girma Yeshitila, head of Prosperity Party's Amhara branch, together with his entourage in North Shewa Zone; federal govt next day launched "decisive measures" to counter "extremist forces".

Govt-OLA peace talks got under way in Tanzania. In positive step toward ending long-running OLA insurgency, PM Abiy 23 April announced peace talks with group starting 25 April in Tanzania; OLA same day confirmed news, saying federal govt had accepted its demands for third-party mediator. Fighting between security forces and OLA continued, however, and OLA continued kidnapping civilians.

Tigray's leader named new cabinet as federal-Tigray relations improved further. Newly appointed leader of Tigray region's Interim Regional Administration, Getachew Reda, 5 April unveiled 27-member cabinet to lead political transition. Cabinet is dominated by TPLF members, while military controls four posts; opposition Baytona for Greater Tigray Party took two positions amid frustration among Tigray opposition parties with excessive TPLF control. Meanwhile, Federal Ministry of Education delegation 6-7 April visited Tigray to discuss reopening region's universities. National Rehabilitation Commission head Teshome Toga 14 April visited regional capital, Mekelle, to evaluate progress on disarmament. Prosperity Party VP Adem Farah 27 April led delegation to Mekelle.

➔ **Somalia Following announcement of phase two of offensive against al-Shabaab, central regions continued to be main theatre of operations; humanitarian situation remained dire amid extreme weather events and conflict.**

Second phase of offensive against Al-Shabaab got off to slow start. After President Mohamud in March announced second phase of anti-Al-Shabaab offensive, progress in April remained limited in southern regions. In South West state, security forces 17 April recaptured several small villages north of Baidoa city in Bay region, including

Adegeow and Tarabow. In Jubaland state, preparations continued with President Ahmed Madobe 10 April visiting recently recovered town of Janay Abdalle. Focus of operations remained country's centre. In Galmudug state's Galgaduud region, govt forces 7 April recaptured Galcad town and 15 April took control of Bud Bud village, which Al-Shabaab had controlled for over six years; reports suggested govt may aim to retake Ceel Buur, insurgents' last remaining major city in area, and establish new front in western Hiraan region (Hirshabelle state). Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab continued to challenge govt's efforts to project its authority. In Galgaduud, militants 19 April launched raid on military base near Bud Bud, and 22 April attacked Masagawaay village causing unconfirmed number of casualties.

Govt continued efforts to secure regional support for offensive's second phase. After Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti in Feb agreed to support Somali forces in fighting Al-Shabaab, govt early April held second "front-line states" summit, with deliberations focused on detailing plans for joint regional offensive. Countries contributing to AU transition mission 27 April agreed on procedures for drawdown of 2,000 troops by 30 June as part of mission's coordinated exit by Dec 2024.

UN Sec Gen highlighted humanitarian crisis amid prolonged drought. UN Sec Gen António Guterres 11-12 April visited Mogadishu and camp for internally displaced persons in Baidoa city (South West state), called for increased support for 2023 humanitarian response plan for Somalia as country grapples with effects of extreme weather events and conflict. Current rainy season expected to see below average rainfall for unprecedented sixth consecutive time, while flooding in Gedo and Bay regions (both south) between mid-March and mid-April displaced 140,000.

➔ **Somaliland Fighting continued between govt forces and local clan militias in Las Anod, while mediators tried in vain to resolve standoff.**

Fighting between govt forces and local clan militias continued. Renewed heavy fighting reported early April on outskirts of Las Anod town, Sool region, between Somaliland forces and Dhulbahante militias. After authorities late March said they will go on offensive in Las Anod, local reports in April suggested both sides attempting to recruit reinforcements. Meanwhile, Dhulbahante committee in Las Anod 10 April announced suspending traffic between Sool, Sanaag and Cayn region and Somaliland from 15 April; move would isolate Las Anod from major port of Berbera and impede traffic between Somaliland and Somalia.

Mediation efforts to resolve dispute made little progress. Over a dozen international partners 15 April held virtual call with Somaliland President Muse Bihi but failed to secure pledge to withdraw forces from Las Anod. Clan elders from southern Somalia, who had travelled to Garowe city (Somalia's Puntland state) and Las Anod in March, 25 April arrived in Somaliland's capital Hargeisa for consultations.

Appointment of envoys hinted at resumption of Somalia-Somaliland talks. Somalia President Mohamud 1 April appointed former Galmudug state president and federal interior minister, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, as special envoy for Somaliland to "ensure the unity and solidarity of the Somali people". Bihi around 18 April reciprocated by naming former Somaliland FM Edna Adan as envoy to stalled Somaliland-Somalia talks.

➡ **South Sudan** South Sudan felt effects of Sudan crisis as economy suffered, refugee flows increased and Sudanese fighters crossed border; violence persisted and opposition forces formed new alliance.

Outbreak of fierce fighting in neighbouring Sudan had immediate knock-on effects. Fighting that erupted 15 April in Sudan (see Sudan) had significant implications for its southern neighbour. On economic front, conflicting reports emerged that clashes in Port Sudan between Sudan's army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) damaged port and oil pipelines, threatening oil exports that make up 85% of South Sudanese gov't's revenue; South Sudanese pound, meanwhile, 15-22 April lost almost 10% of its value compared to USD. On security front, group of dislodged RSF fighters 19 April entered Renk county, Upper Nile state, prompting army same day to issue ultimatum for group to disarm or leave; incident demonstrated risk of conflict spillover. On humanitarian front, authorities in Renk county 24 April reported 10,000 refugees had crossed border as Sudanese fled fighting. Meanwhile, Intergovernmental Authority on Development 16 April appointed President Kiir, along with Kenyan and Djiboutian counterparts, to mediate conflict in Sudan.

Violence persisted in several states. In Jonglei state, armed youths 3 April reportedly killed two and stole 2,000 head of cattle in separate incidents in Wickol and Padiak areas; unknown gunmen 27 April attacked World Food Programme convoy. In Abyei Administrative Area, gov't official 9 April reported alleged rebels loyal to Gen Stephen Buay Rolnyang, leader of South Sudan People's Movement-Army, 7 April killed 11 Nuer youth in Rumamer county. In Central Equatoria state, unknown assailants 11 April killed four in Mangalla Payam area.

In other important developments. Armed groups and opposition entities not party to 2018 revitalised peace agreement 12 April signed Memorandum of Understanding in Sudanese capital Khartoum, forming new alliance dubbed South Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance; in statement issued same day, actors cited "need for united opposition" to "change the regime in Juba". Meanwhile, Juba 2-3 April deployed around 345 additional soldiers to Democratic Republic of Congo as part of East African regional force's fight with M23 rebel group.

↓ 🌟* **Sudan** Fighting erupted between army and paramilitary force, killing hundreds and triggering humanitarian crisis; conflict could slide into all-out war, drawing in new actors and spilling into neighbouring countries.

Deadly fighting broke out between rival security forces. Longstanding power struggle between Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who leads Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo, who controls paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), 15 April descended into violent clashes in capital Khartoum, derailing transition toward restored civilian rule. Hostilities came amid rising tensions over negotiations to merge RSF into army, notably regarding timeline and leadership structure of integrated force. Fighting spread across country, notably to North, Central, West and South Darfur, North Kordofan, Kassala, Gedarif, Red Sea states. Army seized control of number of cities, including Kassala and Port Sudan in east, while RSF had upper hand in Darfur. In most other places, particularly Khartoum, momentum swung back and forth.

Fighting precipitated humanitarian crisis. Hostilities killed hundreds of civilians while millions in Khartoum remained trapped amid food, water and electricity shortages. Dozens of hospitals across Sudan shuttered due to fighting and dwindling supplies, while looting and vandalism were widespread. World Food Programme 16 April suspended operations after three employees were killed in North Darfur. As of 28 April, UN refugee agency estimated over 50,000 people had fled to neighbouring countries.

Mediation efforts failed to halt fighting. International actors called for end to hostilities, while Intergovernmental Authority on Development 16 April appointed Kenyan, South Sudanese and Djibouti presidents to broker ceasefire. Successive attempts to enforce humanitarian truces 18, 19, 21 April failed as foreign govts scrambled to evacuate citizens. U.S. and Saudi Arabia brokered 72-hour ceasefire starting 25 April, extended several times. With sides fighting on despite ceasefires, however, conflict risks descending into protracted civil war that draws in other armed groups and communal militias; in West Darfur state, there were indications tribal militias were already being drawn in. Risk of spillover into neighbouring countries or involvement of regional players also high, particularly due to presence of cross-border militias.

Sahel

↓ Burkina Faso Amid sustained fighting between govt forces and jihadist groups countrywide, both sides conducted large-scale massacres of civilians, while govt continued to restrict fundamental freedoms as part of total war strategy.

Govt forces and jihadists carried out massacres of civilians. In North region, suspected soldiers around 20 April raided Karma and nearby villages in Yatenga province, reportedly killing at least 136 civilians. Both govt forces and jihadists launched suspected retaliatory attacks on civilians in Sahel region's Séno province: military 4-6 April allegedly killed seven civilians in Dori town; and suspected Islamic State Sahel Province combatants overnight 6-7 April stormed Kourakou and Tondobi villages, leaving 31 and 13 civilians dead, respectively.

Fighting between govt forces and jihadists continued. As part of more offensive approach against jihadists, military in March-April reportedly conducted major operation against al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) positions notably in Sahel, North, Centre-North and Boucle du Mouhoun regions, with unclear results. Meanwhile in North region, JNIM combatants 15 April attacked military detachment and civilian auxiliaries (VDPs) near Aorema village, close to Ouahigouya town in Yatenga province, reportedly leaving at least eight soldiers and 32 VDPs dead; govt reported 50 assailants also killed. In Centre-East region, JNIM 10 April ambushed security forces near Zambanega village, Boulgou province; eight soldiers, three VDPs and ten militants reportedly killed. In East region, suspected jihadists 27 April killed 33 soldiers in attack on military detachment near Ouagarou town in Gnagna province, reportedly losing 40 of their own.

Authorities continued to restrict civic space as part of total war on jihadists. Among other measures aimed at boosting country's military capabilities, interim president, Capt. Traoré, 7 April announced new civilian "watch and development committees" at local level, reportedly responsible for alerting authorities about any suspicious movements and acting for development of their communities; 13 April declared "general mobilisation", giving authorities wide legal latitude to restrict rights and freedoms if deemed necessary to combat insecurity. Meanwhile, authorities 1 April expelled Burkina Faso correspondents for French newspapers *Le Monde* and *Libération*; move came after *Libération* confirmed video showing men executing children in military barracks as authentic.

➡ **Mali** Tensions continued to mount between transitional govt and coalition of northern armed groups signatory to 2015 Algiers peace accord, and Islamic State gained further ground in Ménaka region.

Relations between govt and Algiers Accord signatory groups deteriorated further. Army aircraft 5 April flew over Kidal city (Kidal region in north), headquarters of coalition of former rebel groups Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA); CMA responded with warning shots, and same day denounced ceasefire "violation" and "grave provocation". In effort to reboot peace process, accord's international mediation mechanism (led by Algeria) 9 April proposed meetings with interim govt 17 April, and with govt and signatory groups 24 April, which Bamako declined. Further stoking tensions, armed forces reported arresting on 23 April 12 "terrorists" in rare operation in Ménaka region (also north); CMA however claimed detainees were coalition members. Algerian FM Ahmed Attaf 27 April visited Bamako, held talks with interim president, Col. Goïta; in joint statement, leaders committed to reviving 2015 deal.

Islamic State pursued advance in Ménaka, violence continued in centre. Following weeks-long fighting with al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), Islamic State Sahel Province 11 April took control of Tidermène town (Ménaka), in effect encircling regional capital Ménaka and driving displacement. In Mopti region (centre), govt forces and allied Russia's paramilitary Wagner Group elements 1 April reportedly killed nine civilians in Kourkanda-Peulh village; military claimed eight of those killed were jihadists. Suspected JNIM combatants 22 April launched suicide attacks in Sévaré town (also Mopti), leaving 10 civilians dead and over 60 wounded; military reportedly killed 28 assailants.

Tensions with UN resurfaced ahead of UN mission in Mali's mandate renewal. UN Security Council members at 12 April meeting expressed concern about frozen peace process with northern armed groups and possible presidential election delay after Malian authorities in March indefinitely postponed constitutional referendum; ahead of vote on UN mission (MINUSMA)'s mandate renewal in June, UNSG Special Representative for Mali El-Ghassim Wane also urged Bamako to lift restrictions on MINUSMA operations. Meanwhile, as disinformation campaign sought to attribute 22 April attack to MINUSMA, angry mob 23 April assaulted and wounded two MINUSMA staff in Sévaré.

➡ **Niger** President Bazoum reshuffled military leadership as small-scale jihadist violence persisted, notably in south east; high-level visits

showcased Niger's new role as Western countries' preferred partner in the Sahel.

Low-level violence continued in Diffa region and returned to Agadez region. In likely effort to place men closer to him in command of military, Bazoum 1 April named new army chief of staff, while defence minister 13 April named new chief of gendarmerie. Meanwhile in Diffa region (south east), IEDs likely planted by Boko Haram faction Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) 9-15 April killed several soldiers and one civilian in Diffa and Bosso departments. Also in Diffa, rival Boko Haram faction (JAS) 15-17 April abducted at least three civilians in N'Guigmi department. In rare attack in northern Agadez region, unidentified gunmen 9 April ambushed gold convoy under military protection near Arlit town, leaving five soldiers dead and another five wounded.

Court sentenced civil society leader to prison. Court in capital Niamey 14 April sentenced coordinator of opposition coalition M62, Abdoulaye Seydou, to nine months in prison for "disseminating information that could disturb public order" after he accused armed forces of killing civilians.

High-level visits from Western actors continued. German defence minister and economic cooperation minister 12 April met with Nigerien counterparts in capital Niamey, said Niger would be "the focus of our future military engagement in the Sahel" as Berlin plans to withdraw from UN mission in Mali by May 2024. German parliament 28 April approved deployment of up to 60 troops to Niger as part of planned EU training mission.

West Africa

➔ Benin Northern departments suffered several attacks attributed to jihadist groups despite authorities' efforts to contain violence.

Attacks targeted civilians and military along Burkina Faso and Niger borders. Unidentified armed individuals 2 April killed four fishermen in Matéri commune, Atakora department near border with Burkina Faso. Unidentified gunmen overnight 3-4 April attempted to abduct civilians and steal cattle at Fulani camp near Porga commune (also Atakora); army intervened and reportedly forced assailants to flee, but some sources claim three civilians killed. Unidentified armed individuals overnight 15-16 April reportedly attacked military camp near Malanville city at Niger border in Alibori department; death toll unknown. Govt 12 April announced special recruitment of 5,000 soldiers to be deployed in northern areas affected by jihadist incursions.

Rwanda committed to providing military assistance to counter jihadist threat. President Talon 15 April met with his Rwandan counterpart, President Paul Kagame, in economic capital Cotonou; two leaders signed agreement for Rwandan military help in securing Benin's borders, with Talon saying cooperation could include anything from "monitoring, coaching and training" missions to "joint deployment" of troops.

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** Authorities set date for local and regional elections, widely seen as warm-up for 2025 presidential election; govt took new steps to counter growing jihadist threat.

Political heavyweights continued to mobilise supporters in run-up to elections. In likely popularity test ahead of 2025 presidential election, former President Gbagbo 1 April met with youth representatives of his party in economic capital Abidjan. Authorities 19 April scheduled municipal and regional elections for 2 Sept. Several parties in following days disclosed lists of candidates, with President Ouattara's Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace selecting 11 members of govt among 31 candidates for regional elections.

Jihadist expansion from Sahel region remained major concern. Ivorian and Burkinabe legislative branch presidents, respectively Adama Bictogo and Ousmane Bougouma, 4 April met on margins of continental conference of French-speaking Parliamentary Assembly in Abidjan to discuss security cooperation, confirming renewed dialogue between neighbours; Bougouma expressed "high expectations" regarding Ivorian support to Ouagadougou in fighting jihadists. Meanwhile, Ivorian National Security Council 12 April announced creation of two "transit sites" for Burkinabé refugees in border departments of Ouangolodougou (north) and Bouna (north east); initiative will allow security services to monitor influx and conduct identity checks as authorities fear militants could infiltrate country among displaced people.

➡ **Guinea** No breakthrough in talks between transitional authorities and opposition parties; meanwhile, protests erupted against power shortages.

Fragile talks proceeded between govt and opposition parties. Following first round of talks in March as part of mediation led by religious leaders, PM Bernard Goumou and Forces Vives de Guinée (FVG) – large opposition coalition including outlawed National Front for the Defence of the Constitution, opposition leader Cellou Dallein Diallo's party and deposed President Condé's Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) – in April held several rounds of talks in capital Conakry but failed to make tangible progress to ease political crisis. FVG continued to demand release of detained opposition figures, lifting of protest ban and new national dialogue supervised by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), while Goumou reportedly failed to secure strong support for talks from key officials linked to military govt. Collapse of talks could lead FVG to call for renewed street protests.

Spontaneous protests erupted over power shortages. Youths protesting power cuts late March-early April occupied roundabouts and clashed with police in several neighbourhoods of Kankan city – both an RPG stronghold and interim president Col. Doumbouya's birthplace. Govt 2 April sent security reinforcements to restore order, and 5 April suspended governor of Kankan region. Court in Kankan 13 April sentenced 15 protesters to jail terms on charges of "participating in non-authorized gathering" and "destruction of public buildings". Situation eased in following days, but Kankan and other cities could see new violence amid recurrent power shortages.

⚠ **Nigeria** Surges in criminal, herder-farmer and communal violence left hundreds of people dead across country, with particularly heavy toll among civilians.

North West, North Central saw resurgence of deadly attacks, with over 300 killed. In Benue state, armed groups 3-7 and 25 April launched multiple attacks on civilians in Apa, Guma and Otukpo areas, killing at least 149 people. Armed groups also conducted deadly raids in Kaduna state, with at least 41 people killed 12 and 15 April in Zango Kataf area. Meanwhile in Niger state, vigilantes around 13 April killed about 50 bandits in Kainji National Park. In Nasarawa state, herder-farmer violence 18 April left twelve people dead in Kokona area. In Plateau state, armed groups 22-26 April killed 13 people in Barkin-Ladi, Jos South and Riyom areas. Armed group 30 April killed 40 people, including six security operatives, in Danko-Wasagu area, Kebbi state.

North East recorded persistent jihadist threat and significant communal violence. Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) 13 April killed ten people in Dogsa village, Yobe state; Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies same day warned ISWAP had started weaponising drones with a view to using them for attacks in Lake Chad basin. Troops 17-20 April killed 35 Boko Haram (JAS) fighters in Sambisa forest, Borno state. Meanwhile in Taraba state, clashes between Fulani and Kuteb ethnic groups in Ardo-Kola, Takum and Ussa areas 31 March-4 April left at least 32 people dead.

Kidnapping for ransom surged across country. In Zamfara state, gunmen 7 April kidnapped about 85 people, mostly children and women, in Tsafe area; 28 April released most of them after ransom payment. In Nasarawa state, gunmen same day abducted former deputy governor, Onje Gye-Wado, in Wamba area, releasing him few days later allegedly after ransom payment. In Rivers state, gunmen 17 April abducted senior lawyer and former Bar Association chairman Okey Wali in state capital Port Harcourt; released him two weeks later in unknown circumstances. Armed groups 25 April abducted at least 29 people in Federal Capital Territory.

Violence associated with Biafra agitation groups persisted in South East. Gunmen 6 and 21 April killed at least six policemen in Aboh Mbaise and Ngor Okpala area, Imo state. Separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra denied responsibility.