



Africa

Central Africa

↓ **Cameroon Anglophone separatists escalated violence around Cameroon's National Day, notably launching rare attack in Francophone region near economic capital Douala; ethnic conflict erupted in south, and Boko Haram stepped up attacks in Far North.**

Separatist militias escalated attacks leaving heavy toll on military. Anglophone separatist rebels 1 May crossed border from Anglophone South West region (SW) into Francophone Littoral region, attacked military post at Matouke village, Mounjo division, less than 40km from economic capital Douala, killing five soldiers and one civilian. In retaliation, govt forces same day reportedly killed six civilians and arrested 14 people in nearby Maumu village, Fako division (SW). Explosive device 16 May killed at least three soldiers in Mabonji locality, Meme division (SW). As Cameroon celebrated National Day – which commemorates date in 1972 when referendum abrogated two-state federation, ushering in unitary state – armed separatists 20 May abducted about 30 women in Kedjom-Keku (Big Babanki) village, Mezam division in North West region (NW), after they protested taxes levied by separatists; all women released 23 May. Govt forces 21 and 28 May fought off ambushes in Otu village, Manyu division (SW) and Bambalang village, Ngo-Ketunja division (NW) respectively, killing at least four separatists. Explosive device 31 May reportedly killed five soldiers in Mbengwi town (NW).

Ethnic tensions turned violent in South region. Govt mid-May sounded alarm on unprecedented levels of hate speech, pledged tough sentences. Violent unrest around 24 May erupted in Sangmelima town, Dja-et-Lobo division in Francophone South region, between members of local Bulu community and members of Bamoun and Bamileke communities from Francophone West region, leaving unclear number of casualties; army intervened to quell tensions.

Boko Haram (BH) conducted several deadly attacks in Far North region. BH militants 4 May killed two civilians in twin raids on Goldavi locality, Mayo-Tsanaga division, and Wilda locality, Mayo-Sava division, also stealing cattle and provisions. BH 21 May attacked Mozogo village, Mayo-Tsanaga; security forces killed two militants and lost a local vigilante. Suspected BH militants 29 May killed two customs officers, one police officer and one civilian in Mora town, Mayo-Sava. One soldier and two BH militants killed same day in clash in Ziguague town, Logone-et-Chari division.

➡ **Central African Republic Rebel offensive continued, and N'Djamena pursued armed groups in CAR's border region amid growing mistrust between neighbours over cross-border rebel activity.**

Rebel groups clashed with govt forces in north east and north west. Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) rebels 5 May attacked army position and seized strategic town of Tiringoulou (Vakaga prefecture), killing three soldiers; counter-offensive by govt forces and UN mission (MINUSCA) 7 May forced them to withdraw. UN humanitarian agency in CAR 26 May condemned attacks on humanitarian workers and other civilians after unidentified assailants 24 May reportedly ambushed aid convoy on way back from Am-Dafok village (also Vakaga), killing driver. CPC elements 15 May ambushed armed forces near Bossangoa town (Ouham prefecture), killing four soldiers.

CAR and Chad launched joint operation against cross-border rebel activity. Following reports that Chadian rebels have established rear bases in CAR's north, N'Djamena 16 May said two countries 14 May launched joint operation in CAR's north-western Ouham-Pendé prefecture, killing dozen rebels and arresting 23 (see Chad). Meanwhile, alleged French support for late April inauguration of border military post near Chadian town of Goré (Logone Oriental province) fed suspicion in Bangui that France is backing CAR's rebels based in southern Chad (see Chad). Further feeding mistrust, unidentified military aircraft 3 May crashed in Ouham-Pendé.

Self-defence militia accused UN mission of inaction against rebels in south east. Self-defence militia Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé 7-9 May clashed with Union for Peace in Central African Republic (UPC) rebels in Mboki town (Haut-Mbomou prefecture), losing at least 19 militiamen. Militia later blamed MINUSCA for not taking preventive measures despite indications rebels were preparing assault.

In other important developments. Security forces and Russian paramilitary Wagner Group elements 27 April-4 May conducted raids in Bangui's Muslim neighbourhood PK5, reportedly arrested ten individuals on allegations of illegal weapons possession and trafficking, demanding payments for their release. PK5 retail traders 5 May shut down shops in protest at "arbitrary" detentions. President Touadéra 30 May announced constitutional referendum will be held 30 July.

↓ **Chad As intercommunal violence spiralled out of control in south, leaving dozens dead, N'Djamena launched military operation across border to chase rebels based in Central African Republic (CAR).**

Intercommunal violence surged in south near border with CAR. Several deadly incidents of intercommunal conflict reported in Logone Oriental province. Notably, suspected herders early May killed at least 17 people in Don town, Nya Pendé department; and unidentified gunmen 17 and 19 May launched attacks in Andouma area, Monts de Lam department, killing between 35 and 40 civilians, burning houses and stealing livestock. In neighbouring Mandoul province, suspected herders 25 May raided Bara 2 village, Barh Sara department, killing at least nine farmers; attack reportedly took place after dispute with local farmer left one herder seriously injured. Authorities in April and May accused Chadian rebels based in CAR of fuelling violence in southern provinces (see Central African Republic).

Army launched operation against rebels based in CAR. N'Djamena late April announced inauguration, with support of French military, of military post near Goré town along border with CAR, with a view to better monitoring new security dynamics on frontier, including Chadian rebels' activities in northern CAR. Despite growing mistrust over cross-border rebel activity, N'Djamena 11 May announced bilateral cooperation agreement between Logone Oriental province and CAR's north-western Ouham-Pendé prefecture to combat Chadian rebels based in CAR, and 16 May said Chad and CAR 14 May launched joint military operation in Ouham-Pendé, killing dozen rebels and arresting 23.

In other important developments. Interim President Mahamat Déby 24 May pardoned 67 people sentenced to prison for participating in bloody 20 Oct 2022 protests, which called for return to civilian rule, along with 11 others who had been sentenced for alleged involvement in foiled Dec 2022 "coup". UN refugee agency late May said 90,000 refugees had arrived in Chad from Sudan since conflict started in mid-April, called for international aid in delivering life-saving assistance.

Great Lakes

➔ **Burundi** **Dissenters continued to suffer violence and harassment, anti-Kigali rebels staged attack near Rwandan border, and Burundi hosted regional peace summit on DR Congo.**

Persecution of govt critics continued. Provincial security forces 4-9 May arrested and reportedly tortured three members of main opposition party, National Congress for Freedom (CNL), in Bubanza province, allegedly on ruling party Sec Gen Révérien Ndikuriyo's orders to track down "troublesome elements". Provincial authorities 5 May detained three CNL activists in Gitega province, releasing them three days later. Violence by ruling party youth militia, Imbonerakure, also continued. Notably, Imbonerakure 5 May macheted to death local CNL leader in Ruyigi province. Meanwhile, appeals court in Bujumbura city 2 May upheld ten-year prison term for journalist Floriane Irangabiye for "undermining the integrity of the national territory".

Rebel activity persisted near Rwandan border. In Cibitoke province, anti-Kigali National Liberation Forces rebels 14 May reportedly ambushed members of Imbonerakure in Mabayi commune, killing two and injuring four before military pushed them back into Kibira forest.

In other important developments. Authorities early May indicted former PM Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni, who was detained in April, for "undermining the internal security of the state, undermining the proper functioning of the national economy and illegal enrichment". Bunyoni's arrest puts an end to long-running power struggle between him and President Ndayishimiye, both of whom come from ruling party's old guard, and comes in context of increased pressure from International Monetary Fund to sort out country's highly corrupt foreign currency exchange sector, in which Bunyoni was thought to have a big hand. Burundi 6 May hosted summit of Regional Oversight Mechanism of Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DR Congo and Great Lakes region in bid to revitalise peace and cooperation initiatives;

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Kenyan President William Ruto both failed to attend (see Rwanda).

➔ **DR Congo** Amid mounting discontent with East African force, President Tshisekedi secured deployment of Southern African troops to help quell M23 rebellion in North Kivu; intercommunal conflict spread further in western provinces.

Southern Africa's regional bloc pledged troops for eastern DR Congo. As Tshisekedi stepped up criticism of East African Community (EAC) force's approach to tackling M23 rebellion, Southern African Development Community 8 May approved troop deployment to eastern provinces. Tshisekedi next day threatened to expel EAC force, accusing it of taking weak stance vis-à-vis M23 and even colluding with rebels in some instances. EAC 11 May denounced Tshisekedi's criticism as "not fair", and 31 May approved extension of force's mandate until Sept. Kinshasa late May reported movements of Rwandan army and M23 rebels in North Kivu province, warned of imminent offensive on Goma city.

Amid fragile M23 calm, other armed group attacks continued unabated in east. Local CMC-Nyatura militia 3-4 May killed 13 people in attack on Kizimba site for internally displaced persons in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu. Islamist militia Allied Democratic Forces in May launched repeated raids in North Kivu's Beni territory, killing at least 34 people, and 18 May killed another 13 in Irumu territory, Ituri province. Unidentified assailants, possibly CODECO or Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri local militias, 12 May killed at least 47 people in several villages of Djugu territory, Ituri. Local Mai Mai Kabido militia 18 and 28 May killed at least five eco-guards in and near Virunga national park in Lubero and Rutshuru territories (both North Kivu).

Intercommunal violence spread further in west. Conflict between Yaka and Teke communities, triggered by land dispute, continued to spread beyond Mai-Ndombe province's Kwamouth territory. Notably, local militias 11-13 May clashed with security forces and other militias, leaving at least 16 people dead in Nguma and Mongata villages (Kinshasa province), as well as Batshongo village (Kwango province).

Police cracked down on protesters in Kinshasa. Ahead of general elections expected in Dec, opposition demonstrators 20 May took to streets in Kinshasa to denounce alleged voter registration irregularities, prolonged insecurity and cost-of-living crisis. Security forces responded forcefully, with opposition claiming dozens injured. UN 23 May said police used "disproportionate" force.

➔ **Rwanda** President Kagame failed to attend regional peace summit on eastern DR Congo crisis; despite heightened bilateral tensions, Kigali and Kinshasa revived agreement on refugee repatriation.

Regional peace summit proceeded without Kagame. President Kagame 6 May failed to attend 11th summit of Regional Oversight Mechanism of Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DR Congo and Great Lakes region, with PM Edouard Ngirente representing Rwanda. Participants called for "restraint, de-escalation ... and pursuit of dialogue" between Kigali and Kinshasa amid heightened bilateral

tensions since resurgence in March 2022 of M23 movement in eastern DR Congo (see Burundi).

Kigali and Kinshasa made headway on voluntary repatriation of refugees. During meeting in Switzerland, Rwanda, DR Congo and UN Refugee Agency 15 May signed joint statement committing to resuming facilitation of sustainable return and reintegration pathways for Congolese refugees in Rwanda and Rwandan refugees in DR Congo, in line with 2010 Tripartite Agreement on voluntary repatriation. Parties to hold follow-up technical meeting in Kenya in June to define practicalities.

➡ **Uganda Assassination of minister by bodyguard headlined month of multiple killings involving security personnel.**

Spate of shootings put spotlight on gun violence and weak weapons control system. Bodyguard 2 May shot and killed Labour Minister Charles Okello Engola at his home in capital Kampala. Also in Kampala, unidentified assailants 6 May shot influential vlogger Ibrahim Tusubira (alias Isma Olaxes) dead. Several other incidents of fatal gun violence involving police or private security guards reported in May throughout country. Meanwhile, authorities in Kayunga district said they were investigating 15 May robbery in which four gunmen in army uniforms set up illegal roadblocks near police station and robbed travellers.

Cattle-related violence in Karamoja sub-region remained on govt's agenda. Military around 11 May deployed additional troops in Karamoja sub-region bordering Kenya and South Sudan, where army continues disarmament exercise in bid to contain cattle thefts and herder-farmer violence. Following recent instances of cross-border violence, President Museveni 19 May inked executive order banning armed Kenyan Turkanas from entering Uganda and asking Turkanas both to return all "stolen" cattle to Uganda and to surrender those alleged to have killed Ugandan geologists in March within six months; pastoralists from Kenya's Turkana county often cross into Uganda's Karamoja sub-region during dry spell in search of water and pasture.

In other important developments. Civil society activists 22-28 May held online campaign to highlight brutality and corruption in police and other law enforcement agencies, as well as to expose service provision weaknesses in roads and health sectors. House committee 23 May presented recommendations on iron sheets corruption scandal, calling for three of 15 top officials suspected of involvement to be put on trial. Museveni 29 May enacted repressive anti-LGTB+ law, sparking widespread condemnation. Notably, U.S. President Biden same day decried move as "tragic violation" of human rights.

East and Southern Africa

➡ **Kenya Talks between govt and opposition stalled; Al-Shabaab resumed attacks along Somalia border after months of low-level activity; and clashes over land and cattle continued in north.**

Bipartisan talks stalled after making limited progress. Opposition Azimio La Umoja coalition 2 May resumed countrywide anti-govt protests; next day called off demonstrations planned for 4 May, saying govt had agreed to key demand to review

formation of new electoral commission. President Ruto 13 May met with Azimio leader Raila Odinga, ushering in ten-day détente. Azimio 23 May however suspended talks to consult with colleagues, next day gave govt six-day ultimatum to yield on four points of contention – including acting to lower cost of living and launching audit of Aug 2022 election servers – or else consider talks dead. As ultimatum lapsed, Azimio reiterated demands, also urged govt to withdraw controversial 2023 finance bill, which expands tax base amid growing debt pressure.

Al-Shabaab staged attacks as Kenya announced reopening of border with Somalia. Explosive devices allegedly planted by Al-Shabaab 1 and 14 May injured nine people in Burta Ashaqa village, Mandera county. Kenya and Somalia 15 May announced reopening by mid-August of three border crossings, which Kenya closed in 2011 in bid to prevent Al-Shabaab attacks; move signals thawing relations and emergence of trade as key agenda item between neighbouring countries, but raises risk of Al-Shabaab seeking refuge in Kenya as Somali govt presses its offensive against group.

Violence over resources continued in north despite above-average rainfall. Most of Kenya – except south and south-eastern regions – received above-average rainfall during March-May season, providing welcome relief. Clashes over land and cattle however continued. Notably, armed men 6 May killed police officer and stole 200 cattle in Samburu county.

In other important developments. Amid protests over insecurity in Isebania town, Migori county, demonstrators 25 May reportedly attempted to overrun police station; police shot four dead.

➡ **Mozambique End of holy month of Ramadan and rainy season coincided with resurgence of Islamist militant attacks in northern province.**

Violence resurged in Cabo Delgado after weeks-long lull. Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) from late April stepped up activity in Cabo Delgado province (north), mostly along Messalo river. Notably in Macomia district, suspected ISMP and Local Forces (militia allied with govt) around 5 May clashed near Litandacua village, with at least two Local Forces injured; suspected ISMP 14 May launched assault on base of Southern African Development Community mission in Macomia town but were repelled; presence of militants also reported around 26 May near Novo Cabo Delgado and Litandacua villages. In Muidumbe district, govt soldiers and Local Forces 3 May engaged suspected ISMP in Mandela village, reportedly killing six. Militants were sighted again in Nangade district, where they have not been seen since Feb, prompting residents who had recently returned home to move back to Nangade district headquarters. Notably, suspected ISMP 19 May briefly abducted 12 civilians in Nkongga village, warning them not to collaborate with security forces; police 24 May ambushed suspected ISMP militants near Ngangolo village, killing five, while police lost two officers.

TotalEnergies published report on Cabo Delgado, key step to restart LNG project. TotalEnergies 23 May released long-awaited report on humanitarian situation in northern province, which will inform deliberations about resuming Mozambique LNG project; report highlighted improvement, particularly with return of displaced persons to Palma and Mocímboa da Praia towns.

Civil society expressed concern over municipal election process. Ahead of municipal elections scheduled for 11 Oct, More Integrity consortium of seven local civil society organisations 16 May called for extension of voter registration period, saying irregularities and equipment breakdowns threaten integrity of registration. National Electoral Commission 19 May announced extension of opening hours for voter registration but refused to extend registration period, citing budgetary constraints. Meanwhile, ruling party Frelimo 3 May submitted draft amendment to change constitution and postpone country's first district elections scheduled for 2024 as part of 2018 deal on decentralisation and demobilisation of armed wing of main opposition party Renamo; Renamo immediately protested move.

➡ **Tanzania Dodoma announced decision to revive constitutional review process.**

President Suluhu Hassan 6 May gave go-ahead to revive constitution-writing process, which had stalled in 2015, in line with recommendation made in Sept 2022 by govt-backed task force on democratic reform.

➡ **Zimbabwe Clampdown on govt critics in run-up to general elections sparked outcry, and Constitutional Court rejected bid to postpone vote now scheduled for 23 August.**

Conviction of high-profile opposition figure sparked outcry. Court in capital Harare 3 May sentenced prominent lawmaker from main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), Job Sikhala, to pay \$600 fine for obstruction of justice or else serve six months in prison; Sikhala remained in custody awaiting trial on other charges, including inciting violence. CCC leader Nelson Chamisa next day condemned "unjust and unfair" verdict, demanded immediate release of Sikhala and "all political prisoners". European Union delegation in Zimbabwe 3 May called on country's judiciary to protect fundamental rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and NGO Amnesty International also next day said sentence was "further evidence of an escalating crackdown on peaceful dissent". In response, ruling party Zanu-PF around 7 May said Zimbabwe's judicial system is free of political interference.

Election preparations went ahead despite challenges from opposition. Constitutional Court 8 May dismissed application by Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai opposition party leader Douglas Mwonozora seeking postponement of general elections on grounds that electoral commission's constituency delimitation report is null and void; Mwonozora same day decried ruling as politically motivated. After electoral commission 27-31 May made voter roll available for public inspection, CCC signalled "serious anomalies" including registered voters missing or misplaced in list. President Mnangagwa 31 May scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections for 23 August.

Horn of Africa

➡ **Eritrea Eritrea's efforts to bolster its international standing continued as President Isaias spoke out on Sudan conflict and strengthened ties with China, Russia.**

President Isaias sought influence in addressing Sudan crisis. In 1 May interview with state media, President Isaias discussed conflict in Sudan, urging “an immediate end” to fighting and emphasising potential mediating role of neighbouring countries, including Eritrea; also advocated for Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional bloc to play support role. During meeting with Sudanese ambassador 12 May, Isaias denied allegations Asmara is cooperating with United Arab Emirates to provide sanctuary for fighters from Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Eritrea bolstered relations with China and Russia. President Isaias 14 May arrived in China for four-day state visit at invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping as countries sought to “enrich their strategic partnership”. Leaders held talks on bilateral cooperation, regional stability and global issues, with Xi saying China “is ready to work with Eritrea to advance mutually beneficial cooperation”. Isaias 30 May arrived in Russian capital Moscow for four-day official visit at invitation of Russian President Putin, who 31 May announced sides would soon sign various cooperation agreements.

➔ **Ethiopia Violence in Oromia intensified after govt-OLA talks failed to produce agreement, federal-Tigray relations faced setback, and security operations in Amhara drew criticism from human rights body.**

Govt-OLA talks ended without agreement amid uncompromising stances. Peace talks between govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) that began 25 April in Tanzania ended 3 May without agreement as sides failed to reach consensus on key political issues: OLA demanded greater political role in Oromia region, proposing power-sharing arrangement via transitional administration until next election; govt rejected proposition, which would threaten power of Oromo ruling elites, instead insisting on rebels’ disarmament. OLA 17 May accused govt of launching “all-out offensive” after talks concluded, with fighting reported in East and West Shewa Zones (centre), Horo Guduru, East and West Wollega Zones (west), and parts of southern Oromia.

Authorities refused to restore TPLF’s political party status. National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) 13 May denied Tigray People’s Liberation Front’s (TPLF) request to restore its political party status, cancelled Jan 2021 after outbreak of war, citing lack of legal provision for status restoration; NEBE said TPLF can submit re-registration request, meaning legally it would become new political party. TPLF and Tigray’s Interim Regional Administration that TPLF controls said board’s decision endangers peace and urged authorities to reinstate TPLF’s “pre-war status”. Thousands of displaced Tigrayans 23 May protested in major cities in Tigray, demanding withdrawal of outside (Eritrea, Amhara) forces to allow their return home. Meanwhile, World Food Programme and U.S. international development agency 3 May said food aid to Tigray was being diverted and sold on local market, suspended deliveries.

Security forces accused of abuses during operations in Amhara. Tensions eased in Amhara region following April violence, which broke out over govt plans to integrate regional paramilitaries into federal security structures, though suspicion of federal govt as it improves relations with TPLF and engages with OLA persisted. Meanwhile, concerns emerged about “law enforcement campaign” launched late April in Amhara after assassination of key figure from ruling Prosperity Party; notably, Ethiopian

Human Rights Commission 9 May accused security forces of “arbitrary arrests, inappropriate treatments of people in custody [and] disproportionate use of force”.

↓ **Somalia As military operations against Al-Shabaab reached standstill, group launched major attack on African Union (AU) military base, leaving large number dead; Puntland state conducted local elections amid tensions and violence.**

Al-Shabaab conducted largest attack on AU mission in a year. In Lower Shabelle region (South West state), Al-Shabaab 26 May targeted Buulo Mareer base manned by Ugandan contingent of AU Transition Mission; group claimed 137 soldiers killed, while Ugandan military source said Uganda lost “under 100” troops.

Govt struggled to get offensive off ground in south and sustain gains in centre. Mogadishu failed to make significant progress against Al-Shabaab militants in country’s south, illustrating difficulty in getting military offensive’s second phase off ground. As level of external military assistance remained unclear, govt and Kenyan officials 12 May met to discuss Nairobi’s pledge of support for southern offensive. Recurring clan conflict in centre distracted clans from fight with Al-Shabaab, threatening consolidation of gains made during offensive’s first phase. Notably in Hirshabelle state’s Hiraan region, clan conflict in May erupted between Hawadle and Gaaljecel clans, around Beledweyne city, and between Hawadle and Ayr clans around Mataban town.

Local vote held in Puntland despite rising tensions and violence. Group of Puntland opposition leaders mid-May called for postponement of 25 May local council elections, saying they are part of plot by Puntland President Said Deni to extend his term. Puntland forces and militia 16 May clashed near Garowe airport reportedly over delivery of electoral materials, leaving three dead. Puntland’s attorney general next day ordered arrest of four opposition politicians for alleged role in fighting. Govt and opposition 23 May reached agreement that saw arrest warrants withdrawn and election proceed peacefully in all but three districts. Puntland-Mogadishu relations remained tense. PM Abdi Barre 8 May complained Puntland’s non-participation in National Consultative Council (NCC) meetings between federal govt and member states threatens progress on debt relief, while Deni next day accused Mogadishu of “attempting to destabilise” Puntland by backing opposition.

In other important developments. NCC 28 May announced restructuring of political system, including direct elections every five years and abolishment of premiership; moves, which will require constitutional amendment, were criticised by some opposition and regional politicians as unconstitutional.

↓ ●* **Somaliland Fighting between govt forces and Dhulbahante clan militias spread in Sool region; as parties recruit new fighters, conflict could morph into confrontation between clan families and ripple into other parts of Somaliland.**

Govt and local clan militias clashed north of Las Anod. Govt forces and Dhulbahante fighters 16-17 May clashed heavily around Dhabansaar and Samakab villages, north of Sool region’s capital Las Anod, as field of conflict widened; warring parties fought for control of road connecting Las Anod to Burco town, with reports that militias from wider Harti clan joined the fray in support of Dhulbahante. Recruitment of new

fighters risks fuelling confrontations between clan families and widening conflict beyond Sool. Meanwhile, in attempt to woo Dhulbahante voters living on Somalia side of border in lead-up to 25 May local elections in Puntland state (see Somalia), Puntland President Said Deni 10 May pledged commitment to “liberating” Las Anod from Somaliland forces, raising concern of more substantial backing for Dhulbahante militias.

Violence also flared elsewhere. Protesters clashed with security forces in various locations in lead-up to 18 May Independence Day, including 8 May in Borama city, Awdal region (west), where local clan members have long complained about marginalisation. Communal clashes between two Isaaq sub-clans 15 May left two dead in Togdheer region’s capital Burco (centre); President Bihi and opposition leader Abdirahman Irro (who hail from respective sub-clans) in following days reportedly travelled to Burco to lead reconciliation efforts.

➡ **South Sudan Influx of people fleeing Sudan put pressure on scarce resources in Upper Nile state, raising ethnic tensions; militia leader returned to Juba.**

South Sudan struggled to cope with refugee influx from Sudan. As of 23 May, over 73,000 refugees and returnees had reportedly crossed into South Sudan, mostly through Renk county (Upper Nile State), from Sudan where fighting continued (see Sudan). With new arrivals, dire humanitarian situation in Upper Nile deteriorated amid lack of food, clean water and sanitation, raising ethnic tensions. Notably, brawl between two groups of displaced South Sudanese over water in Renk county 15 May killed one; fighting 28 May erupted at water point in Malakal town between Nuer and Shilluk communities. Situation could worsen, especially with coming rainy season. Meanwhile, President Kiir spearheaded Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional bloc’s mediation efforts between Sudan’s warring parties. Sudanese army 8 May sent envoy to capital Juba, paramilitary Rapid Support Forces 17 May reciprocated; fighting continued despite efforts.

Militia leader returned to Juba, more opposition figures defected to govt. After peace agreement with govt in Jan 2022 and months of subsequent negotiations, Shilluk Agwalek militia leader Gen. Johnson Olony 14 May arrived in Juba; unclear whether return will de-escalate tensions in Upper Nile, where Olony was reportedly mobilising for attack on areas along White Nile controlled by VP Machar’s Sudan People’s Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO). Govt 14 May announced dozens of high-ranking SPLA-IO members from Machar’s strongholds in Jonglei and Unity states joined ruling Sudan People’s Liberation Movement; around two dozen members of Simon Gatwech’s SPLA-IO Kitgwang faction same day joined govt.

Violence persisted in several states. In disputed Abyei region between Sudan and South Sudan, unknown assailants 20 May killed five in Hafir el-Silik area. In Jonglei State, armed group 23 May looted World Food Programme trucks outside UN compound in Bor county.

In other important developments. Legislative assembly 9 May ratified UN convention prohibiting use, production and stockpiling of cluster munitions. UN Security Council 26 May extended sanctions on South Sudan, including arms embargo, for another year.

↓ 🌐* **Sudan** Fighting between army and paramilitary force escalated in Khartoum and Darfur, where growing involvement of tribal militias and armed groups raises risk of all-out civil war; various mediation initiatives failed to halt violence.

Hostilities intensified in and around Khartoum. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fought over strategic sites in capital Khartoum and sister cities Omdurman and Bahri as conflict escalated; SAF pounded cities with heavy artillery and aerial bombardment, while RSF used guerrilla warfare and ground-to-air missiles. Fighting also continued in North Kordofan state capital El Obeid, but subsided in Kassala, Red Sea, Gedaref and Blue Nile states. Both forces faced internal challenges: SAF's inability to defeat RSF created discontent within its ranks, raising fears of mutiny; RSF's reputation worsened further, with its leaders unable to prevent troops from looting and vandalising property as reports of rape also emerged.

Fighting surged in Darfur, fuelling intercommunal tensions. RSF intensified attacks in Darfur region as it sought control of major cities, possibly to strengthen negotiating position. Conflict aggravated intercommunal tensions, especially between Rezigat and Masalit groups, leading to frequent clashes. Notably, intercommunal violence 12-13 May in West Darfur state capital el-Geneina killed at least 280 people and displaced thousands. Reports late May emerged of armed militias laying siege to Zallengei town, Central Darfur state. Governor of Darfur and leader of Sudan Liberation Army/Movement Minni Minnawi 28 May called on Darfuris to arm themselves in light of region's growing lawlessness. Continued hostilities risk entangling more tribal groups, including from neighbouring countries, making risk of all-out civil war in Darfur very high.

SAF and RSF held talks in Jeddah amid competing mediation tracks. Despite AU attempts to ensure coordinated mediation process, stakeholders initiated several and at times competing negotiating tracks. Most notably, South Sudan spearheaded Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional bloc's mediation efforts (see South Sudan), while U.S.-Saudi-brokered talks 6 May began in Saudi Arabian city Jeddah. Both tracks produced agreements, but with little change on the ground, civilians continued to bear brunt, with well over 800 killed and 1.4mn displaced as of 29 May amid escalating humanitarian crisis.

Sahel

➡ **Burkina Faso** Amid rampant violence, civic space continued to shrink as transitional military govt further mobilised society against jihadists, while hinting at election delay.

Rampant jihadist violence continued to affect most regions. Spate of suspected jihadist attacks in Boucle du Mouhoun region (west) took heavy toll on civilians, killing at least 53 in Mouhoun province 11 and 28 May; another 13 in Kossi province 14 May; and 14 in Banwa province 19 May. Also in Boucle du Mouhoun, suspected jihadists 27 May attacked armoured convoy in Bourasso department (Kossi province), with around 20 dead, most of them army auxiliaries (VDPs). In North

region, suspected jihadists 18 May attacked several villages in Yatenga province, killing 12 VDPs and 16 civilians; 31 May ambushed food convoy escorted by troops in Loroum province, killing two civilians while army reportedly shot 50 assailants dead. In East region's Kompienga province, presumed jihadists 21 May killed 15 civilians on outskirts of provincial capital Kompienga; army reportedly retaliated, killing dozens. In Centre-East region, suspected al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 15 and 17 May killed around 20 civilians in Koulpélogo province.

Security forces continued counter-insurgency operations. Army and VDPs 18 May launched assault on presumed JNIM positions in Gnagna forest (Gnagna province, East region), killing around 30 militants; same day raided other JNIM positions near Bittou town (Boulgou province, Centre-East region), killing over 20.

Authorities ramped up repression of dissent and adopted national security law. Security forces 5-11 May arrested four members of civil society on various charges. Transitional legislature 9 May adopted new national security law further formalising govt's strategy of mobilising society in struggle against jihadists; law notably provides for private security companies to support govt forces. In address to transitional legislature, interim PM Apollinaire Kyelem de Tambela 30 May ruled out negotiations with jihadists, and suggested security situation could delay country's return to civilian rule beyond July 2024. As late-April killing of at least 146 civilians by suspected army elements in Karma village (North region) sparked international condemnation, interim President Capt. Traoré 4 May denounced actions of "coalition against Burkina Faso".

➡ **Mali Authorities scheduled constitutional referendum for June amid mixed reactions, and UN report on 2022 Moura massacre prompted sharp response from Bamako, contributing to tense climate facing UN mission.**

Malians to vote on new constitution in June. Military govt 5 May announced 18 June for constitutional referendum, originally scheduled for 19 March. New constitution expected to pass fairly easily despite concerns from some segments of society that it could open door for military junta members to run in presidential election expected in Feb 2024. Notably, Appel du 20 février coalition of political parties and civil society organisations 7 May claimed transitional authorities do not have mandate to adopt new constitution and lack sufficient territorial control to hold credible vote.

UN released long-awaited report on Moura massacre, heightening tension. UN Human Rights Office 12 May released report on March 2022 massacre in Moura village, Mopti region, concluding that Malian military and unspecified "foreign elements" killed about 500 civilians. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk same day said exactions could amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Bamako 13 May condemned "biased" and "fictitious" report, claiming only "terrorists" were killed in Moura; also opened judicial inquiry against UN fact-finding mission over alleged "military conspiracy" and "espionage".

IS Sahel maintained position in north, JNIM launched attacks in west. Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) 9 May ambushed and killed two members of 2015 Algiers peace agreement signatory armed group Movement for the Salvation of Azawad near Intadeyni village, Ménaka region (north east). In relatively uncommon attacks in

Kayes region (west), suspected al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 8 May ambushed troops near Kita town, 130km from capital Bamako, leaving six soldiers dead; 14 May reportedly attacked customs post in Melgué town, with unknown number of casualties.

Tensions between Bamako and signatory armed groups declined. National Reconciliation Minister Col. Ismaël Wagué 12 May met with representatives of coalition of formerly separatist armed groups signatory to Algiers Accord, Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), in Kidal city; parties likely talked about modalities for holding constitutional referendum in CMA-held territory, as CMA has previously come out against new constitution.

➔ **Niger President Bazoum maintained hard-line approach toward critics of French military presence, and deadly violence persisted in region bordering Burkina Faso.**

Govt arrested critics of security partnership with France. Govt 2 May accused civil society group Union Committee Tillabery for Peace, Security and Social Cohesion of “sowing disorder” after group late April accused French forces of seeking to destabilise Niger and demanded their departure; police same day detained group’s leader Amadou Arouna Maïga.

Tillabéry region (south west) saw jihadist and intercommunal violence. In Gotheye department, military convoy 7 May hit explosive device likely planted by al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims near Samira Hill gold mine, leaving seven soldiers dead. Suspected Islamic State Sahel Province militants 3-13 May attacked villages in Tillabery’s Téra department, killing at least eight people. Meanwhile, in Tillabery department, clashes late April-early May erupted between sedentary Djerma and nomadic Fulani communities in Dessa, Kandadji and Ayorou communes, leaving at least ten people dead and up to 18,000 displaced, who mid-May returned home.

Security operations continued along Nigerian border in south east. Military 10 May announced intercepting 1,400 Boko Haram militants since March as they fled into Diffa region following clashes with rival Islamic State faction in Nigeria’s Borno state; 30 combatants also killed during operations. Military 29 May said joint operation with Nigerian army 6-28 May left 55 Islamic State West Africa Province militants dead in Niger-Nigeria border regions, including several senior commanders.

West Africa

➔ **Benin Northern departments continued to face sporadic jihadist attacks on military and civilian targets.**

Suspected combatants from al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 1 May killed around 15 civilians and kidnapped another 12 in Kérou commune, Atakora department, and next day killed three civilians and kidnapped one more in Banikoara commune, Alibori department. In rare public statement on insecurity, govt 3 May announced investigation into both incidents. Soldiers 12 May

killed one suspected JNIM militant and seized weapons following firefight in Matéri commune, Atakora department.

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire Amid ongoing preparations for regional and municipal elections due in September, former President Gbagbo's absence from electoral list sparked outcry from his party.**

Main political parties discussed ad hoc electoral alliances. Ahead of regional and municipal votes scheduled for 2 Sept, ruling Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) and former PM Pascal Affi N'Guessan's Ivorian Popular Front 2 May signed partnership agreement in economic capital Abidjan, pledging to promote peaceful politics and avoid electoral violence; N'Guessan said partnership did not amount to "electoral agreement". Media outlets including RFI 4 May reported nascent talks between former President Laurent Gbagbo's Parti des peuples africains – Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI) and former President Henri-Konan Bédié's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire with a view to fielding common candidates in certain regions or municipalities to better challenge RHDP's favourable position.

Gbagbo and others remained absent from electoral list. Electoral commission 20 May published electoral list, confirming that Gbagbo will not be able to vote in Sept elections; Gbagbo has been stripped of his civic and political rights since his 2018 condemnation for robbery of Central Bank of West African States in 2011, despite presidential pardon granted in 2022. PPA-CI immediately denounced "unacceptable provocation" and "casus belli", and 30 May condemned "irregularities and fraud" on electoral list, notably presence of deceased voters. Prominent politicians and former Gbagbo associates Charles Blé Goudé and Guillaume Soro also remained absent from electoral list.

↓ **Guinea Changes in military leadership revealed tensions at highest levels of govt, and deadly protests erupted following failure of mediation process between transitional military authorities and opposition.**

President Doumbouya took steps to fend off challenges to his rule. President Lt. Col. Doumbouya 9 May sacked top junta figure Gen. Sadiba Coulibaly as armed forces chief of staff, allegedly over disagreements on conduct of transition to civilian rule. Interim President Lt. Col. Doumbouya late April also sacked head of military intelligence, Lt. Col. Ismaël Keïta, citing "serious misconduct", and disbanded battalion in charge of presidential security (which defended former President Condé during 2021 putsch), suggesting he may fear challenges from officers outside ruling junta.

New round of opposition demonstrations turned violent as mediation failed. Opposition coalition Forces Vives de Guinée (FVG) – notably including opposition leader Cellou Dallein Diallo's movement, former President Condé's Rally of the Guinean People, and political wing of National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC) protest movement – 8 May refused to attend new round of talks with govt under auspices of religious mediators. Govt took part, proposed to grant conditional release to three imprisoned FNDC leaders, including Oumar Sylla (alias Foniké Mengué), if they committed to suspend militant activities, which FNDC leaders rejected. FVG supporters 10 May took to streets in capital Conakry, clashed with police; FVG said seven demonstrators shot dead and 32 injured, while authorities claimed three people killed. Small-scale demonstrations same day also

took place in Nzerekore town in south east, and in central town of Dabola. In apparent sign of appeasement, authorities later same day released three FNDC leaders without condition until their trial, but renewed protests 11 May took place in Conakry. Situation remained tense through late May, with authorities 17-18 May deploying army in Conakry as FVG called for new demonstrations.

➡ **Nigeria Bola Tinubu sworn in as president, while violence continued countrywide after brief lull during election period.**

New president sworn as election results remained challenged. Following election marred by continuing legal challenges, Bola Ahmed Tinubu 29 May took office as president; during inauguration ceremony, Tinubu identified security as his administration's "top priority", promised reform of security agencies and greater investment in "training, equipment, pay and firepower" of security personnel.

Criminal violence, notably kidnapping for ransom, continued unabated in North West Zone. Numerous kidnapping incidents reported in Kaduna state. Notably, armed groups 7 May abducted 40 worshippers at church in Madala village, Chikun area, and 12 May kidnapped 22 villagers of Kagarko area. In Niger state, gunmen 9-12 May raided several villages in Paikoro and Rijau areas, kidnapping scores. In Zamfara state, gunmen 24 May killed 20 farmers in Maradun area, while at least 26 people were killed 30 May in three separate incidents in Maru area.

Herder-farmer conflict flared in North Central Zone, insecurity mounted in Abuja. In Plateau state, spate of attacks in villages of Mangu area 15-17 May left at least 125 residents dead and forced over 20,000 to flee; local authorities blamed violence on herders. Amid mounting insecurity in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, security forces 7 May rescued 134 persons, mostly kidnapped in Abaji, Kuje and Kwali areas. Gunmen 14 May stormed housing estate in Kuje area and kidnapped at least 15 people.

Jihadist and communal violence persisted in North East Zone. Military reported continuing gains against Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province, with 26 combatants killed and 511 fighters and their families surrendering to troops 4-18 May. However, vehicles of Multinational Joint Task Force 14 May set off explosive devices in Arege area in Borno state, with three soldiers killed.

Separatist and other violence continued to plague South East Zone. South East also saw first attack on diplomatic personnel and assets, as gunmen 17 May ambushed convoy of vehicles conveying U.S. embassy staff to flood response project in Anambra state, killing seven people and kidnapping another three; police 18 May blamed attack on Indigenous People of Biafra separatist group, which condemned incident.

➡ **Senegal Political tensions continued to mount as court sentenced opposition leader Ousmane Sonko in libel case while rape trial opened, sparking deadly protests.**

Clashes between opposition supporters and police left several dead. Court of appeal 8 May extended prominent opposition leader Ousmane Sonko's suspended prison sentence in libel case from two to six months, which could prevent him from running in presidential vote scheduled for Feb 2024. Sonko 8-9 May called on supporters to

“stand up and fight with all available means” and 12 May filed appeal at Court of Cassation. On eve of Sonko’s trial in separate rape case, pro-Sonko protesters 15 May clashed with police in Ziguinchor city, Sonko’s stronghold in Casamance region (south), and capital Dakar; interior ministry next day said clashes left two civilians dead. Prosecutor 24 May asked court to find Sonko guilty of rape and sentence him to ten-year jail term. Sonko same day called on supporters to join him for march of defiance to Dakar, which 26 May left Ziguinchor. Security forces 28 May stopped caravan and escorted Sonko to his house in Dakar. Pro-Sonko supporters next day clashed with police in Dakar, and Sonko 30 May reiterated call for civil disobedience.

Opposition to President Sall’s potential third term bid persisted. Coalition of civil society and political parties (F24 coalition) 12 May demonstrated in Dakar against Sall’s potential third term bid, with no incidents reported. Upon Sall’s invitation, govt and various political and civil society actors 31 May convened for national dialogue talks.

Govt forces clashed with separatists in Casamance region. Local media 10 May reported army clashed with faction of separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) during combing operation near Sindian village in northern Casamance, leaving five soldiers injured. Meanwhile, two other MFDC factions 13 May officially laid down arms during ceremony with state representatives in Bignona department as part of ongoing peace process.