



CrisisWatch 2023 – July Trends and August Alerts

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Cameroon Anglophone conflict continued to take high civilian toll, as human rights organisation denounced widespread human rights violations.**

Tit-for-tat attacks by army and separatists continued in Anglophone regions. Armed Anglophone separatists 1 and 4 July killed three soldiers in Bamenda city and Belo town, both North West (NW) region. In response, govt forces launched spate of attacks, killing two women in Mejang village (NW) 5 July, three separatist combatants in Mbonge town (South West) 12 July, and at least five young men in Bamenda's Nacho neighbourhood 14 July. Unidentified gunmen wearing military uniforms 16 July shot ten civilians dead in same neighbourhood; military and NW governor Adolphe Lele Lafrique next day blamed "terrorists", while prominent separatist armed group, Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF), denied responsibility.

ADF hardened their stance, threatening to target anyone working with govt. ADF leader Ayaba Cho Lucas 12 July vowed to seize, sell or destroy properties of "collaborators and enablers of Cameroon government's activities in the Anglophone regions", notably ruling party members and traditional rulers who cooperate with Yaoundé. Separatists 29 July declared ghost town in Bamenda city to disrupt funeral of opposition leader Ni John Fru Ndi for his stance in favour of united Cameroon.

Rights group denounced widespread human rights violations in North West. NGO Amnesty International 4 July published extensive report documenting human rights violations – killings, kidnappings and gender-based violence – committed by security forces, associated militias and armed separatists in North West region since 2020. Report also accuses govt of instrumentalising Fulani Mbororo community militias against Anglophone rebels, exposing community to reprisals by separatists, and of systematic crackdown on people denouncing violations.

In other important developments. Far North region in July recorded lull in jihadist violence after security forces in June reinforced their positions; lull also coincided with resumption of clashes between Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province in neighbouring Nigeria (see Nigeria). Anglophone cocoa producers in July staged street protests in Mamfe city (SW) to protest Nigeria exports ban imposed in June by Yaoundé in bid to curb smuggling.

➔ **Central African Republic (CAR) Central Africans voted on new constitution abolishing presidential term limits, while rebel groups stepped up attacks on govt forces in attempt to derail vote.**

President Touadéra-sponsored constitutional referendum held 30 July. Touadéra 10 July unveiled proposed new constitution removing two-term limit for presidents, thus paving the way for his third-term bid; draft constitution also creates position of VP appointed by president and bars Central Africans of foreign origin or holding another citizenship from running for president. Opposition coalition Republican Bloc for the Defence of the Constitution (BRDC) voiced discontent but failed to mobilise large numbers, with less than 1,000 people protesting 14 July in capital Bangui. Opposition leader Anicet Georges Dologuélé late July criticised absence of level playing field, citing state control of key voting institutions, absence of electoral register and short campaign timeframe, and BRDC called for boycott of referendum. Vote 30 July proceeded without major incidents.

Armed groups intensified attacks in lead-up to referendum. Rebel Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) 3-4 July killed at least seven soldiers in ambush 25km from Abba town (Nana-Mambéré prefecture) and attack on checkpoint near Sam-Ouandja town (Haute-Kotto prefecture); 11 July launched another raid on checkpoint 30km from Nana-Bakassa town (Ouham prefecture), killing one soldier. In response, security forces 2-12 July arrested at least 70 people during search operations in Bambari city (Ouaka prefecture) and Bangui. UN peacekeeping force (MINUSCA) 10 July killed 15 suspected CPC fighters and lost one Rwandan peacekeeper during operation in Sam-Ouandja town.

Wagner's mutiny fuelled speculations about paramilitary group's future in CAR. Approximately 600 Russian paramilitary Wagner Group operatives 6 July left Bangui heading for Russia, fuelling speculations about group's future in CAR following Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's mutiny in Russia in June. Wagner spokesperson in CAR, Alexander Ivanov, 7 July said group will remain in country. CAR's presidency next day confirmed "it is not a definitive departure but a rotation", and hundreds of Wagner forces mid-July reportedly landed in Bangui. Meanwhile, UN Security Council 27 July relaxed arms embargo on CAR, lifting restrictions on supply, sale and transfer of arms to govt forces; Bangui criticised decision, demanding total lifting of embargo.

➡ **Chad Interim President Déby moved to consolidate control over armed forces and authorities scheduled constitutional referendum for December, while communal violence persisted.**

Déby appeared to set the stage for possible presidential candidacy. In apparent attempt to secure better control of armed forces, Interim President Gen. Déby throughout June and July retired at least 100 generals and promoted similar number of younger officers close to him to rank of general. In Paris-based weekly news magazine *Jeune Afrique*, African Union Commission Chairperson (and former Chadian FM) Moussa Faki 17 July said military leaders of transition should not stand for election, reiterated need to hand over power to civilians. Authorities 17 July scheduled constitutional referendum for 17 December, while civil society continued to accuse transitional govt of trying to impose unitary state.

Transitional authorities advanced reconciliation agenda. As part of transition's national reconciliation agenda, govt late June-early July set up national commission in charge of disarming politico-military groups and reintegrating their personnel

into national army, and another one tasked with national reconciliation and social cohesion. Déby 17 July pardoned 110 individuals sentenced to jail terms for alleged involvement in 20 October 2022 protests.

Intercommunal violence persisted. Clashes between Arab and Moubi communities 1-3 July left at least seven civilians dead in and around Kouka and Iregué localities in Mangalmé department, Guéra region.

Sudanese exodus continued to strain Chad's humanitarian capacity. UN Deputy Sec Gen Amina Mohammed 18-19 July visited Chad, met with Déby and PM Saleh Kebzabo and reiterated call on international community to increase support for Sudanese refugees in Chad. World Food Programme 11 July announced scaling up its response on Chad-Sudan border to support surge of people fleeing from Sudan, as UN refugee agency 23 July counted over 329,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad.

Great Lakes

➔ **Burundi Main opposition party entered near-complete paralysis and Burundi delegation boycotted UN periodic review of country's human rights record.**

Main opposition party experienced split in leadership. National Congress for Freedom (CNL) President, Agathon Rwasa, 28 June dismissed 11 members of CNL's political bureau, labelling them as "dissidents" and accusing them of insubordination and collusion with Interior Minister Martin Niteretse. In response, ten suspended members 4 July announced Rwasa's suspension, accusing him of plotting against CNL, embezzlement and misappropriation of assets. Group thereafter named CNL Sec-Gen Simon Bizimungu as temporary party leader, who in turn urged CNL members to disregard announcement.

Burundi's UN walkout deepened human rights concerns. Burundi delegation 3 July walked out of UN Human Rights Committee session in Geneva, Switzerland. Bujumbura cited presence at session of "criminals", notably Armel Niyongere, one of 12 human rights activists and journalists convicted in Burundi for their alleged involvement in 2015 coup attempt. Committee same day expressed "deep regret" at move, said review of Burundi's human rights record would continue without delegation. NGO Human Rights Watch 5 July said walkout was indicative of Burundian authorities' "contempt for human rights".

Imbonerakure violence continued. Two groups of ruling party youth militia Imbonerakure, including one returning from DR Congo, overnight 30 June-1 July engaged in violent clashes along Burundian bank of Rusizi River, reportedly leaving three dead. Imbonerakure 15 July allegedly beat 14-year-old to death in Ntega commune, Kirundo province, and around 17 July killed resident of Muhanga commune, Ngozi province.

➔ **DR Congo Tensions escalated further ahead of general elections set for December, while civilians continued to bear the brunt of violence in eastern provinces.**

Pre-electoral tensions turned violent. Unidentified gunman 13 July killed Chérubin Okende, MP and spokesman of Moïse Katumbi's opposition party, Together for the Republic, in capital Kinshasa. Small anti-govt protests same day broke out and President Tshisekedi urged judiciary to "shed light on this case". Adding to turmoil, electoral commission 10 July dismissed all opposition's demands ahead of general elections set for December, including independent audit of electoral register. In response, opposition leader Martin Fayulu 12 July vowed to block "fraudulent" elections. Electoral commission 23 July closed registration of candidacies for legislative elections, with Fayulu and former President Joseph Kabila's parties choosing to remain out of the race.

M23 ceasefire remained fragile in North Kivu province. Local sources said M23 armed group 5-16 July killed at least 11 civilians in Bukombo village and another eight in Bungushu village, both Rutshuru territory. Congolese military 27 July claimed to have pushed back incursion by Rwandan army north of North Kivu's capital Goma. Rwandan army next day rejected accusations, accused Kinshasa of seeking pretext to launch attack on Rwandan territory. European Union 28 July sanctioned nine Congolese and Rwandan individuals responsible for serious human rights violations and/or for fuelling armed conflict in eastern DR Congo, including several armed group members and a Rwandan military officer.

Other armed groups continued to terrorise civilians in East. In Ituri province, association of various ethnic Lendu militias CODECO 3 July raided Pabon village, Mahagi territory, killing two; Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 12 July killed at least 16 people in Eloke-Nord and Apesiko villages, Mambasa territory. In North Kivu province, ADF next day killed two including one army officer in Mapobu village, Beni territory. Following 16 June school attack in Uganda, Ugandan and DR Congo forces stepped up operations against ADF cell in Mwalika Valley, Beni territory (North Kivu), reportedly killing 16 militants, including several leaders, by mid-July.

In other important developments. As conflict between Yaka and Teke communities persisted in western provinces, armed forces 3 July reportedly arrested 50 Yaka "Mobondo" militiamen.

➔ **Rwanda Kinshasa accused Rwandan army of attacking Congolese border guards, and European Union (EU) imposed sanctions on Rwandan military officer for fuelling conflict in eastern DR Congo.**

Congolese military 27 July claimed to have pushed back incursion by Rwandan army into North Kivu (see DR Congo). Rwandan army next day rejected accusations, accused Kinshasa of seeking pretext to launch attack on Rwandan territory. Meanwhile, European Union (EU) Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell 7 July said EU "firmly condemns Rwanda's support to M23 and Rwanda's military presence in eastern DRC" and "reiterates its urgent demand that Rwanda withdraws its troops from eastern DRC, ceases immediately all support to M23". EU 28 July sanctioned nine Congolese and Rwandan individuals responsible for serious human rights violations and/or for fuelling armed conflict in eastern DR Congo, including a Rwandan military officer and several armed group members.

➔ **Uganda UK embassy issued terror alert as authorities tried to downplay security risks following major Islamist militia attack in June.**

Govt sought to shape anti-terror narrative. Security agencies deployed heavily in and around capital Kampala after UK embassy in Uganda 2 July issued terror alert. Meanwhile, govt played down risk posed by Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) after group 16 June launched deadly attack in western Uganda. Notably, President Museveni 13 July referred to Uganda as “island of peace” where no terror group could survive, while acknowledging intelligence gathering failures; also accused former DR Congo President Kabila of having turned his country into ADF’s safe heaven, which Kabila’s spokesperson 18 July called “simply ridiculous”. Following 16 June attack, Ugandan and DR Congo militaries stepped up operations against ADF cell in Mwalika Valley, Beni territory (North Kivu), reportedly killing 16 militants, including several leaders by mid-July.

Museveni faced allegations of crimes against humanity. International media including *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* 11-12 July revealed accusations of crimes against humanity against 26 Ugandan officials, including President Museveni, his son Muhoozi Kainerugaba, and seven other high-level officials; testimonies of 215 people containing detailed allegations of torture were reportedly submitted in May to International Criminal Court (ICC) in support of opposition leader Bobi Wine’s complaint over troubled 2021 elections. Museveni’s entourage 12 July said accusers were “peddling wrong information” in order to tarnish his reputation.

In other important developments. In Karamoja sub-region, suspected ethnic Jie gunmen 3 July killed four, including two soldiers. Internal and state affairs minister 5 July said Museveni’s deadline for Kenyan Turkana herders to leave Uganda or face expulsion extended to September.

East and Southern Africa

↓ Kenya Crackdown on anti-govt protests left over 20 people dead as tensions spiked over tax hikes; spate of Al-Shabaab attacks continued.

Nationwide protests turned deadly. Opposition-led protests resumed across country to denounce rising cost of living after govt late June raised fuel and energy taxes. Police 7, 12, and 19 July cracked down on protesters in several cities and towns, leaving over 20 people dead and arresting over 300, including nine senior opposition figures. Opposition leader Raila Odinga 25 July denounced “unprecedented police violence” and said opposition would file charges for “police atrocities” against govt at International Criminal Court. President Ruto and Odinga 28 July met in Mombasa city; govt and opposition politicians next day announced they would set up joint committee to resolve differences.

Inter-communal clashes erupted in western counties amid protests. Amid opposition-led protests, clashes 12 July erupted between Ruto’s Kalenjin community and Odinga’s Luo community in disputed Sondu town, located along border between Kericho and Kisumu counties; violence killed three and left dozens injured.

Al-Shabaab attacks continued along Somalia border. Amid spate of Al-Shabaab attacks in eastern counties since May, Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki 5 July announced delay in planned reopening of border with Somalia. Al-Shabaab militants

same day ambushed police at Ogorwen location in Mandera county, reportedly leaving six officers dead; 23 militants also killed. Security forces vehicle 10 July hit explosive device in Fafi area, Garissa county, with two dead. Suspected Al-Shabaab militants 14 July killed two police officers and one teacher in raid on Wargadud police camp in Mandera county.

➔ **Mozambique Islamic State militants launched significant attacks on security forces in coastal areas, prompting govt to step up counter-insurgency operations; Southern African regional force's mandate extended by another year.**

Islamic State insurgents increased pressure on security forces in coastal districts. Suspected Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) combatants 30 June-1 July launched attacks in border area between Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia districts, notably killing at least ten special unit soldiers in Cobre village; 6 July ambushed Rapid Intervention Unit convoy near Mbau town, Mocímboa da Praia district, killing seven police officers and looting weapons; and 18 July attacked military position in Cobre village, Macomia district, killing unknown number of soldiers. Violence continued to impact civilians despite ISMP's apparent drive to avoid casualties; militants 16 July robbed and beheaded two fishermen in Litamanda village, Macomia district.

Govt forces redoubled counter-insurgency efforts in Macomia. Govt forces supported by soldiers from Rwanda and Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission to Mozambique (SAMIM) in July stepped up counter-insurgency drive launched in June along Macomia coast. Military prevented some traders and civilians from entering district with large amount of goods amid reports ISMP militants have been resupplying in district; restrictions may escalate tensions between troops and civilians, particularly in areas affected by food insecurity.

Southern African bloc renewed mission's mandate. During extraordinary Troika summit, Southern African Development Community 11 July renewed SAMIM's mandate for additional year; assessment circulated during summit proposed mission's complete withdrawal by July 2024 or July 2025, while stressing work still needed to empower Mozambican forces to replace foreign military personnel in areas reclaimed from insurgents.

Election preparations continued. Ahead of municipal elections scheduled for 11 Oct, 23 political parties, coalitions, and citizens groups registered by 14 July deadline; registration of candidates opened 20 July. Main opposition party RENAMO 25 July said it was open to coalitions with other parties for local elections, but reported no formal contact underway.

➔ **Zimbabwe Ahead of general elections set for 23 August, opposition candidates continued to face restrictions, and President Mnangagwa enacted bill critics say will be used to prohibit criticism of govt.**

Govt and opposition remained at loggerheads weeks before elections. Police 7 July banned main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) rally scheduled for 9 July in capital Harare, citing lack of suitable facilities; ban upheld in court 9 July after CCC contested decision. High Court 12 July barred former ruling party official and late President Mugabe loyalist, Saviour Kasukuwere, from running for

president, saying he has lived outside of country for over 18 months, and Supreme Court 28 July confirmed his disqualification; Kasukuwere's camp denounced attempt by ruling party to exclude him from race. Elisabeth Valerio 19 July won appeal against electoral commission's decision to bar her from running for president, becoming only female candidate in presidential election. EU observer mission 22 July arrived in country.

Controversial "patriotic bill" signed into law. President Mnangagwa 14 July enacted Criminal Law Code Amendment Bill criminalising "wilfully damaging the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe", de facto prohibiting criticism of govt. Opposition, lawyers, and human rights groups continued to oppose bill, saying it may be used to curtail freedoms ahead of August votes. Notably, NGO Amnesty International 15 July denounced "brutal assault on civil space".

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea Eritrean forces' continued presence in Ethiopia's Tigray region hindered peace process; President Isaias attended summits in Egypt and Russia amid efforts to boost international standing.**

Eritrean forces maintained strategic positions in Tigray. Coalition of regional and international civil society organisations 10 July published report warning that peace deal in Ethiopia's Tigray region is "marred by significant gaps" (see Ethiopia), including continued presence of Eritrean troops who were supposed to withdraw under terms of accord. Though Asmara mostly withdrew its forces in Feb 2023, it has maintained strategic positions in region and could still disrupt peace process, especially if Amhara-controlled Western Tigray is returned to Tigray's administration.

Asmara's efforts to bolster its international standing continued. In bid to play more active role in regional affairs, President Isaias 13 July attended Sudan's Neighbouring States Summit in Egypt's capital, Cairo, to discuss possible solutions to Sudan crisis. Summit ended with plan to establish ministerial mechanism, aimed at facilitating comprehensive peace agreement. Isaias 28 July met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on sidelines of Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg; leaders reportedly held "extensive discussions on bilateral ties and international matters of mutual importance", including war in Ukraine.

➔ **Ethiopia Violence in Oromia continued unabated, Amhara Fano militia stepped up attacks on govt forces, and Tigray's top commander announced demobilisation of over 50,000 troops.**

Clashes between insurgents and govt forces persisted in Oromia region. Fighting raged in Oromia between govt forces and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) following failed talks in May, with sides stepping up operations in bid to strengthen their respective negotiating positions should talks resume. Hostilities notably occurred in West Hararghe and Arsi zones, where OLA operations have been rare. Month also saw OLA, as well as unaffiliated bandits, increase kidnappings for ransom.

Violence intensified in Amhara region. Discontent with federal govt in Amhara simmered as clashes between, on one side, Fano militia and defected Amhara

paramilitaries and, on the other, federal and regional forces late July escalated in North Shewa, North Wollo and Gondar zones; notably, Fano gunmen 26 July ambushed army in Gondar. Month saw spike in assassinations of local officials, likely perpetrated by Fano: notably, gunmen 3 July shot police chief and his deputy in Dejen District (East Gojam Zone); gunmen 14 July killed police commander of Debre Berhan town (North Shewa).

Tigray-Amhara tensions persisted over territorial dispute, Tigray demobilised over 50,000 troops. PM Abiy 6 July pressed Tigray and Amhara to resolve territorial disputes through peaceful consultations (Western and parts of Southern Tigray have been under Amhara's administration since Nov 2020); Amhara regional authorities next day announced plans for referendum to settle issue but offered few details, such as who would organise vote or be eligible to cast a ballot. Tigray official 13 July reportedly said holding referendum while parts of region remain under Amhara's control would be illegal. Meanwhile, Tigray's top commander Tadesse Worede 26 July announced demobilisation of over 50,000 Tigray forces and urged federal govt to ensure withdrawal of Amhara and Eritrean forces.

In other important developments. Authorities in Gambella region 20 July imposed curfew after ethnic Anuak militias killed scores, mostly Nuer community members, in Gambella city. Ethiopia and Egypt 13 July agreed to seek final deal on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam within four months (see Nile Waters).

➔ **Nile Waters Egyptian and Ethiopian leaders agreed to resume talks on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).**

On sidelines of Sudan's Neighbouring States Summit in Egypt's capital, Cairo (see Sudan), Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi 13 July agreed to restart GERD talks, with aim of reaching final deal on filling and operation of dam within four months. Pact came after Ethiopia promised to ensure Egypt and Sudan receive sufficient water flows during fourth annual filling, which may last until Sept; war-torn Sudan's role in forthcoming talks not yet clear.

➔ **Somalia Al-Shabaab continued to launch significant attacks amid stalled govt offensive and drawdown of AU troops, while tensions persisted at regional level with unclear consequences on counter-insurgency drive.**

Al-Shabaab conducted several deadly attacks. Al-Shabaab militants early July repeatedly crossed Shabelle river to launch incursions between Bulo Burte and Beledweyene cities in Hirshabelle region (Hirshabelle state, centre). In attempt to pressure South West state authorities to stop detaining those who travel to Al-Shabaab-held areas, group 11-21 July laid siege to Baidoa city (Bay region), causing food and fuel shortages. Al-Shabaab attacked bases handed over in June by African Union mission (ATMIS) troops to Somali forces. Notably, militants 13 July briefly captured Geriley base in Gedo region (Jubaland state, south), and 19 July targeted Arbacow base in Lower Shabelle region (South West state), but did not overrun it. Al-Shabaab 24 July killed at least 20 soldiers in suicide attack on military training centre in capital Mogadishu. Second phase of govt's offensive in July remained on hold with small-scale operations mainly in Galmudug state's Galgaduud region (centre) and Jubaland state's Lower Juba region (south).

Govt sought greater acceptance of political reforms plan. In effort to obtain greater support for decisions agreed by federal gov't and member states in May, notably shift to presidential system, President Mohamud 12-13 July held consultations with senior opposition politicians; participants did not reach full agreement on key issues including election harmonisation and timelines, and Somalia's governance model.

Political tensions persisted in several regions. Standoff continued between Hirshabelle state President Ali Guudlaawe and Ali Jeyte, who proclaimed new Hiraan state after Guudlaawe in June sacked him as regional governor of Hiraan; Jeyte 22 July said he had fallen out with Guudlaawe over approach to Al-Shabaab. Following election-related violence in Puntland state in June, Puntland parliament 25 July passed constitutional amendments that some opposition leaders opposed, notably allowing for direct election of president and VP. In contrast, Gedo region showed signs of de-escalation. Jubaland state officials early July travelled to Gedo for talks with regional authorities, and Ahmed Buulle 26 July pledged to hand over office to governor appointed in June by Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe.

➔ **Somaliland Fighting between gov't forces and Dhulbahante clan militias continued in Las Anod, and electoral authorities announced election roadmap despite opposition.**

On-and-off clashes continued around Las Anod town, Sool region. Fighting between Somaliland forces and Dhulbahante militiamen 8 July damaged Las Anod hospital, injuring staff; NGO Doctors Without Border 24 July announced withdrawal of services from hospital. Heaving fighting and artillery exchange also reported mid-July and around 29 July on outskirts of town. Dhulbahante clan 6 July replaced 33-member committee tasked with governing SSC-Khatumo region with new 45-member grouping. Delegation of Somali traditional elders attempting to mediate in conflict mid-July left Somaliland after three-month mission without concrete results.

Electoral commission set election dates despite opposition. Electoral commission 17 July scheduled political parties election for Dec 2023 and presidential vote for Nov 2024, which means one and two-year delay respectively; opposition parties previously demanded presidential vote be held before political parties election, and rejected full two-year extension of Bihi's term. House of Representatives 23 July elected Yasin Haji Mohamud 'Faratoon' as new speaker after previous speaker defected to Dhulbahante in June. Somaliland forces late July clashed with newfound militia group upset over electoral process in Gacan Libaax mountains (Togdheer region).

➔ **South Sudan President Kiir announced candidacy in 2024 presidential election amid chorus of international and local voices warning country lacks conducive environment for free and fair poll.**

Gov't began election campaigning. Ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM-IG) pushed forward with preparations for presidential election scheduled for Dec 2024 amid hopes it will provide international legitimacy and end sanctions regimes. President Kiir 4 July confirmed election would take place and announced he would run for president at rally in Wau city, Bahr el Ghazal state.

Array of actors raised concerns about elections. International and local actors raised concerns about lack of political will to hold competitive elections as well as lacklustre implementation of revitalised peace deal (R-ARCSS). Notably, head of UN mission in South Sudan 6 July said country is “not yet ready” for “free, fair and credible elections”. Leader of R-ARCSS signatory party National Democratic Movement 9 July said credible elections “will not be possible...under the current conditions and (given) status of implementation of the R-ARCSS”. Prominent members of VP Machar’s Sudan’s People Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) also voiced concern, as did holdout opposition leader of National Salvation Front Thomas Cirillo on 10 July. Several other holdout opposition leaders and civil society organisations 13 July issued statement accusing govt of organising “sham election”. SPLM-IO deputy chairman 23 July reiterated party “is ready for elections that are free, fair and credible, not sham elections”. SPLM-IG pressed ahead despite warnings, though one SPLM-IG official 10 July claimed party is discussing further extension of transitional period.

Govt and opposition forces clashed in Greater Upper Nile region. SPLM-IG and SPLA-IO 1 July clashed in Wunkur county, located in disputed territory between SPLM-IG-controlled Ruweng Administrative Area and SPLA-IO-controlled Panyikang county (Greater Upper Nile). SPLA-IO area commander in Longechuk county in Upper Nile 2 July confirmed defection to govt.

Sudan war fuelled more displacement and raised food prices. As of 26 July, over 193,000 people had crossed into South Sudan from Sudan since April. Conflict continued disrupting food supplies along border, causing food scarcity and high prices in north.

➔ **Sudan Paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) gained upper hand in Khartoum amid heavy fighting with army, Darfur witnessed high levels of ethnic targeting, and diplomatic disarray hindered peace efforts.**

RSF entrenched its superior position in capital Khartoum as war intensified. Fighting continued to escalate between army under Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Burhan and RSF led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo “Hemedti” as conflict 24 July turned 100 days old. RSF gained upper hand in capital Khartoum and sister city Bahri, seizing control of strategic sites as army suffered significant battlefield losses. Notably, RSF 15 July repelled major army offensive trying to break its two-month siege of army headquarters in Bahri. Paramilitary’s momentum prompted speculation it could soon win war for Khartoum.

Darfur region saw high levels of ethnic targeting. Amid fighting between army and RSF in various areas of Darfur, South and West Darfur states witnessed numerous attacks on civilians, notably perpetrated by RSF and affiliated tribal militias on members of other ethnic groups. In West Darfur, epicentre of ethnic conflict involving Arab Rizeigat (from which most RSF personnel come) and non-Arab Masalit tribes, UN 13 July reported bodies of at least 87 Masalit had been discovered in mass grave; International Criminal Court same day launched investigation of alleged war crimes in Darfur. In South Darfur, RSF 18 July seized control of Kaas town, displacing thousands.

Fighting continued in Kordofan states and spilled into Blue Nile state. After settling into uneasy stalemate, hostilities between army and RSF 20 July resumed in North Kordofan state capital, El Obeid. In South Kordofan state, rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North throughout July clashed with army, reportedly taking control of several towns and pushing into Blue Nile where sides notably fought around al-Kurmuk locality.

Competing mediation tracks failed to yield results. Various, uncoordinated diplomatic initiatives continued throughout month, producing little. Notably, regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development 10 July convened talks, calling for end to war, while Egypt 13 July hosted leaders from Sudan's neighbouring countries, announcing its own initiative with the same goal. Meanwhile, army conveyed several messages hinting at interest in talks, while Hemedti 28 July said he would reach peace deal with army "in 72 hours" if it replaces leadership.

Sahel

➔ **Burkina Faso All-military approach to jihadist insurgency led to large numbers of casualties among army auxiliaries and local communities; pro-regime groups voiced support for new constitution.**

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of spreading violence. Conflict actors continued to target civilians suspected of collusion with opposing side. Notably, presumed al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) combatants 1 July killed 11 civilians near Partiaga town, Tapoa province, and unidentified jihadists 5 July killed 15 civilians in Sorgha town, Gnagna province (both East region). Soldiers and army auxiliaries (VDPs) 8 July killed around 12 ethnic Fulani passengers on bus near Dedougou city, Mouhoun province, Boucle du Mouhoun region. Military 8-9 July also reported killing around 90 jihadist militants near Partiaga (Tapoa) and Ougarou town (Gnagna) (both East region) and near Sofikel town, Seno province (Sahel region). Several attacks led to heavy casualties on govt's side, particularly among VDPs. Notably, JNIM 7 July killed around 16 VDPs and two civilians, while losing ten of their own, in Kogossablogo village, Namentenga province (Centre-North region).

Demonstrators rallied in favour of new Constitution. Amid rumours that transitional authorities are looking to adopt new constitution and delay elections scheduled for July 2024, thousands 1 July demonstrated in capital Ouagadougou to demand constitutional revision; gathering also reported same day also in second-largest city Bobo-Dioulasso.

In other important developments. West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS 9 July held summit in Guinea-Bissau, regretted Ouagadougou and other West African transitional regimes' "very limited" cooperation with ECOWAS mediators; also reiterated call on transitional authorities to restore constitutional order and voiced concern over humanitarian situation of people displaced from "front line countries", including Burkina Faso, to neighbouring coastal states. Ouagadougou and Bamako 31 July warned military intervention against coup leaders in Niger would be considered "declaration of war" against them (see Niger).

➔ **Mali In likely attempt to assert power, Interim leader Col. Goïta conducted major cabinet reshuffle, while new constitution entered into force; violence remained elevated in central and northern regions.**

President reshuffled cabinet, sidelining prominent figures of the transition. Interim President Col. Goïta 1 July carried out govt reshuffle, bringing 13 new ministers into govt. Reshuffle saw Goïta loyalists replace several ministers loyal to PM Choguel Maïga, and 2015 peace agreement signatory groups lose two out of four ministries; reshuffle also strengthened Goïta at the expense of four other colonels at the heart of power since May 2021 coup, including defence minister, Col. Sadio Camara.

IS Sahel faced resistance from signatory armed groups, rival jihadists in north. Presumed Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) militants 6 July attacked UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) convoy near Ouatagouna town, Gao region, killing three civilians and wounding 14 people, including three peacekeepers. Also in Gao, al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 8-9 July engaged IS Sahel fighters in Hourara, Tandadadjorane and Fiteli villages, reportedly taking over some bases. 2015 peace accord signatory, Movement for the Salvation of Azawad, 11 July killed around ten civilians suspected of collusion with IS Sahel in Inazole village, Ménaka region.

Violence remained high in centre as govt sustained offensive against jihadists. In Mopti region (centre), govt forces and Russian paramilitary Wagner Group early July conducted air and group operation against JNIM in Sévéri village, killing at least seven militants. Also in Mopti, JNIM 2 July killed 28 ethnic Dogon Dan Na Ambassagou militiamen in Nouh-Bozo and Bangassi villages. In Ségou region, army 12 July allegedly killed at least 20 JNIM militants as they tried to ambush supply convoy in Sokolo area; and JNIM 27 July reportedly killed at least 12 civilians in Tiouga village.

In other important developments. Constitutional Court 21 July endorsed constitutional referendum, and Goïta next day promulgated new constitution. MINUSMA 3 July presented plan for mission's withdrawal to FM Abdoulaye Diop; MINUSMA-govt joint working groups tasked with carrying out withdrawal by 31 Dec set up 11 July. Bamako 31 July expressed support for coup leaders in Niger (see Niger).

↓ **Niger Presidential guards deposed President Bazoum, extending coup belt and resulting instability sweeping West Africa.**

Presidential guards staged coup overthrowing Bazoum. Presidential guards 26 July sealed off presidential palace in capital Niamey and detained President Bazoum. Putschists 26-27 July suspended constitution, dissolved govt and state institutions and closed borders, claiming “continued degradation of the security situation” and “poor economic and social governance” pushed them to act. Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Abdou Sidikou Issa, 27 July said military would not intervene against coup leaders, purportedly to avoid bloodbath in Niamey, de facto backing putschists. Head of Presidential Guard, Gen. Abderrahmane Tchiani, 28 July appeared on state TV and declared himself head of new ruling junta, National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP). Thousands of pro-junta protesters 30 July marched in Niamey waving Russian flags and stormed French embassy, drawing tear gas from French security. CNSP 31 July detained head of Bazoum's party and four ministers. Coup

prompted international condemnation. Notably, West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS 26 July condemned "attempt to seize power by force" and called on putschists to free Bazoum "immediately and without any condition"; 30 July imposed sanctions, including national assets freeze, and threatened force if coup leaders fail to reinstate ousted Bazoum within a week.

Low-level insecurity persisted in Tillabery region (south west). Al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) militants 4 July killed three civilians in Ourogo village, Say department. Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) fighters 7 July killed one gendarme and wounded another in Ayorou department. JNIM 14 July ambushed transport convoy under military escort near Niakatire locality, Torodi department, killing one gendarme and four civilians, and wounding 19 others; two militants also killed. Meanwhile, reports around 10 July emerged that Nigerien and French forces 6-7 July captured two high-level IS Sahel leaders; observers 12 July however claimed reports were case of mistaken identity.

West Africa

➔ Côte d'Ivoire Political class continued to gear up for September 2023 regional and municipal elections.

Prominent opposition parties struggled to agree on joint candidacies. Electoral commission 19 July extended deadline to submit candidacies for regional and municipal elections until 23 July at request of Henri Konan Bédié's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and Laurent Gbagbo's African People's Party-Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI). PPA-CI 18 July announced alliance with PDCI in 24 regions (out of around 30). Notably, VP of PPA-CI Stéphane Kipré 17 July joined list of PDCI official Alphonse Djédjé Mady in Haut-Sassandra region. Parties also filed joint candidacies in 158 out of 201 municipalities, but negotiations failed in key constituencies in economic capital Abidjan, including in Yopougon commune, where PDCI instead reached alliance with Simone Gbagbo's party. Meanwhile, President Ouattara 13 July insisted that members of ruling Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) who were not officially endorsed by party apparatus should not run as independents.

Hurdles persisted for heavyweights seeking political comeback. After electoral commission late June rejected Gbagbo's request to be reinstated on electoral roll, PPA-CI did not appeal decision by 1 July deadline, meaning Gbagbo will remain unable to participate in September elections. Paris-based weekly news magazine *Jeune Afrique* 4 July confirmed that exiled former PM Guillaume Soro is facing Paris-based judiciary investigation for alleged murder of ex-rebel leader Ibrahim Coulibaly in 2011; Soro, who remains under 2021 life sentence in Côte d'Ivoire for allegedly plotting coup against President Ouattara in 2019, unlikely to be allowed to return home in time to run for president in 2025.

➔ Guinea Tensions between transitional authorities and political parties remained elevated following failure of mediation process.

Truce between opposition and transitional authorities remained fragile. Dixinn court of first instance 3 July claimed to not have jurisdiction over slander and abuse

of authority case brought against Justice Minister Charles Wright by National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC) protest movement leaders; latter same day brought case before Supreme Court. Meanwhile, authorities continued to harass opposition. Security forces 4 July prevented FNDC head of mobilisation, Billo Bah, from travelling abroad. Cellou Dalein Diallo's Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) opposition party faced destabilisation attempt as Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, expelled from UFDG in June 2022 after joining Col. Doumbouya's govt, geared up for UFDG presidency candidacy.

Tensions persisted between ECOWAS and transitional authorities. In interview with Paris-based weekly news magazine *Jeune Afrique* published 7 July, outgoing chairman of West African regional body ECOWAS, Guinea-Bissau President Sissoco Embaló, said Guinean transition was taking too long. ECOWAS 9 July held summit in Guinea-Bissau, lamented transitional authorities in West Africa's "very limited" collaboration with ECOWAS mediators, reaffirmed need to restore constitutional order; heads of state same day elected Nigerian President Tinubu, who has previously come out as strong opponent of military coups, as new ECOWAS chairman.

In other important developments. Trial of 28 September 2009 massacre, in which govt forces killed over 150 demonstrators and raped over 100 women while Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara was heading country, 10 July resumed after 6-week suspension. Junta 30 July expressed support for Niger coup leaders.

➔ **Nigeria Jihadists and criminal groups killed dozens in North East and North West, herder-farmer violence flared in North Central states, while security forces fought separatists enforcing sit-at-home order in South East.**

Jihadist violence persisted in Borno state, North East zone. Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) 25 July killed 32 civilians, including 25 herders, in two attacks in Gudumbali forest and Gubio area. Meanwhile, ISWAP 5 July killed scores of Boko Haram members in Sambisa Forest near Bama area. Counter-insurgency operations continued, with air force 5 July bombing ISWAP gathering near Marte town and 15 July launching airstrikes on ISWAP camps in southern islands of Lake Chad. Troops 20 July also repelled ISWAP attack on army post near Monguno town. Jihadist attacks continued, however.

Jihadist activity reported in North West zone amid persistent criminal violence. In Zamfara state, gunmen 10 July killed four police officers on Gusau-Sokoto road in Bungudu area, and 24 July killed at least 29 persons, including seven soldiers, in Maru area. Troops throughout month engaged suspected criminals at several locations, notably in Zamfara's Maru area and Kaduna state's Kagarko area. MP from Sokoto state, Sani Yakubu, 12 July said jihadists from Niger, Mali and Libya had joined forces with local criminals and taken over Tangaza area.

Herders-farmer violence continued in North Central zone. In Benue state, assailants 7-8 July killed 33 people in attacks on three villages in Ukum area; residents blamed Fulani herders, while Benue governor said some killings related to communal feuds and banditry. In Plateau state, gunmen 1-8 July killed at least 16 villagers of Mangu area; residents blamed attacks on Fulani armed groups hired by herders.

South East zone saw uptick in separatist violence. Gunmen 3-10 July enforced stay-at-home order in South East zone to press demands for release of outlawed separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) leader Nnamdi Kanu, leading to shootings and confrontations with security forces. Notably, police 7 July killed four gunmen near Awkunanaw town, Enugu state, and gunmen next day killed two people in Owerri North area, Imo state.

➔ **Senegal Political climate eased as President Sall decided not to stand for re-election, but detention of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko rekindled tensions.**

Incumbent president renounced third candidacy. President Sall 3 July announced he will not run for third term in Feb 2024 election. International community immediately hailed decision, with U.S. Sec State Anthony Blinken welcoming “example for the region”, and UN Sec Gen António Guterres praising “demonstration of statesmanship and leadership”.

Authorities arrested opposition leader, sparking deadly protests. Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko 6 July denounced legal actions taken against him, including two-year prison sentence for “corrupting the youth”, as unjust, and warned of “indescribable chaos” if his presidential candidacy is prevented. Authorities 24 July lifted security detail set up around Sonko’s home in capital Dakar since late May, with govt next day saying risk to public order had faded. Police 28 July arrested Sonko on accusations of plotting an insurrection, and Sonko 30 July announced starting hunger strike. Authorities next day formally charged him with “fomenting an insurrection”, dissolved his party and restricted Internet access. Protests also 31 July broke out in Sonko’s southern city of Ziguinchor, with clashes between police and protesters leaving two people dead. Meanwhile, security forces 11 July arrested Sonko’s close ally, MP Birame Souleye Diop, on charges of “offenses against the head of state”; Diop released from police custody 19 July, but case ongoing.