



## Africa

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### Central Africa

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➔ **Cameroon** Anglophone separatists sought African Union (AU) support, enforced lockdowns and continued to clash with govt forces; jihadist attacks persisted in the Far North.

*Separatists pursued AU backing, clashed with govt forces.* Anglophone separatist group Ambazonia Governing Council 3 April sent joint letter with Nigerian Biafra separatist group to AU Chairperson Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, urging body's intervention in their independence causes, including leading dialogue and mediation initiatives and establishing fact-finding missions to investigate human rights violations. Separatist-enforced lockdowns continued to cause disruption in North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions as weekly "Monday ghost town" strikes halted public activities, including delaying school reopenings and threatening farming; in Nkambe city, Donga Mantung division (NW), separatist militia Ambazonia Defence Force 15 April burned dozen motorbikes as punishment for non-compliance with strikes. Separatists also clashed with govt forces and detonated around dozen roadside bombs between March and April, mostly in NW, damaging military patrol vehicles and resulting in unspecified numbers of casualties. Govt forces 8 April killed two notorious separatist fighters in Bafut and Batibo areas (NW) and two others on 24 April near Kumba city (SW). Meanwhile, two prominent repentant separatist fighters mid-April criticised govt's demobilisation program in viral video, denouncing unfulfilled promises.

*Jihadist violence persisted in Far North.* Boko Haram militants 6 April targeted Ngourkouma town, Logone-et-Chari division, but faced resistance from locals who seized weapons from assailants; militants 16 April issued ultimatum to residents, demanding return of seized weapons under threat of harm to their children, prompting hundreds from neighbouring fishing villages to flee to nearby Blangoua town over fear retribution would spread. Bakoura faction of Boko Haram 14-29 April carried out attacks on military positions in Magdeme, Mora, Kolofata and Zigue towns, raiding nearby villages for resources, and 29 April killed at least six civilians and two soldiers at Darak town. Meanwhile, soldiers and vigilantes 25 April freed around twenty women Boko Haram had kidnapped near Amchide town two days earlier.

*Preparations for 2025 presidential elections continued.* Amid concerns over slow voter registration rate, ruling and opposition parties, alongside religious leaders, mobilised citizens to register.

➔ **Central African Republic Intercommunal violence escalated as govt allies responded firmly to cost-of-living protests.**

*Sectarian tensions rose in several regions.* Series of incidents highlighted rising intercommunal tensions; rebels from Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation (3R) group 2 April killed over twenty civilians 40km from Bohong town in Ouham-Pendé prefecture (north west). In Ouham prefecture (north), clashes erupted between Christian and Muslim communities in Bossangoa town 5 April following private dispute, highlighting ongoing divisions; in nearby Benzambé village, transhumant herders from West Africa same day killed child, leading villagers to lynch three residents they accused of witchcraft, while relatives of victim attacked and killed Fulani girl with machetes, as tensions remained high throughout month. Meanwhile, in Obo town, Haut-Mbomou prefecture (east) Russian paramilitary Africa Corps, formerly Wagner Group, initiated enlistment and training of fighters from Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé (AAKG) ethnic self-defence militia to confront Fulani-led armed group Unity for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) rebels; moves heightened risk of further sectarian tensions in region should Azandé fighters target Fulani, and by association Muslim, civilians accused of backing rebels.

*Govt supporters responded firmly to protests over cost of living.* Crescent Beninga, spokesperson of Civil Society Working Group, 7 April called for peaceful protest against water and electricity shortages, but faced opposition from pro-govt factions; notably, Central African Youth Advisory Council 9 April denounced protest as political manipulation while National Coordination of Central African Students 11 April urged students to boycott march, branding it uncivil and unpatriotic. Around 100 demonstrators 12 April attempted to march in capital Bangui but security forces blocked them; activist Blaise Didatien Kossimatchi same day organised pro-govt counter-demonstration.

*In another important international development.* President Touadéra met with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron 17 April in France's capital Paris in bid to ease tensions over govt's growing ties with Russia; presidents agreed upon "roadmap" for "constructive partnership".

➔ **Chad Tensions continued to mount in lead-up to May presidential election as opposition disunity persisted; govt requested U.S. troops leave.**

*Amid political tensions, opposition remained divided over boycott of polls.* Ahead of May presidential vote, which includes transitional President Déby and recently-appointed PM Succès Masra as main contenders, opposition remained divided. Civil society opposition platform Wakit Tama 12 April endorsed boycott – which some parties including New Chad Artisans party and Chadian Liberal Party called for in March and early April – citing concerns over lack of electoral roll revision and timing during rainy season. Meanwhile, Union of Nationalists Party 3 April accused international community of financing flawed electoral process. Other opposition parties, however, formed alliances to contest vote and oversee electoral process; 34 parties 9 April formed Justice-Equality Coalition around Masra, partly in order to monitor polling stations nationwide; but alliance, as well as others including Coalition for Just and Equitable Republic created to support influential former PM Padacké's candidacy, unlikely to defeat ruling party. Meanwhile, electoral authorities

criticised perceived violations of electoral rules including supporters of Déby and Masra early April organising rallies and religious ceremonies across country, ahead of official 14 April campaign start date, and Masra 28 April urging supporters to monitor vote by taking photos of tally sheets.

*Socio-economic crisis sparked civil unrest, insecurity continued in hinterland.* Amid socio-economic deterioration including rising fuel prices and electricity shortages, various unions held protests including students 3 April in capital N'Djamena and textile workers 9 April in Sarh city (Moyen-Chari region). Inter-communal violence remained high, particularly in Moyen-Chari and Mayo-Kebbi Ouest regions.

*Govt requested U.S. troop withdrawal.* Letter from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Idriss Amine Ahmed 4 April confirmed previous rumours that govt asked U.S. troops to withdraw from Adjji Kossèi military base at airport in N'Djamena; Ahmed cited lack of legal basis for U.S. presence. U.S. military 25 April said Washington would reposition “some” troops but described it as “temporary step” as talks continue.

#### ➔ **Gabon Govt held national dialogue on transition to civilian rule.**

Transitional President Nguema 2 April inaugurated national dialogue process as part of transition toward civilian rule; Catholic church 8-30 April led discussions in capital Libreville, convening over 600 delegates while Central African Republic President Faustin-Archange Touadera attended dialogue's closing ceremony as facilitator for regional body Economic Community of Central African States. Report delivered to Nguema at end of dialogue process called for new constitution with balance of power between different arms of govt as well as review of country's international cooperation, particularly with France. Meanwhile, opposition continued to raise concerns over inclusiveness and structure of dialogue.

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## **Great Lakes**

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#### ➔ **Burundi Catholic Church expressed concerns about political freedoms, opposition criticised new electoral code, and insecurity persisted.**

*Catholic Church expressed profound concerns about state of nation.* Church 14 April issued public declaration highlighting failures in justice system, economy and, most prominently, political freedoms; statement emphasised need for free legislative elections in 2025, cautioning against political exclusion in implicit reference to recent govt-sponsored efforts to dismantle opposition National Congress for Freedom (CNL) party; political party leaders, civil society and human rights activists broadly reacted in agreement with church's analysis, while ruling CNDD-FDD party Sec Gen said statement was sign of “freedom of expression enjoyed by every Burundian citizen”. Meanwhile, CNL remained in disarray amid govt repression, with reports at least 100 party members have fled to Tanzania since mid-March.

*Electoral law amendments stirred opposition.* Parliament 9 April adopted new electoral code, raising costs of candidate deposits and establishing that funds only reimbursed upon winning 5% of votes. Opposition highlighted concerns that measures will prohibit many candidates from running. Code also stipulated two-year

waiting period for those who leave a political party before they are able to stand as independents, effectively barring prominent opposition figure Agathon Rwasa – ousted as CNL head in March in govt-sponsored efforts – from standing as independent in 2025 polls.

*Human rights abuses and insecurity persisted.* Human rights group Ligue Iteka 9 April released monthly report detailing dozens of murders, abductions and arbitrary arrests, with police, intelligence agents, soldiers and ruling-party youth wing Imbonerakure suspected as main perpetrators. Meanwhile, CNDD-FDD members accused in cases of sexual assault and other violence throughout April. Concerns remained high over agitation within army related to troop deployment in eastern DRC amid reports of desertion over pay, as Imbonerakure members continued to be trained to be deployed.

➔ **DR Congo Military stalemate persisted in North Kivu as security deteriorated in regional capital Goma; govt renewed scrutiny over supposed allies of rebels.**

*Military front remained frozen but pervasive violence swept Goma city.* Frontlines in North Kivu province stalled as govt forces held regional capital Goma but M23 rebels retained control of strategic areas near Sake town (25km north west of Goma) and foothills of Nyiragongo volcano; heavy gunfire continued, however, including 4 April mortar that killed three Tanzanian soldiers in Mubambiro area deployed as part of Southern African regional bloc (SADC) mission SAMIDRC, which Congolese army blamed on M23. Meanwhile, escalating insecurity gripped Goma with military and pro-govt Wazalendo militia groups blamed for surge in lawlessness that saw at least 22 civilians and one soldier killed in city during month; notably, alleged soldiers and Wazalendo members on motorbikes 10 April killed four civilians during armed robbery near provincial governorate building. Locals at times responded violently, leading to soldiers and Wazalendo casualties and raising tensions. In response, govt suppressed protests while also attempting to demonstrate accountability, including 15 April sentencing Republican Guard member to death for civilian shootings. Meanwhile, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa 24 April announced extension of troop contribution to SAMIDRC for unspecified time.

*Govt continued to accuse former President Kabila of M23 support.* Intelligence services 5 April released deposition video of Éric Nkuba, recently-arrested adviser to pro-M23 politico-military group Congo River Alliance, in which Nkuba implicated Kabila and several figures close to him as M23 supporters; next day, Kabila allies dismissed allegations and said Nkuba coerced into testimony.

*Armed militias continued attacks against civilians in Ituri and North Kivu.* In North Kivu, Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels 2 April killed ten civilians in Mangina commune, Beni territory. In Ituri province, ADF 7 April killed eight civilians in Otomabert village, Irumu territory while ethnic Lendu militia CODECO members 14 April ambushed and robbed convoy of humanitarian workers on road to Fataki town, Djugu territory. In attempt to address violence, Defence Minister Jean-Pierre Bemba 19 April oversaw signing of agreement for immediate cessation of hostilities by various armed groups including CODECO.

➡ **Rwanda International diplomacy continued to push govt to seek solution to crisis in eastern DR Congo; tensions between Kigali and Kinshasa remained high.**

*International actors called for Rwanda to pursue diplomatic resolution.* On sidelines of 30-year Rwandan genocide commemorations in capital Kigali, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa 6 April met with President Kagame amid strained ties over former's contribution of troops to southern African bloc (SADC) mission in DR Congo (DRC); Ramaphosa next day said both leaders emphasised need for political solution over military action. Mauritanian President and AU Head Mohamed El Ghazouani held similar discussions with Kagame, seeking to facilitate dialogue and secure ceasefire in eastern DRC. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron 23 April called for dialogue between Kagame and his Congolese counterpart Félix Tshisekedi and urged respect for DRC "territorial integrity" during call with Rwandan president.

*Tensions remained high over Kigali's role in DRC.* Kagame 8 April said Congolese M23 rebels only existed as they were "denied their rights as citizens" and those accusing Rwanda of supporting group should themselves be accused of "not supporting M23" due to "injustice" done to community. Belgian ambassador to Kinshasa Roxane de Bilderling 19 April argued DRC could lodge formal complaint with International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Rwanda; Rwandan govt rejected suggestions, saying instead "DRC should take Belgium to ICJ". Meanwhile, during Tshisekedi's official visit to France, Congolese president 29 April denounced "predatory and expansionist ambitions" of unnamed countries while Macron next day called on Kigali to end "support for M23 and withdraw its forces from Congolese territory".

➡ **Uganda Tax proposals and implementation of electronic tax system prompted nationwide strike amid opposition support; military operations against Islamic State-affiliated group continued.**

*Suggested tax increases and regulations led to industrial action.* Traders 16-25 April held nationwide strike in protest at potential new taxation measures and increases on items including fuel and building materials, which business associations also criticised. Opposition leaders Robert Kyagulanyi, alias 'Bobi Wine', and Kizza Besigye 15 April came out in support of strike which shuttered many businesses, while taxation may become key campaign issue ahead of 2026 general elections. In response, President Museveni 19 April met traders to hear complaints, and temporarily suspended penalties for non-compliance with electronic tax system.

*Army continued anti-Allied Democratic Force (ADF) campaign.* Military said army 4 and 8 April killed two top commanders from Islamic State-affiliated ADF in eastern DR Congo (DRC) during joint operation with Congolese forces; army 14 April released statement detailing continued pursuit of scattered ADF fighters, urging vigilance against potential attacks by those returning to Uganda. Meanwhile, newly appointed head of army and Museveni's son Lt-Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba 17 April met delegation of Rwandan military chiefs, raising concerns over whether Muhoozi's close ties to Rwanda would impact joint DRC-Uganda operations against ADF amid Congolese-Rwandan tensions.

*In other important developments.* Parliamentary spending controversies continued as Parliamentary Speaker Anita Among 11 April blocked debate on March revelations of extravagant expenditures, while parliament 15 April proposed increase in budget to cover travel costs and salaries; UK 30 April announced sanctions on three politicians including Among over allegations of corruption related to housing aid project in Karamoja region. Constitutional Court 3 April upheld 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, straining govt's relations with international donors and raising concerns over potential reduction in foreign aid.

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## **East and Southern Africa**

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### **➡ Kenya Al-Shabaab-related insecurity persisted, while police deployment to Haiti remained delayed.**

*Al-Shabaab militants remained threat in north east.* Insurgents continued to stage attacks and ambushes, targeting civilians and security forces. Al-Shabaab militants 9 April attacked two vehicles travelling between Makowe and Garsen towns, Lamu county, killing civilian; suspected Al-Shabaab bomb 29 April killed at least five civilians and wounded five others in El Wak town, Mandera county. Meanwhile, amid Al-Shabaab cross-border attacks, Interior Principal Secretary Raymond Omollo 2 April said in interview govt would not yet reopen border points with Somalia due to "challenge of insecurity".

*Multinational security mission to Haiti continued to face delays.* Although govt continued to insist Nairobi would still lead mission, deployment remained on hold. President Ruto 13 April welcomed official establishment of transitional presidential council in Haiti (see Haiti), seen as crucial step to allow deploying of force, and 25 April said "Kenya stands ready and willing" to give security support. Eight Haitian private sector organisations 15 April sent letter to Ruto expressing concerns over delays to security mission.

*In other important developments.* Amid struggling economy, doctors' strike over pay and training that began in March continued as medical union 4 April rejected govt's offer; Ruto administration insisted it did not have funds to pay more. Meanwhile, military chief General Francis Ogolla killed with nine others in helicopter crash 18 April in North Rift region. Unclear circumstances behind crash led to speculation that incident may not have been accident, heightening political tensions.

### **➡ Mozambique Islamic State militants remained active in northern Cabo Delgado province, amid faltering security operations and gradual withdrawal of international troops; preparations for Oct general election continued.**

*Jihadist activity continued to plague Cabo Delgado, including targeting civilians.* Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) attacks remained at low-level following fasting for religious month of Ramadan from March to early April. Incidents of violence, however, continued including group 9 April beheading four people caught making alcoholic drinks in Namaluco village, Quissanga district, and kidnapping several others. Govt early April launched anti-militant operations with some success

in dispersing insurgents from Mucojo and Quissanga districts, although ISMP fighters, who may now total 350-500, continued to have free movement in much of province; meanwhile, locals accused military of killing several civilians in helicopter fire in Mucojo town 6 April, with accusations army unable to differentiate between insurgents and civilians worsening relationship between local communities and security forces. In neighbouring Nampula province, local sources reported insurgents 25-26 April carried out assault on three villages in Eráti district, reportedly killing at least one civilian in first attack in province in several years. Meanwhile, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) continued gradual drawdown of troops from Cabo Delgado with Botswana 5 April and Lesotho 14 April completing withdrawals. South Africa 22 April announced extension of 1,500 strong force deployment until end of year on bilateral basis, although concerns remained over security gaps in province ahead of 15 July deadline for formal withdrawal of all SAMIM forces.

*Preparation for Oct polls continued with jostling for presidential candidacies.* Ruling-FRELIMO party central committee 5-6 April met and although no candidate yet decided, four potential names considered included former PM Diogo. Meanwhile, main opposition RENAMO 15 April announced preconditions for competing for its presidency that included holding senior role in party; move in effect bans Venâncio Mondlane, primary opponent of party chief Ossufo Momade, from running for opposition candidacy. Final decision on both parties' candidates expected after respective general congresses in May. Parliament 30 April began discussing several electoral bills put forward by opposition parties.

► **South Africa Former President Zuma won court bid to contest May polls, while delegitimisation campaign against election commission continued.**

Ahead of 29 May general elections, electoral court 9 April upheld uMkhonto weSizwe party (MKP) appeal in bid to keep its leader and former President Zuma on parliamentary candidate list, overturning Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)'s March objection to his running due to Zuma's 2021 conviction for defying court order. IEC 14 April filed appeal with Constitutional Court and 29 April called for expedited police investigation into whether MKP forged registration signatures; Zuma and MKP continued to claim legal battles showed alleged electoral authority bias against former president, calling for lead commissioner's resignation. Meanwhile, Zuma and allies continued delegitimisation campaign including alleging collusion between IEC and ruling African National Congress (ANC) to rig elections, while also claiming MKP would win two-thirds majority; President and ANC leader Ramaphosa and IEC – which despite these efforts retained widespread public trust – denied collusion accusations. Despite high level of political tensions, Zuma's permission to run appeared to defuse concerns that unrest could be sparked by radical rhetoric employed by MKP members, with no apparent electoral-related violence reported during month; authorities 3 April charged MKP leader for inciting unrest through March inflammatory statements while party 10 April also demoted four youth leaders for using similar rhetoric. MKP 26 April said it had expelled five "rogue" members including co-founder Jabulani Khumalo as part of attempts to "cleanse itself".

➡ **Zimbabwe Amid hunger crisis, govt used aid to intimidate opposition supporters; authorities launched new currency in bid to stabilise economy.**

*Govt intimidated opposition through partisan distribution of food aid.* Amid shortfall in grain caused by inflation and drought, President Mnangagwa 3 April declared national state of disaster to address widespread hunger, seeking \$2bn from international actors. Concerns, however, increased over how govt will distribute aid after local NGO Zimbabwe Peace Project 17 April released monthly report recording increase in human rights violations, intimidation and harassment, including twelve alleged incidents where citizens affiliated with political opposition were denied food parcels. Notably, ruling party ZANU-PF MP distributed rations in Gobhi village, Matabeleland North province, while warning villagers to join party or face exclusion from aid; also, village head in ward fifteen, Masvingo province allegedly convened supporters of opposition leader Nelson Chamisa's Blue Movement and threatened to remove them from beneficiary list. Meanwhile, ZANU-PF consolidated super majority in parliament with 27 April victory in two by-elections amid boycott by opposition parties.

*Govt launched new currency.* Central Bank 5 April announced new gold-backed currency Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG); ZANU-PF officials claimed ZiG will stabilise economy amid high inflation and volatile currency depreciation, although questions remained over whether authorities have sufficient gold, other minerals and foreign currency reserves to back ZiG. Govt and businesses reportedly refused to accept previous currency, leaving some citizens without cash due to insufficient circulation of ZiG.

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## **Horn of Africa**

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➡ **Eritrea African Union (AU) confirmed Eritrea is controlling territory in Ethiopia's Tigray region; Asmara strengthened ties with Moscow and Beijing.**

*AU confirmed Eritrean presence in Ethiopia's Tigray region.* AU monitoring team 4 April confirmed Eritrean control over part of Zalambessa town in Ethiopia's East Tigray Zone, though Eritrea continued to reject claims it is occupying Ethiopian territory. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's dismantling of Amhara-established administrations in Ethiopia's north – part of its plan to tackle Tigray-Amhara territorial dispute – could strain relations with Eritrea given alleged ties between Amhara nationalist militias known as Fano (who have been fighting insurgency in Ethiopia) and Asmara (see Ethiopia).

*Eritrea bolstered ties with Russia and China.* Russian Pacific fleet late March-early April visited Massawa port, marking growing defence partnership between two countries; Russian delegation led by deputy commander-in-chief of Russian navy, Vice Admiral Vladimir Kasatonov, 1 April met Eritrean army officials, 5 April met President Isaias Afwerki to discuss enhancing bilateral ties. Isaias 7 April met China's Special Envoy to Horn, Xue Bing, and discussed expansion of economic cooperation.



**↓ Ethiopia Hostilities escalated between Tigray and Amhara forces over disputed territories, displacing thousands; insurgencies in Amhara and Oromia regions continued.**

*Tigray-Amhara clashes over disputed territories displaced thousands.* As govt began implementing plan to address Tigray-Amhara territorial dispute (which paves way for return of displaced Tigrayans), hostilities escalated in disputed areas. Tigray forces and Amhara militants 13-15 April clashed in Alamata town and Raya Alamata, Zata and Olfa woredas of Southern Tigray Zone, displacing almost 50,000. Tigray interim President Getachew Reda 16 April blamed “anti-Pretoria deal elements”, while Amhara authorities next day accused Tigray region’s ruling party Tigray People’s Liberation Front of launching “full-scale war” against Amhara. Calm returned to area, though violence could resurge should federal govt proceed with plans to resettle people displaced from Southern or Western Tigray regions.

*Security forces and Fano militants clashed in capital Addis Ababa.* Security forces and Fano militants 12 April clashed in Addis Ababa, marking first such incident in capital, killing civilian and two militants; authorities accused Fano of planning “terrorist attack”. Meanwhile, violence continued in Amhara as authorities struggled to suppress Fano, who are scattered across region and enjoy considerable local support. Notably, grenade attack on school in Finote Selam town, West Gojjam Zone, 4 April injured at least 27; grenade 6 April targeted market in Finote Selam; three hand grenade attacks 22 April occurred in regional capital Bahir Dar.

*Insurgency in Oromia continued.* Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) militants 4 April attacked Amaye Woreda, West Shewa Zone, killing twelve Amhara civilians. Govt forces same day killed twenty civilians in Tole Woreda, South West Shewa Zone, accusing them of links to OLA. Govt attempted to weaken OLA by: calling on fighters to surrender and reintegrate; attempting to exploit alleged divisions in OLA leadership; and training local militias.

*In other important developments.* Donor conference 16 April raised \$630mn for emergency relief in Ethiopia. Somalia 4 April announced expulsion of Ethiopian ambassador, ordered closure of two Ethiopian consulates in Somaliland and Puntland and recalled its ambassador to Ethiopia over Addis’ plans to build naval base in Somaliland (see Somalia).

**➔ Somalia Govt continued to face opposition over contentious constitutional review while tensions remained high with both Ethiopia and Puntland state; Al-Shabaab undertook several attacks.**

*Constitutional review process remained controversial.* Amendments passed in parliament last month that call for direct vote for presidency and grant additional powers to president’s office continued to face political opposition. Former President Sheikh Sharif 12 April met with President Mohamud in Kenyan capital Nairobi over issue, but failed to reach agreement. Sheikh Sharif and other opposition members 16 April met in Nairobi in attempt to form coalition against govt. Process likely to keep political tensions high in coming months.

*Frictions with Ethiopia intersected with domestic tensions.* After 3 April meeting between Ethiopian and Puntland state officials in Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa – and in wake of Jan Ethiopia-Somaliland port deal and March Puntland

announcement that it has withdrawn from federation – Somalia’s Foreign Ministry 4 April ordered Ethiopian Ambassador to leave federal capital Mogadishu and demanded Ethiopian consulates in Puntland capital Garowe and Somaliland capital Hargeisa close within week; Ethiopia, however, reacted mutely and consulates remained operational. Meanwhile, Mohamud discussed Ethiopia-Somaliland deal during 2-8 April trip to Saudi Arabia and 11-13 April visit to Kenya, with latter reportedly proposing regional maritime treaty to defuse dispute; govt 19 April, however, ruled out dialogue with Ethiopia until latter “revokes” Somaliland agreement.

*Amid stalled govt operations, Al-Shabaab carried out several attacks.* Militants 6 April used vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in attack on Baclad town (Middle Shabelle region) and 11 April attacked Bar Sanguni military base (Lower Juba region) for second time in space of four weeks, with reports of up to 30 soldiers and 27 militants killed. Meanwhile, although govt 13 April asserted it would resume anti-Al-Shabaab campaign, no significant action taken or progress made.

*In other important developments.* Pirates 14 April released MV Abdullah, cargo ship seized in March, and 23-member crew after reportedly receiving \$5mn ransom; first major pay-out to Somali pirates in years raised concerns over resurgence in attacks on vessels in Indian Ocean.

➡ **Somaliland Govt announced date of Nov elections as lull in fighting in Sool region continued.**

*Authorities confirmed date of Nov polls.* Election commission 20 April announced party and presidential elections to take place 13 Nov and unveiled voter list two days later. Slow technical preparations and funding concerns, however, fuelled speculation that polls could still be delayed, despite March passing into law of electoral bill.

*Lull in fighting continued along Sool region frontline.* Although govt troops and Dhulbahante clan militias conducted movements along frontline in Sool region, calm continued to hold.

*In another important development.* Govt 4 April rejected Somalia’s order to close Ethiopian consulate in capital Hargeisa amid persistent tensions with Mogadishu over Jan-announced Ethiopia-Somaliland Memorandum of Understanding over sea access and diplomatic recognition.

➡ **South Sudan South Africa’s president brokered talks between Kiir and Machar ahead of December poll, Murle youth from Jonglei State launched well-coordinated deadly attack, and economy worsened.**

*South African president held high-level political talks in capital Juba.* South African President Ramaphosa 16-18 April visited capital Juba to mediate talks between President Kiir and VP Machar. Ramaphosa publicly emphasised need for govt to prepare for Dec elections, though mediation likely sought to broker pre-election deal that could see Machar rejoining Kiir’s Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) as deputy; rank and file of Kiir and Machar’s parties showed discontent at secrecy of diplomacy amid deep polarisation.

*International community reiterated concerns over election preparedness.* Political Parties Council and National Election Commission – tasked with organising poll – 4 April received first batch of allocated funding, representing only fraction of requested money, leaving electoral process vastly underfunded. UN Sec-Gen Guterres 8 April transmitted letter to UN Security Council outlining over a dozen outstanding preconditions essential for holding fair election and emphasising urgent need for technical, legal and operational assistance. U.S. 16 April said South Sudan’s politicians so far have “failed to meet the standards necessary for genuine and peaceful elections”. UN Security Council 29 April renewed UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) mandate for one year.

*Jonglei state saw worrying uptick in intercommunal violence.* In one of the most serious escalations since 2020 war in Jonglei, armed Murle youth from Jonglei State’s Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) 26 April launched well-coordinated and well-armed attack on Toposa cattle keepers in Kapoeta East County (Eastern Equatoria state), killing unknown number and abducting scores of women and children; UNMISS 30 April deployed additional peacekeepers to Jonglei and Kapoeta East county to deter more violence. Meanwhile, former leader of Murle rebel group David Yau Yau 1 April defected from SPLM to join Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-in Opposition, raising fears of electoral violence in GPAA, 29 April announced he had returned to SPLM.

*Pipeline rupture hurt economy.* Main pipeline exporting South Sudan’s oil remained in disrepair, plunging country further into economic and fiscal crisis; Juba 25 April claimed oil exports through pipeline would resume within two months.

➡ ⚡ **Sudan Fears of all-out intercommunal conflict in North Darfur escalated as paramilitary forces (RSF) and Darfuri armed groups prepared for war and Sudanese army (SAF) intensified bombings of Arab areas.**

*RSF and Darfuri armed groups prepared for war, raising fears of ethnic conflict.* Tensions in North Darfur escalated after three members of a coalition of non-Arab armed groups, Joint Force of Armed Struggle Movements, 12 April aligned with SAF against RSF. RSF-aligned Arab militias, meanwhile, torched villages around North Darfur’s state capital El Fasher in response to growing role of non-Arab populations in conflict, notably Sudanese Zaghawa of North Darfur, heightening fears of all-out ethnic warfare. U.S. 24 April warned of imminent RSF offensive on El Fasher, which hosts hundreds of thousands of displaced people; UN 26 April said RSF were reportedly encircling city and that attack “would have devastating consequences” for civilians. Meanwhile, SAF carried out airstrikes on RSF positions, reportedly killing scores.

*SAF-RSF fighting persisted in Bahri, Gezira and South Kordofan.* Fighting continued in Omdurman and Bahri cities, with SAF making modest gains. SAF offensive to retake Wad Madani state capital in Gezira made no significant progress. In South Kordofan state, RSF-affiliated militias 5-6 April reportedly attacked villages in Qurudud Nyama region, killing scores.

*International conference pushed for aid and greater mediation coordination.* In international humanitarian summit for Sudan and neighbouring countries held in French capital Paris, various states 15 April pledged \$2.1bn aid and reaffirmed

commitment to peace initiatives; regional and international actors also convened ministerial meeting, calling for unhindered humanitarian access, cessation of hostilities and support for consolidated mediation and peace process. Saudi and U.S. committed to restart Jeddah process within three weeks. U.S. 29 April called for all countries to halt weapons' exports to Sudan, warning El Fasher is "on the precipice of a large-scale massacre".

*Civilian actors held meetings to discuss future political process.* On Paris conference sidelines, EU brought together Sudanese civilian political actors to discuss ending conflict and prospects for political future. Promediation organisation, supported by Swiss govt, 20 April hosted meeting of Sudanese political actors to discuss ceasefire negotiations and political process; talks excluded representatives from former President Bashir's National Congress Party.

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## **Sahel**

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➔ **Burkina Faso Govt renewed mobilisation orders as new civil society group launched criticism of military authorities; civilians continued to suffer amid widespread violence.**

*Govt extended mobilisation decree amid criticism from new civil society group.* Concerns continued over authorities forcing opponents into security forces including civilian auxiliaries (VDPs) after govt 31 March announced year-long extension to "general mobilisation" protocols to combat terrorism. Although most civil groups remained hesitant or unable to criticise govt amid repression, new civil society movement Front pour la Défense de la République (FDR) 4 April called for dissolution of military junta, elections and civilian transition, and criticised military authorities' failure to free territory from jihadists as promised; FDR reported to be comprised of former politicians, civil society leaders and security officers, many of whom have taken refuge in Côte d'Ivoire.

*Clashes with jihadists continued, with high toll on civilians.* Al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) militants clashed with govt forces and VDPs throughout month with major fatalities recorded across East, Boucle de Mouhoun, South-West, Sahel, Centre-East, North and Centre-North regions. JNIM militants 17 April attacked military near Barsalogo town, Sanmatenga Province (Centre-North), killing at least nineteen and wounding at least ten soldiers. Civilians continued to suffer; notably, JNIM militants 23 April launched attack on Séguénéma town (North) that killed 30 civilians; govt forces next day allegedly killed two civilians from same town. Islamic State Sahel Province militants also accused of launching attacks on civilians including 2 April assault on Woulmassoutou and Sakatamba villages in Seno province (Sahel), killing around twenty.

*Govt expelled French diplomats, suspended broadcast of critical foreign channels.* Foreign Affairs Minister 16 April expelled three French diplomats, including two political officers, for alleged "subversive activities". After rights group Human Rights Watch 25 April released report alleging military "summarily executed" at least 223 civilians in two villages in Yatenga province (North) in Feb, govt in following days suspended various international media outlets including BBC and Voice of America

for their coverage of report; U.S. and UK 29 April issued joint statement calling for investigation into allegations and reversal of media suspensions.

↓ **Mali Political tensions surged as govt took series of authoritarian decisions, closing political space and putting inter-Malian dialogue at risk; civilians continued to be targeted by conflict actors.**

*Govt suspended civil society activities and elections.* Series of decisions highlighted govt's increasing authoritarian turn and caused tensions to soar. Authorities 10 April suspended all political activities of political parties and politically-oriented activities of associations until further notice; PM Maïga same day announced elections would be suspended until country regained political stability. Meanwhile, authorities following day announced suspension of all media coverage related to political parties. In response, numerous parties and civil society groups 22 April submitted appeal to Supreme Court, and others announced intention to boycott inter-Malian dialogue (see below) until restrictions removed.

*Phase one of Inter-Malian dialogue commenced.* Communal level discussions took place 13-15 April. However, concerns remained over inclusiveness and legitimacy of process with neither separatist armed groups of Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP) nor jihadist groups taking part, and other key political actors boycotting dialogue.

*Amid jihadist attacks and counterinsurgency operations, violence left high toll on civilians.* Clashes between armed forces, Russian paramilitary Africa Corps (formerly known as Wagner Group) and militants continued. Notably, in centre, al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 7 April attacked army and Russian paramilitaries near Sarakala village, Segou region, resulting in at least six militant fatalities. Govt forces 22-23 April conducted operation south of Kalifaré, Timbuktu region, killing 29 JNIM militants. In Menaka region, army 29 April announced killing of senior Islamic State Sahel province commander Abu Huzeifa near Indelimane village. Meanwhile, JNIM and CSP 5 April clashed near Nampala village, Mopti region, resulting in at least 23 CSP and nineteen JNIM fighters killed. Army and Africa Corps reportedly involved in several attacks against civilians with forces alleged to have killed up to 26 civilians in Mopti and Segou regions in incidents 3, 7 and 12 April. Suspected JNIM militants 16 April kidnapped 110 civilians aboard public bus between Bandiagara and Bankass towns, Mopti region; dozens of hostages reportedly released 24 April after local authorities allegedly signed informal agreements with jihadist group.

➡ **Niger As U.S. military prepared to withdraw, govt strengthened military relations with Russia and held initial security discussions with China.**

*Govt formed closer ties with Russia as U.S. troops began withdrawal preparations.* Following severing of military accords with Washington in March, civil society groups 13 April organised protest in capital Niamey in support of govt and demanding immediate departure of U.S. military personnel, attended by thousands; hundreds 21 April also demonstrated in Agadez town – where U.S. base located – ahead of 25 April arrival of Washington delegation to arrange withdrawal. Meanwhile, highlighting shifting military alliances, some 100 Russian military instructors and material 10 April arrived in Niamey with mission of training Nigerien

forces in using new equipment including anti-aircraft systems; troops possibly affiliated with Russian paramilitary Africa Corps, formerly known as Wagner Group, who 12 April announced presence in Niger via social media. Additionally, officials 23 April discussed strengthening defence cooperation with Chinese ambassador.

*Junta consolidated power as case against former President Bazoum set to begin.* Transitional President Gen. Tiani 4 April dissolved regional, municipal and local councils, replacing officials with military authorities-chosen special delegates, majority of whom are military personnel. Next day, court announced it would rule in May on case of Bazoum's political immunity on charges of conspiracy against state, "high treason" and support of terrorism.

*Jihadist-related violence persisted in Tillabery and Diffa regions.* In Tillabery (south west), suspected Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) explosive device 8 April killed six soldiers near Tin Gara village; armed forces same day responded with airstrikes near village, killing at least ten alleged IS Sahel militants. Meanwhile in Diffa (south east), Boko Haram 23 April wounded four soldiers near Lada village.

*In another important development.* Amid economic challenges, govt deepened energy ties with key partners, notably 12 April announced \$400mn loan from China National Petroleum Corporation as advance on future oil sales and 16 April finalised gas deal with Mali, in part motivated by latter's energy crisis.

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## **West Africa**

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### **➡ Benin Jihadist violence continued to plague north.**

In northern Alibori and Atakora departments, armed groups allegedly linked to Al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 3-6 April killed two poachers and one Fulani pastoralist in National Park W. In Alibori, JNIM 3 April also reportedly abducted two men in Guenelaga and Garbey Koara towns and 13 April killed civilian in Gogounou commune. Meanwhile in Alibori's Malanville commune, suspected JNIM gunmen 16 April killed two civilians and soldier at border crossing with Niger.

### **➡ Côte d'Ivoire Political positioning continued ahead of 2025 presidential election; govt discussed border incidents with Burkina Faso.**

*Preparations for 2025 vote continued.* Amid internal jostling within ruling-Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace's (RHDP), Adama Bictogo, president of National Assembly and RHDP heavyweight, 16 April said President Ouattara was "natural candidate" for party. Meanwhile, former PM Guillaume Soro – in exile since 2019 and sentenced to life imprisonment in absentia in 2021 for endangering the state – 4 April confirmed late March calls with Ouattara after president pardoned several associates of Soro, welcoming "beginning of political relaxation"; however Soro, who is seeking to end exile, 23 April criticised govt's "prerequisites" to allow him to return.

*Defence delegation met Burkinabé authorities.* Defence Minister Téné Birahima Ouattara 19 April travelled to Burkina Faso border town Niangoloko to discuss

tensions with his counterpart Kassoum Coulibaly; meeting came after series of incidents along border including Ivorian soldiers late March arresting two Burkinabé security force members who had crossed border; troops subsequently exchanged fire, although no casualties reported.

➔ **Guinea Opposition demanded junta stick to timeline of return to civilian rule before end of 2024; social discontent continued over services and repression.**

*Opposition called on authorities to stick to transition timeline.* Concerns grew over potential delays to return to civilian rule after President Doumbouya late March dismissed members of communal councils and 9 April appointed delegates to fill these posts for six months, also after govt failed to publish draft of new constitution by promised March date. In response, coalition of opposition political parties and civil society groups Les Forces Vives de Guinée (FVG) 2 April called for “restoration of public liberties and return to constitutional order before 31 Dec 2024”, threatening to no longer recognise junta as legitimate govt after this date. Meanwhile, several political parties and civil society groups 22 April joined opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) to form Union Sacrée coalition, which also called for elections before 2025 in its first declaration.

*Popular unrest continued amid poor services and repression.* Lack of services, particularly electricity and water, led to demonstrations including 15 and 25 April in Lero town, Kankan region, latter resulting in one death, seven injured and 56 arrests; director of company responsible for providing electricity 10 April said recent power cuts intentional and necessary to improve electricity network. Meanwhile, govt continued to target media; after authorities 17 April suspended media site inquisiteur.net on defamation charges, press associations requested audience with Doumbouya.

➔ **Nigeria Jihadist-related insecurity persisted in North East, while bandits continued killings and mass abductions; worsening inflation heightened food crisis fears.**

*Violence between jihadists and military remained high in North East.* Govt conducted operations involving artillery and aerial bombardment against Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram militants around Lake Chad and Sambisa Forest in Borno state. Notably, army said airstrikes 13 April killed over 30 ISWAP members and commanders and destroyed vehicles in Kolleram village on lake. However, in Borno state, explosive devices apparently planted by ISWAP fighters 17 April struck bus in Kukawa area, killing sixteen civilians and wounding twenty others and 27 April struck vehicle in Gamboru area, killing at least nine civilian vigilantes.

*Criminal groups continued mass abductions in North West and North Central.* Despite govt security operations, particularly in Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara states, bandit-related violence remained prolific. Notably, in Katsina, gunmen on motorcycles 16 April abducted at least twenty persons in Na-Alma village, Malmufashi area while armed group 18 April kidnapped at least 28 from at Zamfarawar Madogara village, Batsari area. Armed gangs 19 April killed six soldiers in Shiroro area, Niger state and 27 April killed at least fourteen civilian vigilantes in Isa area, Sokoto state. Herder-farmer violence persisted in North Central zone;

series of attacks on farming communities 4-28 April in Benue, Kogi and Plateau states killed over 90 people; residents blamed herder militias.

*Separatist movements continued in South East and South West.* Although security in South East improved, military blamed Biafra separatists for 18 April attack on troops in Ihiala area, Anambra state that killed soldier. In Oyo state in South West, armed members of Yoruba Nation – organisation calling for breakaway of Yoruba people from Nigeria – 13 April stormed govt secretariat and parliament in capital Ibadan and hoisted flag of self-proclaimed Democratic Republic of Yoruba, before security forces arrested them.

*Concerns rose over food crisis amid deepening economic problems.* As inflation rose to 28-year high on 15 April with food inflation at 40%, humanitarian agencies warned of worsening food insecurity; UN 5 April reported analysis tool showed 31.8mn people face acute food crisis by June, 28% increase on same period last year.

► **Togo Political tensions ran high amid vote for new constitution and holding of delayed polls; jihadist violence continued in north.**

*Elections took place amid controversy over transition to parliamentary system.* Amid rising political tensions, parliament 19 April gave final approval to new constitution that transitions presidential system to parliamentary one and creates new “President of Council of Ministers” role appointed by legislature; opposition remained concerned that President Gnassingbé, in place since 2005, will use new structure to extend stay in office and condemned moves as “power grab”. Legislative and regional elections – which govt 9 April delayed from 20 April date – 29 April took place peacefully; opposition had called for 11-13 April protests in response to reforms, initial vote delay and arrests of activists, but govt 9 April denied permits for demonstrations which failed to attract significant turnout. West African regional bloc ECOWAS 15 April sent delegation to capital Lome to facilitate govt-opposition dialogue.

*Jihadist-related insecurity continued in north.* In Savanes region, Al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) 2 April damaged military vehicle in Lalabiga village, while army helicopter 4 April reportedly crashed during counter-insurgency operations in region, injuring several soldiers.