



CrisisWatch 2023 – October Trends and November Alerts

Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Cameroon** Anglophone regions observed general strike on self-proclaimed independence anniversary, as separatists redoubled efforts to reduce internal wrangling and come closer to Nigerian separatists.

Anglophone conflict continued. Anglophone regions 1 Oct went silent on anniversaries of British Southern Cameroons' 1961 reunification with Francophone Republic of Cameroon and 2017 unilateral declaration of independence by now-detained Anglophone leader Sisiku Ayuk Tabe. Most residents 30 Sept-2 Oct stayed indoors as businesses closed and transportation halted. Some administrators in South West regional capital Buea sanctioned businesses observing general strike. Low-level violence persisted: Ambazonia Defence Forces 4 Oct killed two men they accused of spying for govt forces in Batibo town (North West region), and govt forces 12 Oct killed six suspected separatist rebels in Akwaya subdivision (South West). Meanwhile, Anglophone separatist groups 5-8 Oct met in Canada to draw up plans to reduce internal wrangling and splintering of movement. Ayaba Cho Lucas' Ambazonia Governing Council and Nigerian separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) factional leader Simon Ekpa 21 Oct signed cooperation agreement in Finland's capital Helsinki, pledging mutual assistance in their respective separatist struggles. Following petition by 30 U.S. Congress members, U.S. President Biden 6 Oct extended Temporary Protected Status for Cameroonians for additional 18 months on account of thousands of people fleeing Anglophone conflict.

Jihadist and intercommunal violence persisted in Far North region. Authorities in Mayo-Sava division 3 Oct enforced night curfew in Mora and Kolofata towns in response to increasing jihadist violence. Boko Haram militants 4 Oct killed two vigilante members in Grea village, Mayo-Sava. Unidentified jihadist group same day kidnapped local chief and two staff members from multinational company in Bargaram locality, Logone-et-Chari division. Meanwhile, Kotoko farmers and Choa Arab herders 6 Oct clashed in Makary, Logone-et-Chari, with one killed and four injured.

Unknown assailants launched rare mass kidnappings in North region. Unidentified gunmen 21 and 23 Oct kidnapped at least 50 people near Touboro town in North region.

➔ **Central African Republic** Rebel groups continued low-intensity attacks in hinterland amid military operations by govt forces and allies.

Rebel activity persisted across country despite operations by govt forces and allies. In Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, alliance of major rebel groups Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) 2 Oct attacked gold mine near Birbatouma village, prompting riposte from military, with fighting reported next day near Ndélé town; govt forces and Russian paramilitary Wagner Group 30 Oct launched search operation in same area. In Haute-Kotto prefecture, reinforced presence of UN mission (MINUSCA) peacekeepers around Ouadda town in Oct led elements of Gen Mohamed Moussa's Party of the Rally of the Central African Nation and other CPC-affiliated groups to leave Ouadda and relocate further north to Sam-Ouandja area in Vakaga prefecture, while other fighters returned to Bria-Yalinga-Nzacko triangle in southern Haute-Kotto. Meanwhile, as influx of Sudanese refugees toward Am Dafok and Birao towns in Vakaga prefecture continued, armed elements allegedly belonging to paramilitary Rapid Support Forces of Gen Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo reportedly engaged in opportunistic crimes around Birao.

Agropastoral conflicts continued to claim lives. After herder-farmer violence in Sept affected Miamani area in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, several similar incidents reported in Oct in Ouham-Pendé prefecture. Notably, armed Fulani herders 10 Oct clashed with group of armed individuals in Bossemptélé sub-prefecture, and violence 12 Oct broke out between armed herders and residents in Bézéré village, leading to deaths of three soldiers who had been deployed to area; armed elements of CPC-affiliated 3R rebel group late Oct abducted a dozen individuals near Bohong village over accusations of cattle theft. In Lobaye prefecture, transhumant herders armed with assault rifles 22 Oct shot one farmer dead and wounded another.

UN urged Bangui to launch inclusive dialogue ahead of 2024 local elections. Valentine Rugwabiza, UN Special Representative and head of MINUSCA, 26 Oct presented Sec Gen's report on Central African Republic to UN Security Council ahead of vote on mandate renewal expected in Nov. Rugwabiza highlighted govt's progress in advancing peace process, and urged Bangui to engage in inclusive dialogue with political opposition and armed groups ahead of local elections scheduled for Oct 2024.

➡ Chad Authorities arrested dozens after opposition leader announced imminent return from exile.

Interim President Déby strengthened grip on security apparatus. Déby 21 Sept and 9 Oct conducted two important army reshuffles, with 66 new generals appointed, majority of them from ruling clan. Meanwhile, online media Tchad One 7-8 Oct reported elements of elite force that includes presidential guard attempted to overthrow Déby; govt did not react to claim.

Opposition leader delayed return from exile amid crackdown on supporters. Succès Masra, exiled president of *Les Transformateurs* party, 5 Oct informed public security ministry of his return to Chad on 18 Oct. In response, police 8 Oct arrested over 70 party supporters, citing risk to public order. Govt 14 Oct said negotiations for Masra's return were continuing under Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) auspices, and Masra next day announced postponing return until early Nov at request of ECCAS facilitator, Congolese President Tshisekedi. Security forces 20 Oct deployed to N'Djamena in anticipation of unrest on one-year

anniversary of deadly crackdown on opposition protests. Kinshasa 31 Oct announced agreement between Chad's govt and Masra for latter's return.

Herder-farmer conflict flared up in Moyen-Chari province. After apparent lull in herder-farmer violence in Moyen-Chari province since Dec 2022, conflict between herders and farmers late Sept escalated in Korbol department, near Lake Iro, resulting in around ten people killed as rebel group Movement for Peace, Reconstruction and Development entered fray.

In other important developments. Amid growing hostility to French presence, over 20 leaders of political parties and civil society organisations, both in Chad and among diaspora, 10 Oct sent letter to Déby to request withdrawal of French troops from Chad.

➡ **Gabon Coup leader visited several Central African countries to press for reintegration into regional organisations.**

Junta leader, Gen Brice Oligui Nguema, in late Sept embarked on regional tour in bid to get Gabon's suspension from Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and African Union reversed. Nguema notably met with presidents of Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda, but has yet to secure meeting with Cameroon's head of state, Paul Biya. Meanwhile, U.S. President Biden 30 Oct announced plans to expel Gabon and three other African countries from special U.S.-Africa trade program on grounds of "gross violations" of human rights or absence of progress toward democratic rule.

Great Lakes

➡ **Burundi President Ndayishimiye reshuffled govt in apparent attempt to ensure loyalty of inner circle amid ruling party divisions.**

Govt reshuffle exposed ruling party divisions. PM Gervais Ndirakobuca 2 Oct presented review of govt performance to parliament, acknowledging achievement gaps in several sectors, including interior, justice and education. However, govt reshuffle announced next day seemed to reward ministers for their loyalty, rather than performance, with President Ndayishimiye replacing health, agriculture, public service and youth ministers, while those in charge of poorly performing sectors stayed on. Reshuffle came as Sec Gen of ruling party, Révérien Ndikuriyo, recently toured country in apparent attempt to bolster his popularity; Ndikuriyo's mounting ambitions could presage growing frictions with Ndayishimiye.

Authorities arrested opposition party leader. Authorities 17 Oct arrested head of opposition party Council for Democracy and Sustainable Development in Burundi, Kefa Nibizi, over accusations of undermining state security days after party blamed "unprecedented misery" on "failing leadership"; Nibizi granted provisional release 21 Oct. In separate development, Supreme Court 2 Oct denied bail to former PM Alain Guillaume Bunyoni, who has been held in pre-trial detention since April on charges of undermining state security.

Burundi saw wins and losses at UN Human Rights Council. UN General Assembly 10 Oct elected Burundi and 14 other member states to Human Rights Council for three-year term. Human Rights Council 12 Oct extended mandate of special rapporteur for Burundi for another year, citing continued “human rights violations and abuses” in country; Gitega expressed frustration, saying resolution was politically motivated. UN special rapporteur 25 Oct presented annual report on situation of human rights in Burundi to UN General Assembly, noted “shrinking civic space” and “growing pressure on political parties, civil society organisations and the media” ahead of 2025 legislative and municipal elections.

↓ **DR Congo** **Large-scale fighting between M23 rebels and govt forces resumed in North Kivu after six months of precarious calm, fuelling tensions with Rwanda; political climate remained heated ahead of December elections.**

Ceasefire between M23 and govt collapsed in North Kivu province. Wazalendo coalition of pro-govt armed groups 9 Oct seized strategic town of Kitshanga in Masisi territory from M23 rebel group after intense fighting, and around 11 Oct drove M23 from their stronghold of Bwiza (Bwito chiefdom) in neighbouring Rutshuru territory. Violence 15 Oct flared in Bwito’s Tongo and Bishusha *groupements*, and M23 overnight 22-23 Oct reportedly killed over 50 civilians in several villages of Tongo. Fighting also reported around 21 Oct in Masisi, with M23 regaining control of Kitshanga. Direct clashes between M23 and govt forces 24 Oct resumed at Kibumba town in Nyiragongo territory, about 20km north of provincial capital Goma. M23 rebels 25-26 Oct opened new front, seizing Bambo town in Rutshuru territory, 60km from Goma. Kinshasa 23-24 Oct released drone footage purportedly showing Rwandan army incursion into DR Congo in support of M23. Meanwhile, UN regional envoy 17 Oct said risk of “direct confrontation” between Kigali and Kinshasa is “very real” (see Rwanda).

Presidential election candidates engaged in heated rhetoric. Electoral commission 19 Oct published list 24 candidates registered for 20 Dec presidential election, pending Constitutional Court confirmation expected 18 Nov. Harsh rhetoric continued between candidates. Notably, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Denis Mukwege 2 Oct called current leadership “inconsistent, irresponsible and incompetent”, while incumbent President Tshisekedi 7 Oct warned against “candidates from abroad” in thinly veiled reference to Mukwege. Opposition seemed unable to build electoral alliance to rally behind single candidate against Tshisekedi. Fuelling divisions, prominent candidate Martin Fayulu 10 Oct said he was only candidate fit for the role and dismissed other candidates as “thieves”.

In other important developments. Suspected Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces 23 Oct killed at least 26 civilians in Oicha town, Beni territory in North Kivu. Tshisekedi 12 Oct announced easing of state of siege (akin to martial law) in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, notably lifting curfew and allowing peaceful demonstrations, with military remaining in charge at provincial level.

↓ **Rwanda** **Resurgence of large-scale hostilities involving M23 militia in eastern DR Congo fuelled inflammatory rhetoric between Kigali and Kinshasa, as UN highlighted risk of direct conflict.**

As violence early Oct flared between M23 rebel group, made up primarily of ethnic Tutsi combatants, and coalition of armed groups aligned with Congolese govt (see DR Congo), North Kivu military governor 10 Oct blamed “massacre” of seven civilians, who were found dead same day near Rumangabo military base (40km north of North Kivu’s capital Goma), on M23 and Rwanda Defence Force “terrorists”. At Security Council meeting, UN special envoy for Africa’s Great Lakes region, Huang Xia, 17 Oct said risk of “direct confrontation” between Rwanda and DR Congo is “very real”, citing “military build-up” by both countries, “absence of direct high-level dialogue”, and “persistence of hate speech” as worrying signs. Both countries in following days continued to trade blame for violence as direct clashes between M23 and Congolese govt forces resumed in North Kivu. Kigali 23 Oct said Rwandan citizen was injured along border by stray bullet originating from DR Congo, accused coalition of “Kinshasa-backed illegal armed groups” of responsibility; also said Kinshasa’s “ongoing support” for Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda rebels and other armed groups “is escalating provocative actions along the Rwandan border”. Kinshasa 23-24 Oct released drone footage purportedly showing Rwandan army incursion into DR Congo to reinforce M23 positions in North Kivu, and said it had referred matter to joint verification mechanism set up as part of Luanda process.

➡ **Uganda** **ADF militants launched new attacks in Uganda as military continued operations against armed group in DR Congo; tensions ran high with South Sudan over border dispute.**

ADF launched new attacks against civilians in Uganda. Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) 13 Oct ambushed civilian vehicle at Katojo junction near DR Congo border, killing two, and 17 Oct killed two foreign tourists and their local guide in Queen Elizabeth National Park. President Museveni 15 Oct reported army had foiled ADF bomb plot targeting churches in Butambala district, and warned against ADF rebels engaging in retaliatory attacks on Ugandan territory amid Ugandan army operations in DR Congo. Kampala 25 Oct also announced amnesty for ADF members willing to surrender.

Authorities arrested opposition leader, thwarted “one million march”. Police 5 Oct arrested opposition party National Unity Platform (NUP) leader Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, at Entebbe airport on return from trip abroad; Wine said he was subsequently placed under house arrest. Police same day detained at least 40 NUP supporters in capital Kampala and elsewhere in effort to thwart what party had described as “one million march” to welcome leader home. Opposition 26 Oct walked out of parliament for third time in two weeks, demanding debate on human rights and end to repression of opposition parties.

Border dispute with South Sudan flared up. After South Sudanese authorities claimed ownership of over 20 villages in Kerwa and Kochi areas in Uganda’s Yumbe district, Ugandan troops late Sept reportedly set up bases in South Sudan’s Kajo-Keji county. South Sudan parliamentary spokesperson 1 Oct vowed not to “allow even one metre of our land to be taken by Uganda”, and Museveni 2 Oct sent ministerial delegation to Yumbe and Moyo districts. Governor of South Sudan’s Central Equatoria State and Ugandan local authorities 27 Oct met in Yumbe to resolve disputes.

East and Southern Africa

➔ **Kenya Parliament extended bipartisan talks between govt and opposition, border dispute between Kericho and Kisumu counties turned deadly, and court paused police deployment to Haiti.**

President Ruto reshuffled cabinet, parliament extended bipartisan talks. Ruto 4 Oct replaced eight cabinet ministers, notably moving FM Alfred Mutua to Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, adding foreign affairs ministry to Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi's portfolio. National Assembly 17 Oct approved 30-day extension of bipartisan talks between govt and opposition, giving National Dialogue Committee until 28 Nov to submit report.

Intercommunal clashes flared on Kericho-Kisumu border. Armed individuals from Kericho county 4 Oct reportedly raided East Kadiang'a location near disputed Sondu town in Kisumu county, killing seven and allegedly targeting hospital; govt 5 Oct announced deployment of special police units to area to contain violence.

Al-Shabaab continued operations in eastern counties bordering Somalia. In Garissa county, two Al-Shabaab fighters 3 Oct died while attempting to set up explosive device in Amuma area; security forces in second half of Oct destroyed at least two Al-Shabaab logistics bases in Fafi constituency, where police 17 and 30 Oct killed at least five al-Shabaab militants; explosive device 30 Oct killed two security officers near Dadaab town. U.S. embassy in Kenya 13 Oct issued security alert, warning of "potentially imminent [terrorist] attacks" in capital Nairobi and elsewhere.

Court temporarily suspended police deployment to Haiti. UN Security Council 2 Oct approved deployment of Kenyan-led multinational police force to combat gang violence in Haiti; Nairobi volunteered to lead international force in Haiti as part of Ruto's efforts to signal Kenya is reliable foreign affairs partner. However, High Court 9 Oct temporarily suspended deployment, and 24 Oct extended suspension until 9 Nov pending decision on opposition's petition citing concerns over constitutionality of deploying police officers abroad.

➔ **Lesotho Political tensions ran high as opposition tabled motion of no-confidence in govt, prompting security forces to threaten intervention.**

Opposition 16 Oct submitted motion of no-confidence against PM Sam Matekane's govt, with 61 MPs out of 120 in parliament pledging support for motion; vote deferred after Matekane resorted to court to challenge move. Police and army same day called on opposition not to go ahead with no-confidence motion, saying they would only work with current govt. Security forces 18 Oct briefly detained leader of opposition party Socialist Revolutionaries Teboho Mojaepela. Matekane 26 Oct wrote to Southern African Development Community (SADC) arguing that opposition's move aims to "subvert our democratic norms and principles" and could usher in period of "political uncertainty". Opposition parties next day wrote to SADC highlighting threat of military coup, as well as harassment of Mojaepela and other opposition figures. South African outlet News24 31 Oct reported that Matekane had gained support of opposition party Basotho Action Party, with their six seats

returning parliamentary majority to his control and seemingly ending prospect of no-confidence vote.

➡ ⚡ **Madagascar Authorities violently dispersed opposition rallies denouncing govt interference in electoral process; political tensions could rise further and fuel violence around mid-November presidential election.**

Opposition protests left two presidential candidates injured. Opposition coalition of 11 presidential candidates in Oct continued to protest to denounce lack of level playing field and demand disqualification of incumbent President Rajoelina from presidential race, saying he holds dual citizenship. Police and soldiers 2 and 7 Oct dispersed opposition rallies in capital Antananarivo with tear gas and rubber bullets, reportedly leaving opposition presidential candidates Andry Raobelina and Marc Ravalomanana injured. Amid unrest, High Constitutional Court (HCC) 12 Oct ordered one-week postponement of first round of presidential election to 16 Nov. Opposition demonstrations continued on almost daily basis until month's end.

Tensions engulfed ruling party. Senate President Herimanana Razafimahefa 9 Oct said he had renounced interim presidency in Sept under pressure from govt officials, including death threats. In extraordinary session, ruling party-dominated senate 12 Oct voted to dismiss Razafimahefa on grounds of "mental deficiency". Razafimahefa same day referred decision to HCC, which 28 Oct rejected appeal; HCC same day named new Senate President Richard Ravalomanana as interim president, reversing previous decision to put PM Christian Ntsay at head of "collegiate govt". Collective of opposition candidates called Ravalomanana's installation "very serious breach of the Constitution". National Assembly President Christine Razanamahasoa 17 Oct highlighted "democratic backsliding", calling for action from international community to prevent "internecine war"; colleagues in ruling party immediately denounced her remarks.

International community expressed concern over deteriorating political climate. UN Human Rights Office 10 Oct warned of "deteriorating human rights situation" in lead-up to presidential election, saying security forces used "unnecessary and disproportionate force" against peaceful opposition protesters. In joint statement, EU, U.S. and other govts 16 Oct expressed "worry" over "tense political climate".

↓ **Mozambique Protests erupted as opposition denounced fraud in municipal elections, with violence and repression leaving several people dead; insurgent activity remained low in northern Cabo Delgado province.**

Municipal elections marred by deadly violence. Municipal elections, seen as test for presidential election due in 2024, held 11 Oct. Election day went relatively smoothly, but violence broke out in following days. Notably, police 12 Oct brutally dispersed gathering of RENAMO opposition party supporters in Chiúre district, Cabo Delgado province, killing 16-year-old boy. Ruling FRELIMO party 15 Oct claimed victory in all but one of 65 municipalities. Opposition immediately accused FRELIMO of influencing vote counting and 17 Oct held nationwide protests; police crackdown reportedly left dozens wounded notably in capital Maputo and Nampula city. Unrest worsened after electoral commission 26 Oct confirmed FRELIMO's victory in all but

one municipality. Opposition supporters 27 Oct took to streets in several cities to decry results and dismiss elections as rigged; police suppressed protests notably in Nampula, with nine civilians and one police officer reportedly injured, and 60 people detained. Violence next day broke out again, including in Maputo as security forces reportedly used tear gas and live bullets to disperse protesters; at least three people killed. Police late Oct accused RENAMO of using homemade explosives during unrest, while National Human Rights Commission 30 Oct criticised “indiscriminate” use of force by police against demonstrators.

Activity of Islamic State-affiliated militants remained limited in Cabo Delgado. In Macomia district, suspected Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) militants 13 Oct killed two hunters near Chai village, and around 20 Oct reportedly kidnapped two fishermen near Litandacua village. In Mocimboa da Praia district, fear of ISMP attacks early Oct led to displacement of almost 5,000 people from several villages; local source claimed militants 16 Oct kidnapped at least three men from Awasse village.

➔ **Zimbabwe Opposition continued to call for re-run of August elections, while controversy over fake letters recalling some MPs fuelled political tensions.**

Opposition continued to dismiss Aug general elections as fraudulent. Main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) 2 Oct called for new elections under international supervision, with “independent and professional” body in place of current electoral commission. Police 16 Oct banned CCC protest march in Bulawayo city. In response, CCC 18 Oct said it is “fundamental constitutional right” of citizens to protest election outcome, and warned that “when all has failed”, citizens might “take matter into [their] own hands”; also said party leader Nelson Chamisa had been mandated to pursue dialogue with President Mnangagwa to find way out of crisis. During extraordinary summit of Southern African Development Community, Angolan President Lourenço 31 Oct congratulated Mnangagwa for “exemplary” elections.

Controversy over fake letters fuelled tensions. Sengezo Tshabangu, claiming to be interim Sec Gen of CCC, early Oct recalled 15 MPs, saying they had ceased to belong to party. Chamisa immediately dismissed individual as ruling party puppet, but Parliament Speaker Jacob Mudenda declared seats vacant. Riot police 10 Oct intervened as CCC MPs protested in parliament, and Mudenda suspended all CCC MPs for six parliamentary sittings. Self-proclaimed CCC Sec Gen 10 Oct also said Chamisa had been expelled from CCC, which party denied. CCC 25 Oct said it would boycott by-elections for 15 vacated seats scheduled for 9 Dec.

In another important development. Mnangagwa 20 Oct named Lt Gen Anselem Sanyatwe, under U.S. sanctions for allegedly leading post-2018 election crackdown, as army commander, and 28 Oct appointed defence forces commander Gen Phillip Valerio Sibanda to ZANU-PF politburo; civil society activists including journalist Hopewell Chin’ono immediately decried move as unconstitutional.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea Authorities rejected Ethiopian PM's calls for direct access to sea, laying bare deteriorating bilateral relations; govt continued to expand regional partnerships.**

Asmara dismissed Abiy's calls for negotiations over sea access. In audio released 13 Oct, Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed said that securing direct access to sea (Ethiopia has been landlocked since 1993 Eritrean independence) is vital for Ethiopia's development and stressed historic links to Red Sea; he called for open discussions with neighbours about possible solutions and warned that Ethiopia's lack of access was potential source of future conflict. Eritrea 16 Oct responded harshly, dismissing "excessive discourses" on water and sea access and emphasising that Asmara will not "be drawn into such alleys and platforms". Response laid bare worsening relations between Addis and Asmara, with latter fearful that its larger neighbour may have territorial ambitions.

Eritrea continued to strengthen regional ties. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud 8-9 Oct visited Asmara amid concerted Eritrean efforts to enhance bilateral relations. High-level delegation led by FM Osman Saleh 12 Oct travelled to Egypt to discuss Sudan conflict with Egypt's FM Sameh Shoukry; delegation 14 Oct met with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Meanwhile, delegation led by Ambassador Negasi Sengal 23-24 Oct attended Forum on China-Africa cooperation in Chinese capital Beijing.

➔ **Ethiopia Violence in Amhara and Oromia regions remained rampant, and PM Abiy's calls for sea access rattled Ethiopia's neighbours amid deteriorating relations with Eritrea.**

Fano-federal fighting continued in Amhara region. Clashes between federal forces and Amhara nationalist militia known as Fano occurred in rural areas and small towns of Amhara's North Wollo, South Wollo, West Gojjam, East Gojjam and North Shewa zones, as well as Oromia region's North Shewa Zone. Indications mid Oct surfaced that military is planning final offensive to "eliminate" Fano, though rebellion's decentralised structure will likely complicate efforts. Ethiopian Human Rights Commission 30 Oct warned of high civilian casualties.

Hostilities in Oromia persisted amid rising risk of intercommunal violence. Clashes between govt forces and Oromo Liberation Army continued throughout Oct. Govt drone strikes 7-8 Oct in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone killed at least twelve. In North Shewa's Dera Woreda (home to significant number of Amharas), federal forces fought OLA and Fano; with both insurgencies operating in area, risk of ethnically motivated attacks on Amhara and Oromo civilians is high. Kidnappings-for-ransom continued to rise. Notably, suspected OLA militants 3 Oct abducted nine civilians from Sululta city, demanding 300,000 birr (approx \$5,500) per victim; 19 Oct abducted unknown number of Chinese nationals.

Abiy's calls for talks on sea access laid bare deteriorating relations with Eritrea. In audio released 13 Oct, PM Abiy pronounced that securing direct access to sea (Ethiopia has been landlocked since 1993 Eritrean independence) is vital for Ethiopia's development and stressed historic links to Red Sea; he called for open

discussions with neighbours and warned that Ethiopia's lack of access was potential source of future conflict. Eritrea 16 Oct said "discourses" on water and sea access had become "excessive" and emphasised that Asmara will not "be drawn into such alleys"; response revealed deteriorating relations between Addis and Asmara (see Eritrea). Somalia and Djibouti 17, 19 Oct respectively rejected Abiy's appeal for talks.

In other important developments. Situation in Tigray region remained static. UN humanitarian agency 9 Oct warned that "drought-like conditions" in parts of Amhara, Tigray, Somali and Afar regions have increased food insecurity. Third round of talks on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam 24 Oct concluded without breakthrough (see Nile Waters).

➡ **Nile Waters** **Third round of talks on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) concluded without breakthrough.**

Third round of talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan regarding rules for first filling and annual operation of GERD 24 Oct concluded in Egypt's capital Cairo. Sides failed to make progress, with Cairo accusing Addis of refusing to compromise, but agreed to fourth round of talks in Ethiopia.

➡ **Somalia** **Election-related tensions grew further in Puntland, raising prospect of armed confrontation in lead-up to polls set for early 2024; offensive against Al-Shabaab continued to produce mixed results.**

Political dispute worsened in Puntland state. Puntland President Said Deni 10 Oct returned to Puntland after near two-month absence and reaffirmed commitment to hold direct parliamentary and presidential elections by Jan 2024. Opposition continued to accuse him of seeking to use transition to universal suffrage to extend term or set rules in his favour. Notably, representatives of Mideeye and Horseed political associations 10-11 Oct met near Puntland capital Garowe and called for return to clan-based system for Puntland's elections, also agreeing to form joint front against Deni; absent dialogue between Puntland govt and opposition, alliance further raises prospect of violent confrontations ahead of polls as opposition parties have troops at their disposal. Electoral authorities 23 Oct reaffirmed commitment to hold direct presidential election, but pushed date back to 25 Feb 2024, further raising tensions.

President Mohamud returned from frontlines as insecurity persisted. Mohamud 7 Oct returned to capital Mogadishu after two months in Galmudug state capital Dhusamareb, where his attempts to revive govt's offensive against Al-Shabaab yielded mixed results. Notably, several clan communities in southern Mudug region agreed to join fight against al-Shabaab, but similar discussions about forming clan alliance against Al-Shabaab in northern Galgaduud region have yet to bear fruit. Militants continued to put up stiff resistance in Galmudug: local sources reported Al-Shabaab attack on clan militia positions in Bar Ujeed area 14 Oct resulted in dozens of casualties. In Hirshabelle state, govt 12 Oct announced it had pushed militants back across Shabelle river with help from AU mission (ATMIS) after Al-Shabaab crossed it mid-Sept. Southwest state President Laftagareen 7 Oct also promised to initiate second phase of anti-Al-Shabaab operations, and federal officials including defence minister 28 Oct arrived in Diinsoor district (Bay region) to coordinate

operations. Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab car bomb attack 21 Oct killed at least six people at military facility on outskirts of Mogadishu.

In another important development. AU Peace and Security Council 5 Oct backed Somalia's request to UN to pause ATMIS withdrawal for three months.

➡ **Somaliland Govt messaging signalled desire to retake territory lost to Dhulbahante clan militias in Sool region.**

Tensions remained high between govt and Dhulbahante clan forces in Sool region. In strongest public comment since Somaliland army's pull-out from Dhulbahante-inhabited parts of Sool region in late Aug, President Bihi 14 Oct said Somaliland would not accept separate administration in Sool. Reports emerged of troop mobilisation in Qorilugud area near Buhoodle city, which could augur attempt to retake territory in coming months. Meanwhile, leader of SSC-Khatumo state (new self-declared administration for Dhulbahante community) Abdulkadir Firdhiye 6-22 Oct visited Somali capital Mogadishu, reiterated desire to form new Somali member state during talks with Somali PM Hamza Abdi Barre and President Mohamud; local media 19 Oct reported that Mogadishu recognised SSC-Khatumo as interim administration.

Clan tensions erupted elsewhere. Clan tensions late Sept-early Oct flared around Togdheer region's capital Burco and Sanaag region's capital Erigabo, resulting in small skirmishes; SSC-Khatumo 18 Oct accused Bihi of "inciting hatred" among clans.

Electoral dispute de-escalated further. Electoral-related strains continued to dissipate after Gacaan Libaah militia, which originally opposed August agreement between Bihi and opposition to simultaneously hold political party and presidential elections on 13 Nov 2024, late Sept agreed to lay down arms. Election-related tensions continued to simmer in Awdal region, however, with some prominent Gadabursi clan figures attempting to organise themselves both inside and outside Somaliland.

➡ **South Sudan UN denounced repression of civil society amid growing concerns about readiness for 2024 election, key opposition commanders defected to govt, and insecurity continued in several states.**

UN condemned govt repression amid concerns about election. UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan 5 Oct issued damning report on civic space in light of 2024 elections, accusing govt and intelligence agency of abuses against journalists and civil society members, and "extreme intolerance towards expressions of criticism"; report concluded that free and fair elections are unimaginable under current conditions. Govt next day cancelled visit of UN special rapporteur on human rights of internally displaced persons. Interim Chair of Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) – tasked with tracking implementation of 2018 peace agreement – Maj Gen Charles Tai Gituai 5 Oct warned lack of progress on election-preparedness is creating uncertainty and urged govt not to abandon constitution-making provisions of peace deal. Briefing UN Security Council, RJMEC Chief of Staff Berhanu Kebede 23 Oct highlighted importance of reconstituting Political Parties Council and National Election Commission before elections.

Collapse of main opposition movement continued unabated. In severe blow to VP Riek Machar's diminished People's Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO), Unity State Commander Lt. Gen Simon Maguek Gai 10 Oct defected to govt along with several division commanders; Maguek Gai returned to Leer County (Unity State) to mobilise disaffected youth, raising fears of armed confrontation with Machar's forces; Jonglei State sector commander Lt. Gen Michael Wal Nyak 19 Oct defected. Loss of two key commanders drastically reduced SPLA-IO's military capacity in Unity and Jonglei states.

Insecurity persisted in several states. Unknown assailants 11 Oct killed four civilians in Budi County, Eastern Equatoria state. Attack by Twic county youth 13 Oct killed four in Athonyi village, Abyei area. Skirmish between two Dinka communities 15 Oct killed three in Twic East County, Jonglei State.

Juba hosted meeting on Sudan crisis as refugees faced hunger crisis. UN World Food Program 3 Oct warned of looming hunger crisis for South Sudanese returnees fleeing war in Sudan. Juba 24-25 Oct hosted Sudan's Juba Peace Agreement signatories for discussions on ending war.

↓ ⚡ Sudan Paramilitary forces (RSF) captured South Darfur state, marking major turn in war, and are expected to push forward in Darfur and Kordofan in coming weeks.

RSF captured South Darfur amid series of battlefield victories. RSF scored major victories against army in Darfur region. Most notably, paramilitary 27 Oct seized army's 16th Infantry Division in South Darfur capital Nyala, leading to total conquest of state. Elsewhere, RSF 31 Oct captured 21st Infantry Division of army in Central Darfur state capital Zalingei, and by late Oct was moving on army positions in West Darfur and North Darfur state capitals; despite North Darfur state governor and Darfur regional governor urging RSF to halt advance, paramilitary could seek to overtake army garrisons in these state capitals in coming weeks in bid to capture entire region from army. This risks dragging members of Juba Peace Agreement signatories (who until now have remained neutral) into confrontation with paramilitary forces. Hostilities in capital Khartoum, meanwhile, continued unabated.

RSF gained ground in West Kordofan as conflict spread to new fronts. In West Kordofan state, RSF 30 Oct seized Baleela airport and oilfield; forces expected to advance on remaining army garrisons across state in coming weeks in bid to take full control of region. Elsewhere, RSF expanded into White Nile State while army mobilised in Sudan's south east and east, with new recruits headed for Khartoum allegedly reaching border towns between Gezira State and capital. In response, RSF deployed to Gezira in attempt to cut off crucial supply route for army. Meanwhile, army battled with rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) in South Kordofan state; notably, SPLM-N 9 Oct attacked army positions in Delling town, taking control of area.

Jeddah talks resumed. U.S.-Saudi-brokered talks 28 Oct resumed in Saudi city Jeddah, with Intergovernmental Authority on Development and African Union acting as co-facilitators; civilian representatives yet to be invited. Initial rounds will not deal with political issues, but instead focus on humanitarian aid deliveries and

negotiations related to ceasefire; major RSF advances, however, dampened hopes for progress on ceasefire agreement.

Sahel

➡ Burkina Faso Junta purged disloyal elements within armed forces following alleged coup attempt in September, while violence remained widespread across country.

Authorities dismissed head of gendarmerie. After govt late Sept claimed to have foiled coup attempt, with several senior officials of national gendarmerie and army's special forces among alleged plotters, interim President Capt. Traoré 4 Oct replaced gendarmerie chief of staff; defence minister same day suspended eight officers and three non-commissioned officers. Media outlets including Paris-based *Jeune Afrique* early Oct reported that Traoré boosted his personal security, including by stationing armoured vehicles around his office in capital Ouagadougou.

Govt continued to tighten control of civic space. Council of ministers 4 Oct adopted draft bill which would, among other measures, give head of state authority to appoint president of High Council of Communication. Association of Journalists of Burkina Faso next day dismissed bill as "total negation of press freedom". President of transitional legislature, Ousmane Bougouma, 9 Oct submitted report on politico-institutional reforms to govt, notably calling for elections to be administered by Ministry of Territorial Administration instead of independent commission. General Confederation of Workers of Burkina Faso, most influential trade union in country, 18 Oct accused govt of taking "liberticidal" measures, including forced recruitment of civilians into govt-aligned vigilante groups and closure of media outlets.

Jihadist violence remained elevated across country. In East region, al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 11 Oct ambushed special police unit in Yamba town, Gourma province, killing 27 officers, with retaliatory govt airstrikes allegedly killing around 30 militants. In North region, presumed JNIM militants 2 Oct killed around ten civilians in Pogoro-Silmimossi village, Yatenga province, and next day killed unknown number of army auxiliaries (VDPs) and lost ten of their own fighters in attack on Tibou village, Loroum province. In Boucle du Mouhoun region, special police units and VDPs 3 Oct allegedly killed between ten and 40 presumed JNIM militants in Ouarinogo village, Sourou province, while presumed JNIM fighters 6 Oct killed 12 students in besieged town of Nouna, Kossi province.

➡ ⚡ Mali Military authorities appeared committed to taking control of 2015 peace deal signatories' stronghold of Kidal, and could launch offensive in days or weeks to come.

Escalation between former rebel groups and govt forces continued in north. In Kidal region, govt and allied Russian paramilitary Wagner Group 7 Oct carried out strikes and took control of Anefis town from Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP), which gathers northern armed groups signatory to 2015 peace agreement. As part of second phase of withdrawal, UN mission (MINUSMA) mid-Oct started leaving Tessalit and Aguelhok camps in Kidal region; two Malian military planes that landed

in Tessalit to take control of base 16 Oct came under fire from CSP-affiliated Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), who worry arrival of Malian troops in Tessalit may be last step before offensive on Kidal town. CSP 31 Oct claimed takeover of vacated MINUSMA camp in Kidal town. Meanwhile in Gao region, CMA 2 and 4 Oct claimed seizing Bamba and Taoussa bases from army. Divisions emerged within CSP as founding member Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) late Sept announced departure from coalition over CMA's bellicose stance toward govt; MSA Sec Gen 8 Oct said conflict only benefited jihadists, and several other CSP members also expressed commitment to peace.

Jihadist violence continued in centre and north. In centre, al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 7 Oct ambushed soldiers near Batouma, Douentza region, killing 16, and 10 Oct ambushed joint convoy of army, Dan Na Ambassagou militiamen, and Wagner near Sibou village, Bandiagara region, claiming to have killed ten. Civilians continued to pay heavy toll in north. Wagner 8 Oct allegedly killed seven civilians in Takoukate village, Kidal region, while Wagner and govt forces 15 Oct reportedly killed six civilians and committed sexual abuse in Agumeimin and Tichilit villages, Timbuktu region.

Political tensions continued around postponed presidential election. Prominent religious and political figure, Imam Mahmoud Dicko, convened demonstration for 13 Oct in capital Bamako to protest indefinite delay to presidential election, while pro-govt civil society organisation called for counterprotest; authorities 9 Oct banned both gatherings, citing "high risk of unrest".

► **Niger Islamic State launched deadly attack on military in southwestern region, confirming increase in jihadist violence since July coup; France began troop withdrawal.**

Major attack confirmed rise in jihadist violence in south west. In Tahoua region, Islamic State-Sahel Province (IS Sahel) 2 Oct ambushed military in Tabatol village, Tillia department; govt claimed 29 soldiers killed though locals reported total may be much higher. Recrudescence of jihadist attacks reported in neighbouring Tillabery region since July coup continued. IS Sahel militants 10 Oct killed 11 civilians in Karkatia village, Bankilare department, and 16 Oct clashed with troops in several areas of Bankilare and Tera departments, reportedly leading to dozens of casualties on both sides.

Standoff with France and others continued. French soldiers early Oct began withdrawal from Tillabery region; departure of 1,500 troops due to be completed by year's end will likely cause logistical, security, and political challenges. Govt 10 Oct also expelled UN resident coordinator in Niger, Louise Aubin, citing "underhanded manoeuvres" by UN, including non-accreditation of Niger's representatives at international conferences. Meanwhile, U.S. same day formally acknowledged July military takeover was coup, suspended \$500mn in development aid.

Algiers' mediation attempt suffered setback. Niamey 3 Oct denied having accepted Algerian mediation promoting six-month transition to restore constitutional order, emphasised transition duration could only be decided by "inclusive national forum", and Algiers 9 Oct announced putting mediation efforts on hold pending "clarifications" (see Algeria).

In another important development. Authorities 19 Oct alleged deposed President Bazoum attempted to escape from house arrest with help of local and foreign actors, though those close to former president denied claim. Public prosecutor at Niamey court of appeal 31 Oct said investigation was under way and 23 people had been arrested in connection with case.

West Africa

➔ **Benin** **Armed clashes continued at low level in north, and former president staged political comeback.**

Military 3 Oct reportedly repelled suspected al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) attack in Koualou area, Atakora department. Meanwhile, former President Thomas Boni Yayi 14-15 Oct reassumed leadership of party he founded, The Democrats, during party congress in Parakou town, Borgou department; Boni Yayi's return to political stage could signal desire to challenge as-of-yet undesignated heir of term-limited President Talon in general elections set for 2026.

➔ **Côte d'Ivoire** **President Ouattara reshuffled govt in wake of landslide victory in September local elections, while opposition remained in disarray.**

Ouattara revamped leadership team, keeping tight grip on power. After ruling party Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) won landslide victory in Sept regional and municipal elections, President Ouattara 6 Oct dismissed PM Patrick Achi, and 16 Oct appointed governor of Abidjan and RHDP heavyweight Robert Beugré Mambé as new PM. Appointment came as a surprise to many observers who expected more political appointment giving indication about Ouattara's succession plans ahead of 2025 presidential election. Mambé 18 Oct announced new govt mostly composed of previous govt's key figures; reconciliation ministry abolished, which suggests that opposition's poor performance in local elections bolstered RHDP confidence; Mambé himself took charge of sports ministry as country prepares to host Africa Cup of Nations football competition in Jan. Meanwhile, senators 12 Oct elected Ouattara's close ally, former FM Kandia Camara, as head of upper legislature.

Opposition struggled to come to terms with electoral defeat. Former President Laurent Gbagbo 6 Oct circulated memo within his opposition party African People's Party-Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI) announcing audit of local election campaigns; 23 Oct reshuffled PPA-CI leadership, notably replacing party's executive president, sec gen and spokesperson. Amid power struggle within Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) following death in Aug of long-time leader Henri Konan Bédié and electoral defeat in Sept, PDCI 14 Oct scheduled extraordinary party congress for 16 Dec to elect new president.

➔ **Guinea** **Junta continued to restrict press freedom and fundamental rights; ECOWAS court of justice ordered release of deposed President Condé-era ministers.**

Crackdown on journalists sparked outcry from opposition. Union of journalists (SPPG) 16 Oct held demonstration in capital Conakry calling on authorities to lift restrictions on privately-owned news website Guinee Matin, which has been inaccessible within Guinea since mid-Aug; police and gendarmerie enforced ban on protests and dispersed rally, reportedly injuring three journalists and arresting a dozen, who were freed later that day but charged with “participating in an unlawful assembly”. Opposition movements Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea, Union of Republican Forces, and National Front for the Defence of the Constitution immediately condemned crackdown and restrictions imposed by junta on fundamental freedoms. Deposed President Alpha Condé’s Rally of the Guinean People 21 Oct followed suit, calling for “coalition of forces” to protect journalists. Telecommunications Minister Ousmane Gaoual Diallo 17 Oct announced defamation suit against Sec Gen of journalist union, Sékou Jamal Pendessa, who accused Gaoual Diallo of engineering restrictions on Guinee Matin. SPPG 29 Oct announced plans to hold new march on 6 Nov.

In another important development. Court of Justice of West African regional bloc ECOWAS 16 Oct ruled continued detentions of former PM Ibrahima Kassory Fofana and two Condé-era ministers were “arbitrary”, ordered their immediate release; authorities have three months to comply with judgement.

➔ **Nigeria Supreme Court upheld President Tinubu’s election win, while levels of criminal, jihadist and separatist violence remained high across country.**

Tinubu’s presidential win confirmed. Supreme Court 26 Oct refused to overturn Feb election of Bola Tinubu as president, ending legal challenge brought by his rivals, who had argued vote was flawed and Tinubu was not qualified to run.

Suspected jihadists launched deadly attacks in North East. Suspected Islamic State West Africa Province militants 30-31 Oct shot at villagers and set off land mine in Gaidam area of Yobe state, killing at least 37 people. After Bauchi state in Sept reported rising violence, state governor 9 Oct said 67 armed group members killed and 29 abductees rescued during recent security operation in Tafawa Balewa area; attacks continued in Bauchi, however, with gunmen 15 Oct killing nine members of vigilante group in Ningi area. Meanwhile, pro-govt militia group Civilian Joint Task Force 1 Oct announced dismissal of founding leader Lawan Jafar over corruption allegation; move may hamper operations against jihadist groups in North East due to Jafar’s standing among militia members.

Criminal violence continued unabated in North West and North Central zones. Security operations against armed groups, including 10-11 Oct air strikes in Maru area of Zamfara state, remained inadequate to stem attacks and mass abductions. Notably, gunmen 16 Oct killed three and abducted 50 in mining village in Anka area, Zamfara. States of Kaduna, Benue, Niger and Nasarawa in Oct also saw abductions and killings by armed groups.

Targeted killings continued in South East. Following several attacks in Sept on security and state officials in Imo state, suspected Biafra separatists mid-Oct hacked to death Ebonyi state university official during visit to Imo town. Meanwhile, two major factions of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatist group issued contradictory messages on future plans; self-proclaimed PM of Biafra Republic

Government in Exile, Simon Ekpa, who in Aug declared himself commander of new Biafra Liberation Army, 5 Oct said Biafran authorities would “soon start full government”; however, mainstream faction two days later said group was open to talks with federal govt on Biafran independence, offering opportunity for Tinubu to start dialogue.

➔ **Togo Jihadist militants maintained their presence in northern region.**

Al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 5 Oct attacked Togolese military on Koundjoare-Kpekankandi axis in Kpendjal prefecture, Savanes region, killing at least three soldiers.