



Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Cameroon** With peace talks stalled, Anglophone separatist militants hardened stance against civilians who violate their “ghost town” orders and UN humanitarian agencies.

Anglophone conflict continued to take heavy toll on civilians. Separatist groups 10-12 Feb violently enforced lockdowns in various towns of Anglophone North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions to prevent smooth running of National Youth Day activities on 11 Feb. Notably, bomb attack in Nkambe city, Donga Mantung division (NW), 11 Feb killed one school child and injured at least 40 people. Govt forces 15-17 Feb attacked separatists in and around Mamfe city, Manyu division (SW), killing four. Separatist factions from late Jan also hardened stance toward internationally-backed humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC) unveiled plans to destroy World Bank-funded projects, while Interim Govt-Maryland group announced severing cooperation with several UN bodies, accusing them of thriving on status quo while making no effort to find political solution to conflict. Meanwhile, alliance between separatist groups in Ambazonia and Nigeria continued to raise tension: clashes between Nigerian Biafra separatists and Cameroonian soldiers reported 29 Jan and 4 Feb in Bakassi Peninsula.

Boko Haram conducted deadly attacks in Far North region. Suspected Boko Haram militants 5 Feb kidnapped fourteen herders of Fulani and Choa Arab ethnic groups in Limani town, Mayo-Sava division. Boko Haram militants 12-18 Feb attacked several neighbourhoods and villages in Kolofata, Limani (both Mayo-Sava) and Blangoua (Logone-et-Chari division) communes, stealing cattle, food, vehicles and kidnapping civilians. Govt forces 18 Feb repelled Boko Haram attacks on military bases in Limani and Amchide towns (both Mayo-Sava) on Nigerian border, with unknown number of casualties. Boko Haram roadside bomb explosion 27 Feb killed five elite forces soldiers in Gossi locality (Mayo-Tsanaga division).

AU endorsed Cameroonian candidate for UN General Assembly presidency. African Union 14 Feb endorsed former PM Philemon Yang as candidate for one-year presidency of 79th UN General Assembly; Yang’s UN posting could be used by Yaoundé to show govt rewards those who remain loyal and to closely monitor diplomatic moves ahead of 2025 elections.

➔ **Central African Republic** Russia doubled down on military support to Bangui amid struggle for influence with U.S.; rebel groups continued to stage attacks in hinterland.

Struggle for influence between U.S. and Russia continued. Recent announcement of U.S. private security company Bancroft's operations in CAR gave new impetus to Russia's military support to President Touadéra amid struggle for influence. Notably, Russian govt late Jan delivered seven fighter jets to CAR's national security forces, and presidential adviser Pascal Bida Koyagbé around 1 Feb confirmed opening of Russian military base in Berengo (Lobaye prefecture), where Russian paramilitary Wagner Group already operates training camp for CAR army; base could host up to 10,000 troops, increasing Russia's capacity for sub-regional projection. Meanwhile, Russian propaganda campaign against U.S. intensified, supported by pro-Wagner Committee for Initiative, Control and Investigation of U.S.'s Actions in CAR. Notably, anti-U.S. caravan 26 Feb circulated in capital Bangui on tour that appears to have received significant financial support.

Despite army's efforts to control hinterland, security situation remained precarious. In Ouham-Pendé prefecture (north west), govt forces 8 Feb attacked 3R fighters who were reportedly mediating in dispute between farmer and herder north west of Bocaranga city, killing two rebels and seizing vehicles and weapons. In retaliation, 3R fighters next day burnt dozen houses in same area and forced residents to flee, with no reported casualties. In Nana-Mambéré prefecture (also north west), 3R fighters 11 Feb kidnapped three miners and seized gold during raid on mining site near Baboua town. Fighters from Unity for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) and Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé militia around 22 Feb engaged in several days of fighting near Zémio town, Haut-Mbomou prefecture (east), leading to several deaths and population displacement whose extent is not yet assessed. Meanwhile, President Touadéra 7 Feb inaugurated new Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) of national army, which was trained in Bangui by Rwandan bilateral troops; BIR's commander, Captain Lister Lazaret, like majority of battalion's soldiers, belongs to Touadéra's Mbaka-Mandja ethnic group. BIR is reminiscent of notorious *Escadron blindé autonome* created by President André Kolingba in 1980s, which later became brigade of ethnic repression.

↓ Chad Gunfire erupted in capital N'Djamena, with security forces killing staunch opponent and cousin of transitional President Déby, Yaya Dillo, as major cracks emerged within ruling elite ahead of presidential election scheduled for May.

Security forces killed staunch opponent, exposing divisions within ruling elite. Transitional President Mahamad Déby's uncle, Gen. Saleh Déby, 10 Feb left ruling party to join Socialist Party without Borders (PSF), led by Mahamat Déby's cousin Yaya Dillo. Defection, together with expressions of dissent by other members of Zaghawa clan (which is Mahamat Déby's father, former President Idriss Déby's ethnic group), raised tensions within ruling elite. Secret intelligence 27 Feb reportedly arrested and injured senior PSF official Ahmed Torabi, accusing him of murder attempt against Supreme Court president. Victim's relatives overnight 27-28 Feb allegedly tried to storm National State Security Agency in N'Djamena; after security forces intervened, govt said situation was "under control" and confirmed several fatalities. Security forces 28 Feb also surrounded PSF headquarters in N'Djamena, leading to heavy gunfire; authorities later said Yaya Dillo and twelve others had died in shootout, while Saleh Déby had been arrested. Situation next day

remained tense in N'Djamena with security forces deployed in key locations and internet services cut off.

Presidential vote scheduled for May, opposition questioned legitimacy of electoral bodies. Election agency 27 Feb announced first round of presidential election will take place 6 May, followed by second round on 22 June; polls aim to end three-year transitional period and return country to constitutional rule; no date announced for legislative elections. Alliance of fourteen political parties, Consultative Group of Political Actors, 8 Feb questioned Constitutional Council and National Electoral Authority's legitimacy after Gen. Déby late Jan appointed ruling party spokesman Jean-Bernard Padaré as Constitutional Council president and named several people affiliated to ruling party as members of these two bodies.

Social tensions ran high amid rising cost of living. Public sector workers 6 Feb threatened to go on strike over govt's lack of commitment to their demands, including lifting of freeze on raises and advancements. Opposition and civil society coalition "Nous le peuple" 26 Feb launched ghost town operation in N'Djamena and other cities to protest rising cost of living.

Great Lakes

➔ **Burundi War of words with Rwanda continued as rebels reportedly supported by Kigali launched new attack; deployment of troops and militiamen to DR Congo (DRC) caused strains.**

Tensions between Burundi and Rwanda continued to worsen amid rebel violence. Addressing diplomatic corps, President Ndayishimiye 3 Feb criticised what he termed Kigali's "hypocrisy" in regional peace initiatives, citing unsuccessful negotiations for extradition from Rwanda of RED-Tabara rebel group leader. Meanwhile, govt 26 Feb reported RED-Tabara killed at least nine people including soldiers and civilians in Buringa village, Bubanza province previous day, and accused Rwanda of backing rebels; RED-Tabara claimed responsibility for attack, saying they had destroyed ruling party headquarters, and denied killing civilians.

Deployment of Burundian troops to DRC faced challenges. Reports emerged of soldiers and members of ruling party youth wing Imbonerakure refusing deployment to DRC due to concerns over payment and benefits. SOS Media Burundi 23 Feb reported 242 Burundian soldiers detained in Bururi, Rumonge, Ruyigi and Ngozi provinces for allegedly refusing to combat M23 rebels alongside Congolese army in eastern DRC.

Crackdown on opposition persisted, judiciary handed heavy sentence to journalist. Representatives of National Intelligence Service 8 Feb reportedly arrested National Congress for Freedom (CNL) opposition party member, Desire Bizimana, in Bubanza province, taking him to undisclosed location in capital Bujumbura. In blow to press freedom, Supreme Court 13 Feb upheld ten-year prison sentence against journalist Floriane Irangabiye for allegedly collaborating with armed groups.

↓ **DR Congo Advance of M23 rebels on strategic town of Sake in North Kivu caused mass displacement amid major uptick in fighting involving sophisticated weapons.**

Rebels surrounded strategic town of Sake, considered last barrier before Goma. In North Kivu's Masisi territory, M23 early Feb engaged in fierce fighting with Congolese army and allied Wazalendo militiamen, supported by foreign security contractors and Southern African bloc (SADC) troops, around Sake town (25km north west of Goma), which came under attack 7 Feb. Fighting also reported in villages south of Sake, notably Shasha, Kirotshu and Bweremana, with reports of M23 and allied forces deploying armoured vehicles equipped with surface-to-air missiles. After brief lull, violence 25 Feb resumed on outskirts of Sake. Army and allies late Feb retained control of Sake, while rebels occupied surrounding hills and controlled access, except for road to Goma. NGO Médecins sans Frontières late Feb said fighting and shelling had triggered displacement of 180,000 civilians toward Goma and Minova town in South Kivu province since 7 Feb. Tensions with Kigali remained high, with Congolese military saying Rwandan drone attack 17 Feb targeted Goma International Airport.

Kinshasa continued to track down M23 allies. Amid concerns of broader opposition alignment with M23, Kinshasa intensified efforts to arrest individuals suspected of ties to former head of electoral commission Corneille Nangaa, who in Dec 2023 created pro-M23 politico-military group Congo River Alliance. Notably, military intelligence 13 Feb arrested three National Intelligence Agency officials and military governor's spokesman in North Kivu for alleged complicity with M23.

Civilians continued to face other armed groups' attacks notably in Ituri province. Suspected Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militants around 5 Feb allegedly killed eighteen people in Mambasa territory, and 17-18 Feb killed at least thirteen people in Badibongo Siya groupement, Irumu territory. CODECO militia, which claims to defend interests of Lendu ethnic group and often targets people from rival Hema tribe, 14 Feb killed twelve people and 17 Feb killed another fifteen in Djugu territory.

In another important development. PM Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde 20 Feb resigned, prioritising his new mandate as MP in Kasenga constituency in compliance with legal requirement against dual-office holding.

➔ Rwanda International actors hardened their stance against Rwanda's actions in eastern DR Congo as M23 conflict escalated.

Criticism grew of Kigali's backing of rebel group in DR Congo (DRC). Amid M23 rebel group's advance on North Kivu regional capital in DRC (see DR Congo), U.S. state dept 17 Feb condemned M23 violence and urged Rwanda to withdraw soldiers and remove surface-to-air missile systems from eastern DRC; Rwanda's foreign ministry next day rejected U.S. call, citing defensive measures against DRC's perceived "dramatic military build-up", and said U.S. statement "distorts" reality. France 20 Feb also expressed grave concern over security situation in North Kivu, urged Rwanda to cease support for M23 and withdraw from Congolese territory. In response, Rwanda's govt next day pointed to France's responsibility for longstanding conflict in eastern DRC.

Govt opposed UN support for southern African mission in DRC. Kigali 13 Feb objected to UN plan to provide logistical and operational support to southern African bloc (SADC) mission in eastern DRC, whose deployment started in Dec 2023,

alleging it is aligned with anti-Rwanda groups, and warned of pre-emptive and defensive measures against perceived threats from DRC and Burundi.

➔ **Uganda President Museveni's son attempted to consolidate support and broaden appeal ahead of 2026 presidential election.**

Succession battle continued. MK Movement, created in 2022 to support political ambitions of President Museveni's son, Lt-Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, 7 Feb rebranded to Patriotic League of Uganda (PLU) in lead-up to Muhoozi's expected candidacy for 2026 presidential election. While newly appointed PLU chairman, Michael Mawanda, described it as civic non-partisan entity, ruling party National Resistance Movement (NRM) Secretary General, Richard Todwong, said PLU was part of teams mobilising for ruling party. But opposition to Museveni's son among elite remained present; Internal Affairs Minister Maj. Gen. Kahinda Otafiire 20 Feb reiterated he did not support Muhoozi becoming president.

Army continued anti-ADF operations. Army continued counter-insurgency operations around Rwenzori mountains. Notably, security forces 19 Feb arrested suspected Islamic-State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel Abdul Razak Bahati in Kasese district near Congolese border.

Uganda faced allegations of collusion with M23. Military 15 Feb said only Ugandan troops left in DR Congo are those deployed under Operation Shujaa to hunt down ADF; comments came after allegations by Congolese civil society in Rutshuru territory and Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) armed group that Ugandan forces are deployed in Rutshuru alongside Rwandan troops to support M23 armed group.

East and Southern Africa

➔ **Kenya Govt discussed preparations for police deployment to Haiti while tensions between President Ruto and courts continued.**

Govt continued preparations for police deployment to Haiti. After court late Jan blocked deployment of 1,000 Kenyan police to lead UN-backed multinational mission in Haiti, U.S. 2 Feb reiterated "commitment to collaborating with Kenya" as it leads mission. Kenyan, Haitian and U.S. officials 12-14 Feb met in U.S. to discuss preparations, and Haiti 14 Feb said it was working on reciprocal agreement with Kenya, main point of Kenyan court's opposition. Haiti's acting PM Ariel Henry 29 Feb visited Kenya and met with Ruto to "finalise modalities" for agreements between two countries on deployment.

Tensions between judiciary and executive persisted. Following Court of Appeals late Jan decision to suspend govt tax that President Ruto said he would appeal, concerns grew that current administration would threaten judiciary's independence and ignore court ruling related to Kenyan police deployment to Haiti.

Authorities continued to combat Al-Shabaab, banditry-related violence. Interior Cabinet Secretary Kithure Kindiki 15 Feb said govt would begin upgrading security equipment and give priority to forces in unstable areas, including locations

vulnerable to Al-Shabaab attacks near Somalia border and North Rift regions subject to banditry.

↓ **Mozambique** Jihadists advanced south in Cabo Delgado province and threatened to cross into Nampula province as attacks caused mass displacement; preparations began for Oct general elections.

Islamic State-affiliated militants attacked southern districts of Cabo Delgado. Following uptick in Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) violence in Jan, group continued to target security forces and civilians with at least sixteen attacks between late Jan and 16 Feb, including 9 Feb raid on security forces near Mucojo village, Macomia district that killed at least twenty soldiers. Militants advanced into south-eastern districts of Cabo Delgado province close to provincial capital Pemba, including Ancuabe, Chiure, Mecufi, and Metuge. Notably, ISMP 19 Feb killed four in Chiure amid reports suggesting group burnt public buildings including churches and forced some residents to convert to Islam. New reports also emerged of military indiscriminately targeting civilians including arbitrary arrests and beatings on suspicion of supporting or being militants. UN 28 Feb reported violence 8-27 Feb displaced over 68,000 people predominantly from Chiure districts. ISMP advance took advantage of disarray of military and withdrawal of Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), due to be completed by July; militants may also be avoiding Rwandan troops who have been effective in fighting group in northern districts.

Militants reached border of Nampula province. Some insurgents reached southern border of Cabo Delgado province and may attempt to cross Lurio River to enter Nampula as part of recruitment drive; ISMP, whose size has reduced from around 3,000 at peak in early 2021 to 200-500 currently, may attempt to capitalise on Nampula's socio-political and economic grievances, compounded by large refugee influx from Cabo Delgado. Opposition 22 Feb demanded govt find mechanism for dialogue with insurgents.

Preparations began for vote expected to be contentious. Ahead of general elections due to be held 9 Oct, electoral commission 7 Feb announced tentative electoral calendar with voter registration starting 15 March. Political tensions are expected to remain high in lead-up to polls that include vote for president, with both ruling FRELIMO and main opposition RENAMO parties struggling to designate their respective presidential candidate.

➔ **South Africa** Electoral tensions continued to run high in KwaZulu-Natal province ahead of general elections set for May.

President Ramaphosa's office 20 Feb scheduled general elections to elect new National Assembly and legislature in each province for 29 May. Meanwhile, electoral violence persisted amid steep competition in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, key battleground for May elections. Unidentified gunmen 7 Feb killed Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) councillor of Nongoma local municipality, KZN, bringing total number of reported political assassinations in province since July 2023 to six. Police same day said political killings task team is investigating cases. Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) early Feb dismissed former President Jacob Zuma's claims that IEC is colluding with ruling African National Congress (ANC) to rig elections, challenging him to produce evidence, and urged all political leaders to exercise

restraint; comments came after Zuma – who is campaigning mainly in KZN for newly formed uMkhonto weSizwe party – and his allies late Jan doubled down on criticism of ANC and IEC.

➔ **Zimbabwe** **By-election wins cemented govt's parliamentary control amid opposition disarray; mass evictions targeted those living on state-owned land.**

Ruling party won all by-elections seats as opposition split further. Amid low turnout, ruling ZANU-PF party 3 Feb won all six National Assembly seats in controversial by-elections triggered after recall of CCC elected officials by self-proclaimed secretary-general of main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) Sengezo Tshabangu; victory restores ZANU-PF two-thirds majority in parliament lost in Aug general elections, amid opposition and civil society fears that party will alter Constitution and extend presidential term limits. Recalls further weakened CCC. After Nelson Chamisa late Jan resigned from position as CCC president, another CCC heavyweight Job Sikhala 8 Feb announced leaving party and creating new, as yet unnamed political movement. CCC 17 Feb reportedly named Chamisa's long-time rival, Welshman Ncube, as well as two other senior CCC members, Tendai Biti and Lynette Karenzi-Kore, as acting co-presidents of party, fuelling rumours that Ncube and Biti worked with ZANU-PF and Tshabangu to remove Chamisa.

Govt carried out mass evictions as EU renewed sanctions. Authorities mid-Jan to mid-Feb evicted hundreds of residents from rural areas and informal settlements in peri-urban areas, particularly in Masvingo province, in campaign targeting “illegal” dwellings on state-owned land, drawing condemnation from traditional leaders and civil society. Amid continued concerns over human rights, EU Council 2 Feb extended sanctions including arms embargo and targeted asset freeze against one entity by one year.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea** **Fresh reports of Eritrean forces in Ethiopia's Tigray region surfaced, and President Isaias Afwerki held talks with Italian officials during extended stay.**

Ethiopia-Eritrea relations remained strained. News agency Associated Press 2 Feb revealed memo prepared late Jan by Ethiopia Health Cluster – international, local organisations and UN agencies coordinating health responses for people affected by humanitarian emergencies – alleging that Eritrean troops have abducted farmers and stolen hundreds of livestock in Ethiopia's Tigray region; Eritrea's information minister Yemane Gebremeskel same day denied allegations. Meanwhile, performance during nationally televised celebration marking 34th anniversary of Massawa city's capture from Ethiopia 10 Feb implicitly mocked Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed, in further sign of deteriorating relations with Addis after Abiy vowed to restore Ethiopia's sea access; Eritrea viewed remarks as threat to its sovereignty.

In other important developments. After attending Italy-Africa summit late Jan in Italy's capital Rome, President Isaias extended stay until 8 Feb, holding meetings

with investors and Italian officials, including PM Meloni and Defence Minister Guido Crosetto; Information minister Yemane 3 Feb said discussions focused on strengthening economic cooperation and security in Red Sea region. Isaias 24-27 Feb visited Egyptian capital Cairo for talks on bilateral cooperation and regional security.

➔ **Ethiopia Authorities extended state of emergency in Amhara region amid ongoing violence, insurgency continued in Oromia, and tensions between Tigray authorities and federal govt rose over peace process.**

Federal govt extended state of emergency in Amhara. Clashes between federal forces and Amhara nationalist militias known as Fano persisted, prompting govt 2 Feb to extend state of emergency by four months. Human Rights Commission 5 Feb said federal forces late Jan killed at least 45 civilians in Merawi town, North Gondar; govt 6 Feb denied targeting civilians. Federal drone 19 Feb reportedly killed at least 30 near North Shewa's Sasit town. Fano 24 Feb briefly took control of Merawi town, sparking heavy fighting. Fano forces 29 Feb reportedly entered regional capital Bahir Dar city.

Fighting in Oromia region persisted. Counterinsurgency operation against Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) that was launched late Jan continued, with federal forces 10 Feb claiming to have killed 70 OLA members in Oromia's West Shewa zone; 20 Feb reportedly killed around 50 fighters, including four leaders, in North Shewa zone. Meanwhile, security forces 22 Feb arrested French journalist for allegedly conspiring with OLA and Fano to incite unrest in capital Addis Ababa, released him 29 Feb.

Tigray leaders met with PM Abiy amid rising tensions over peace process. Tigray leaders 9 Feb met with PM Abiy to discuss peace process and humanitarian crisis. Key sticking points of peace process, including lack of progress on disputed territories, Tigray People's Liberation Front party's unregistered status and delayed demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration process, have heightened federal-Tigray tensions and cast doubts on holding local elections as per agreement. Interim Tigray President Getachew Reda 10 Feb acknowledged lingering mistrust between Addis and his administration. Tigray administration 29 Feb said it would only engage with federal govt on peace process through African Union.

Relations with Somalia remained tense. Somali President Mohamud 17 Feb again condemned 1 Jan Ethiopia-Somaliland deal, which grants Addis access to Somaliland coastline and potentially paves way for Ethiopia's recognition of Somaliland's independence; Mohamud accused Ethiopia of attempting to annex Somali territory and alleged Ethiopian security forces blocked his entry to African Union summit in Addis Ababa, which Ethiopia denied.

➔ **Somalia Al-Shabaab conducted significant attacks, authorities launched contentious constitutional review process, and Ethiopia-Somaliland port deal continued to fuel tensions.**

Al-Shabaab militants continued to pose major threat amid high-profile attacks. In main theatre of govt's offensive in southern Mudug region (centre), group launched attacks on several areas security forces recently retook, including 3 Feb in Shabellow village, with reported high casualties on both sides but no significant territorial shift.

Militants also claimed 10 Feb killing of four Emirati and one Bahraini military trainer at General Gordon military camp in capital Mogadishu; attack was reportedly carried out by undercover insurgent who had claimed to have defected from group. Govt's efforts against Al-Shabaab during month consisted mainly of sporadic air operations supported by foreign partners in southern regions of Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle, and central regions of Galgaduud and Hiraaan. Meanwhile, AU mission (ATMIS) announced 2 Feb official completion of second phase of withdrawal. Govt 15 Feb signed agreement with U.S. to build five bases for 3,000-strong U.S.-trained Danab commando unit.

Domestic tensions emerged over constitutional review process. Parliament 12 Feb initiated constitutional review process, one of President Mohamud's priorities, amid significant domestic opposition. Notably, Puntland state rejected proposals, and former presidents 13 Feb announced failure of mediation attempt between Mogadishu and Garowe. In speech to parliament, former President Sheikh Sharif 19 Feb also denounced constitutional review process.

Govt continued to push back against Ethiopia-Somaliland port deal. Mogadishu remained focussed on diplomatic efforts to pressure Addis Ababa to walk back its Jan agreement with Hargeisa that potentially paves way for Ethiopia's recognition of Somaliland's independence. Mohamud 16 Feb travelled to Ethiopian capital for AU summit, lobbying for support; Mohamud next day alleged Ethiopian security forces tried to bar him from attending closing session of AU summit, which Ethiopian govt denied, and again accused Ethiopia of trying to annex part of Somalia's territory. Meanwhile, amid tensions with Somaliland over deal, airspace control became battleground between Mogadishu and Hargeisa (see Somaliland).

In another important development. Amid tensions with Ethiopia, govt 8 Feb signed deal with Ankara for Türkiye to help Somalia defend its territorial waters by providing support to Somali navy.

➔ **Somaliland Election-related dispute kept domestic politics tense ahead of Nov polls, while fallout from port deal with Ethiopia continued to loom large.**

Electoral uncertainty persisted. House of Elders and House of Representatives 17-18 Feb passed revised electoral law paving way for presidential and political party elections in Nov. President Bihi has 21 days to sign bill, but opposition remains concerned that he will not do so and instead seek to delay vote, renege on Aug 2023 govt-opposition deal.

Fallout from deal with Addis Ababa continued. As Bihi 22 Feb vowed to implement agreement with Ethiopia to lease stretch of Somaliland's coastline to establish naval base and commercial maritime services in return for potential acknowledgement of Somaliland as sovereign state, Mogadishu-Hargeisa tensions remained high over agreement. Series of suspicious deaths in Mogadishu of civilians originally from Somaliland further stoked tensions, while airspace control, which currently falls under Somalia's purview, became battleground. Somalia around 23 Feb accused Somaliland of interfering in communications with flights, while Somaliland around 25 Feb claimed contradictory instructions from Somalia 24 Feb nearly led to mid-air collision.

↓ South Sudan Intercommunal violence escalated across much of South Sudan, killing hundreds; pipeline damage and Sudan war disrupted oil exports, threatening economy and regime stability.

Intercommunal violence killed hundreds. Deadly clashes between Twic Dinka from Warrap state and Ngok Dinka from Abyei Administrative area continued; notably, Twic Dinka 3-4 Feb attacked villages in southern part of Abyei, killing 37. Overcrowding and insufficient grazing land in parts of Warrap state heightened tensions between Dinka from Tonj county, Warrap, and Lou from Jur River county, Western Bahr al-Ghazal state; Dinka 5 Feb attacked police station protecting Lou community in Jur River, killing over twenty. In Jonglei state, Murle youth 4 Feb attacked Thep cattle camp, killing seven Lou Nuer youth; Lou Nuer from Uror, Akono and Nyriol counties reportedly contemplating joining Dinka from Duk and Twic East counties to attack Greater Pibor Administrative Area, where Murle hail from. UN Envoy 26 Feb warned that intercommunal fighting will undermine ability to hold elections in December. Meanwhile, rebel group National Salvation Front 25 Feb claimed attack on army ammunition store in capital Juba.

Pipeline damage and Sudan war disrupted oil exports. Sudanese Bashayer Pipeline Company 12 Feb reported loss of pressure in oil pipeline running from Upper Nile state to Port Sudan city in Sudan; 16 Feb reportedly fixed issue, but lack of maintenance and regular supply of diesel to run pumping stations, many of which run through territory controlled by Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, will potentially lead to other problems that could cause irreparable damage to pipelines; building new ones amid Sudan war would be logistically challenging. Meanwhile, UN Envoy 20 Feb warned of indications that Sudanese warring parties were recruiting in South Sudan.

Economic crisis weighed heavily on political apparatus. Permanent shutdown of oil exports from Upper Nile, which account for 60% of oil production, would threaten economy and President Kiir's patronage system. Minister of Finance Bak Barnaba 18 Feb said govt was unable to pay civil servants and soldiers, called for drastic austerity measures as value of South Sudanese pound dropped; govt 26 Feb blamed economic crisis in part on impact of Sudan war on oil exports.

➔ Sudan Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched offensives against paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), both sides faced internal challenges, and U.S. named special envoy in push to end war.

SAF offensives yielded some success, RSF advanced in North Kordofan. Following months of setbacks, SAF made gains in Omdurman city, Khartoum state, 16 Feb claimed to have broken RSF siege on Engineers and Medical Corps there. SAF also defended positions in West Kordofan state's Babanussa town, splitting Misseriya community's allegiance to RSF. Reports of summary executions of alleged RSF supporters, however, increased opposition to SAF. Meanwhile, RSF 17 Feb claimed capture of SAF's Jebel Al Daier base in North Kordofan, leaving paramilitary in control of state apart from state capital and paving way for expansion into White Nile state. In South Kordofan, SAF, rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (al-Hilu) and SAF-affiliated Public Defence Forces, mostly from Nuba community, 9-10 Feb attacked RSF in Habila town; RSF counterattack 9 Feb killed over twenty

as fighting turned into communal conflict between RSF-affiliated Arab tribes and Nuba.

SAF faced internal divisions and RSF struggled to administer areas it controls. SAF 6 Feb arrested officers in Omdurman, sparking flurry of rumours including that army had foiled coup attempt, laying bare divisions within SAF and raising fears of breakdown in command and control. Meanwhile, RSF faced mounting opposition among local communities in Gezira state and struggled to enforce law and order in South Darfur; it also struggled to protect Reziegat communities in North and South Darfur from SAF bombardment, fuelling discontent among paramilitary's main support base.

U.S. appointed special envoy for Sudan. U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 26 Feb announced appointment of Special Envoy for Sudan, signalling stepped-up efforts to end war following months of failed mediation. Humanitarian situation remained dire; SAF late Jan-early Feb reportedly blocked aid to RSF-controlled areas, while RSF and SAF traded blame for early Feb disruptions to telecommunications networks that impacted aid deliveries. UN Human Rights Office 23 Feb issued report detailing abuses by both sides, some of which UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said "would amount to war crimes".

Sahel

↓ Burkina Faso Violence reached levels unseen since jihadist insurgency started in 2015, with hundreds killed in one day as militants launched nine simultaneous attacks and govt forces and allies reportedly conducted large-scale massacres.

Violence reached levels unseen since 2015, leaving hundreds dead. Jihadist militants from al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province 25 Feb launched nine attacks across country, notably targeting places of worship. Raid on mosque in Natiaboani town, Gourma province (East region), left up to 100 dead, including civilians, soldiers and civilian auxiliaries (VDPs), and attack on catholic church in Essakane village, Oudalan province (Sahel region) killed at least fifteen people. Jihadist militants same day also targeted military, notably killing 51 soldiers in Tankoualou area, Komandjari province (East region). Suspected army and VDPs also 25 Feb allegedly attacked three villages in Yatenga province (North region), with provisional toll of around 170 people killed. Reports of attacks on two villages in Gayéri area of Komandjari province (East) late Feb also emerged, with unconfirmed death toll of 150.

Silencing of dissent continued. National council of lawyers 15 Feb led countrywide strike to demand release of lawyer and civil society activist Guy-Hervé Kam, who was arrested in Jan on undisclosed charges. Rights defender Daouda Diallo, former FM Ablassé Ouédraogo and civil society leader Issiaka Ouédraogo 18 Feb appeared in videos circulated on Internet in combat gear, confirming they have been forcibly enrolled as VDPs since their arrest in late 2023.

ECOWAS urged govt to reconsider decision to leave group. After Burkina Faso alongside Mali and Niger late Jan announced withdrawal from Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), regional bloc 8 Feb called on trio to “prioritise dialogue and reconciliation”, and ECOWAS chairman, Nigerian President Tinubu, 24 Feb urged departing countries to “reconsider the decision”. Tinubu’s comments were made at extraordinary summit of ECOWAS heads of state, during which bloc lifted most sanctions imposed on Niger in 2023 (see Niger). Conciliatory approach has yet to bear fruit, however. Notably, Ouagadougou, Bamako and Niamey 15 Feb discussed framework to create three-state federation at Alliance of Sahel States ministerial summit, said decision to leave ECOWAS was irreversible.

➔ **Mali West African regional bloc urged govt to remain within group as Bamako insisted exit was immediate; authorities remained embroiled in conflict with 2015 peace agreement signatories and jihadist groups.**

ECOWAS took conciliatory approach to Sahel trio’s exit. After Mali, alongside Niger and Burkina Faso, late Jan announced withdrawal from Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), regional bloc 8 Feb called on trio to “prioritise dialogue and reconciliation”, and ECOWAS chairman, Nigerian President Tinubu, 24 Feb urged departing countries to “reconsider the decision”. Tinubu’s comments were made at extraordinary ECOWAS summit, during which bloc lifted most coup sanctions on Niger (see Niger) and restrictions on recruitment of Malians into ECOWAS institutions. Conciliatory approach has yet to bear fruit, however, with Bamako 7 Feb arguing trio does not need to respect one-year withdrawal period, and all three countries 15 Feb reiterating decision to leave ECOWAS was irreversible.

Conflict between govt forces and rebel groups continued in north. After terminating 2015 Algiers peace agreement in Jan, transitional president, Col. Goïta, 5 Feb installed steering committee in charge of preparing inter-Malian dialogue for peace and reconciliation; committee president 20 Feb said armed groups “must lay down arms” to participate. Under pressure from community leaders and economic operators, coalition of 2015 Algiers Accord signatory armed groups, Permanent Strategic Framework, 11 Feb lifted two-month blockade on Timbuktu and Gao towns.

Jihadist violence remained high in north, centre and west. After al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) late Jan intensified attacks in north, notably targeting two army positions in Timbuktu region, govt forces and Russian paramilitary Wagner Group reportedly stepped up violence against civilians, with seven killed 1 Feb in Djounhane village, Kidal region, and at least eight others killed 5 Feb in Dianké town, Timbuktu region. In centre, JNIM 3 Feb attacked N’Donuna village in Ségou region, leaving ten Dozo militiamen dead, and 8, 20 Feb raided army positions in Melga village, Kayes region, and Niono town, Ségou region, killing at least five soldiers. In neighbouring Nara region, sophisticated jihadist attack on Kwala military outpost reportedly left 30 soldiers reportedly killed.

➔ **Niger West African regional bloc lifted most sanctions imposed on Niger following 2023 coup and urged govt to reconsider decision to leave group.**

ECOWAS took conciliatory approach to Sahel trio’s exit. At extraordinary summit of heads of state held 24 Feb, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) lifted most sanctions imposed on Niger following 2023 coup, including

no-fly zone, border closures and asset freezes; ECOWAS chairman, Nigerian President Tinubu, same day urged Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso to “reconsider the decision”, announced in Jan, to withdraw from regional bloc and said trio should “not perceive our organisation as the enemy”. Earlier in month, ECOWAS 8 Feb called on all three countries to “prioritise dialogue and reconciliation”. Conciliatory approach has yet to bear fruit, however. Niamey, Bamako and Ouagadougou 15 Feb discussed framework to create three-state federation at Alliance of Sahel States ministerial summit, and reiterated decision to leave ECOWAS was irreversible. Transitional President Gen. Tiani 11 Feb contemplated leaving West African Economic and Monetary Union and creating new currency.

Anti-junta armed group clashed with army for first time. Patriotic Liberation Front (FPL) fighters and govt forces 7 Feb clashed near Arlit town in Agadez region for first time since creation of armed group following 2023 coup. Authorities reported ten FPL members killed and one captured, with several soldiers wounded; FPL claimed killing 27 soldiers, while acknowledging loss of five fighters.

Jihadist-related violence persisted in Tillabery, Diffa regions. In Tillabery region (south west), military 3 Feb carried out counter-insurgency operation in Kokoloukou area of Torodi department, allegedly killing 50 suspected al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) militants; suspected jihadist militants next day attacked several villages of Méhana commune, Téra department, killing nine civilians. In Diffa region (south east), Islamic State West Africa Province militants 19 Feb attacked national guard position in Assaga Koura (Diffa department), with two guards and unspecified number of militants killed; incident came after militants late Jan attacked special intervention battalion at N’guigmi airport (N’guigmi department), leaving ten soldiers injured.

West Africa

➔ Benin Govt called for unity as Sahel states’ announced withdrawal from ECOWAS dealt blow to regional integration.

President Talon underlined ECOWAS significance, warned against sanctions. Talon 8 Feb lamented Jan-announced withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from West African regional bloc ECOWAS, stressing importance of body in maintaining wider stability; Talon also cautioned against harsh sanctions against three govts, arguing measures disproportionately harm local populations, and suggested withdrawal of sanctions may mean Jan decision to “separate peoples” will remain just “declaration” (see Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger). In same speech, Talon reiterated he will not run for third term and would respect parliament’s upcoming decision over changes proposed by ruling coalition members to Constitution and Electoral Code; reforms have sparked tensions, including over whether to hold 2026 presidential vote ahead of legislative elections.

Jihadist violence and security operations continued. After military late Jan conducted operations against al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) militants in Alibori and Atacora provinces, JNIM 22 Feb claimed it had killed four soldiers 17 Feb near border with Burkina Faso.

In another important development. UN Sec Gen spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric 29 Feb said Benin had pledged to contribute at least 1,500 personnel to Kenyan-led multilateral police mission to Haiti (see Haiti).

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire Govt articulated commitment to stability and fair elections, reaffirmed U.S. partnership.**

Preparations for 2025 elections continued. President Ouattara 14 Feb emphasised measures would be put in place to maintain and strengthen cohesion ahead of 2025 presidential election. Both ruling Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) and main opposition party Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) sought to build election campaigns and gain popular support, including focussing on youth mobilisation; senior RHDP official Roger Adom 19 Feb attended meeting presenting new leader of party's youth wing, saying "We are counting on you" in vote. After Senate President Kandia Camara 31 Jan announced 2024 revision of six legislative bills, including Electoral Code and Nationality bill, PDCI President Tidjane Thiam 21 Feb stressed need for electoral reform to create more representative democratic system.

U.S. and govt reaffirmed security cooperation. Interior and Security Minister Vagondo Diomandé and U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Civil Security, Democracy and Human Rights Uzra Zeya 2 Feb met in Abidjan city, discussing themes including justice sector reform, fight against corruption and terrorism; Zeya emphasised role of Côte d'Ivoire in maintaining regional stability, and importance of mutual cooperation in confronting security challenges.

In another important development. NGO Amnesty International 20 Feb called on authorities to enforce anti-corruption laws and protect human rights defenders, citing Ivorian perceptions of pervasive corruption.

↓ **Guinea Tensions peaked as junta dissolved govt amid internal power struggles and trade unions launched nationwide general strike that paralysed country.**

Junta dissolved govt and restricted movement of sacked ministers. Presidency's Secretary General Amara Camara 19 Feb announced dissolution of govt, granting administrative power to directors of cabinet, secretary generals and deputies until as yet unannounced formation of new govt; measures also saw President Doumbouya-led junta temporarily close all borders and restrict activities of sacked ministers through seizure of travel documents, revocation of official vehicles and freezing of bank accounts. Announcement lacked official explanation but may be linked to tensions between PM Goumou and Justice Minister Charles Wright, and to Doumbouya's attempts to bolster authority amid increasingly open power struggles in govt. Authorities 27 Feb appointed former minister Amadou Oury Bah as PM.

Nationwide strike caused turmoil, saw violent unrest. Trade unions including National Confederation of Workers of Guinea 26 Feb began indefinite nationwide general strike, shuttering schools, banks, and businesses and reducing hospital services, paralysing country; strikers demanded release of Sékou Jamal Pendessa, Secretary General of Union of Guinean Press Professionals arrested in Jan on charge of "participation in non-authorized protest", lifting of ongoing internet restrictions and reduction in cost of basic goods. In capital Conakry, unrest saw demonstrations

and barricades established on city's main highway, while police reportedly killed two demonstrators during clashes on first day of strike. Unions 28 Feb suspended strike after Pendessa's release that day.

Dissatisfaction with govt continued on other fronts. Dozens of women in Coronthie neighbourhood of Conakry 1 Feb blocked roads and protested govt's failure to provide aid after mid-Dec gas depot explosion that killed at least 23; other demonstrators joined, citing increased cost of living, political repression and internet restrictions.

In another important development. West African regional bloc ECOWAS 24 Feb announced lifting of financial and economic sanctions on govt but gave no further details.

➔ **Nigeria Islamic State affiliate launched series of explosive device attacks in North East; bandit groups continued killings and kidnappings for ransom in much of north.**

Despite security operations, jihadist violence continued in North East. Series of incidents from late Jan through Feb highlighted Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) militants' increased use of improvised explosive devices in Borno state, causing dozens of casualties, restricting humanitarian services and hindering resettlement programs. Also in Borno, security forces 2-3 Feb repelled suspected ISWAP attack on Gajiram town in Nganzai area, with at least four police officers killed. In Yobe state's Damaturu area, ISWAP 4 Feb killed two and abducted three others in Kukareta town, while in nearby Maltari village soldiers 18 Feb killed three militants forcefully collecting levies from residents; insurgents 24 Feb also blew up two transmission towers in area, cutting electricity supply to parts of Yobe and Borno states.

Criminal groups continued attacks and kidnappings for ransom across north. Notably, in Sabuwa area of Katsina state, armed group 1 Feb abducted bride and more than 60 other women and children, killing four vigilantes escorting them and demanding ransom payment. State's governor Dikko Umaru Radda 9 Feb urged citizens to organise self-defence groups. Many other attacks, kidnappings and looting of villages by criminal groups occurred in Kaduna, Katsina, Nasarawa, Niger and Zamfara states throughout month, killing scores and leaving hundreds abducted.

North Central and North East zones saw incidents of herder-farmer violence. Armed attacks in Apa area of Benue state 14-16 Feb reportedly killed ten and displaced thousands; locals blamed raids on herders. In Yobe state, police said herders 12 Feb killed two people, forcing 1,500 to flee, in Gurjaje village in Fika area in apparent reprisal for Sept 2023 herder-farmer clash.

South East remained fragile despite lull in attacks by Biafran separatists. Gunmen 12 Feb attacked correctional facility in Umualomoke village in Imo state, killing officer, freeing seven inmates and abducting facility's head.

In other important developments. National Bureau of Statistics 15 Feb reported Jan inflation rate at 29.9%, highest since 1996; economic hardship throughout month

led to sporadic protests in several cities while workers union 27 Feb organised nationwide protest.

↓ **Senegal Constitutional crisis erupted after authorities postponed presidential election amid violent protests and international alarm.**

Election delay sparked constitutional crisis. National Assembly 5 Feb formally extended President's Sall mandate beyond constitutional deadline of 2 April and delayed presidential vote from 25 Feb until 15 Dec; move came after Sall 3 Feb repealed decree convening electoral body, saying "crisis" between parliament and Constitutional Court over disqualification of potential candidates motivated decision. In wake of announcement, several high-level govt officials resigned, including govt's secretary-general and one state minister. Opposition leaders, civil society activists and former ministers condemned delay and questioned its legality. Notably, leading opposition figure and former mayor of capital Dakar, Khalifa Sall, 3 Feb denounced "constitutional coup d'état". Following petition by collective of opposition candidates, Constitutional Court 15 Feb ruled law postponing elections was unconstitutional and overturned Sall's decision to change electoral calendar, calling on authorities to hold elections "as soon as possible". Sall next day vowed to respect ruling, and 22 Feb said his mandate would end as planned on 2 April; national dialogue sponsored by president and attended by only four of nineteen presidential candidates 27 Feb proposed 2 June as new election date.

Security forces cracked down on opposition protests, leaving several dead. Govt forces 4 Feb violently repressed demonstrations in capital Dakar, arresting high-profile opposition figures Aminata Touré and Anta Babacar Ngom, and 6 Feb arrested at least two opposition MPs as they attempted to organise protest in Dakar's suburbs. Gendarmes and police 9-10 Feb used tear gas to repress protests nationwide, arresting around 250 people as clashes left at least three people dead. Following talks between Sall and opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, govt 1-17 Feb released some 250 imprisoned members of Sonko's dissolved PASTEF party and other opposition and civil society groups. In apparent attempt to de-escalate tensions, Sall 26 Feb announced plans for general amnesty for political demonstrators from 2021 to 2024.

International actors denounced election delay. Notably, West African bloc ECOWAS 3 Feb expressed "concern" over Sall's announcement, and three days later urged authorities "to restore the electoral calendar".