



# Early Warning and Early Action – Crisis Group Tools and Publications

April 2019

Ring the alarm bell has been at the core of Crisis Group's mission since its inception in 1995. We call for action to prevent deadly violence, mass atrocities and political destabilisation. Through our monthly CrisisWatch conflict tracker, timely field-centred analysis and targeted engagement at the local, regional and global levels, we strive to alert the policy community to upcoming risks and potential opportunities for conflict resolution in over 70 conflicts, crises and vulnerable countries.

## CrisisWatch

[CrisisWatch](#) is our global conflict tracker, a vital tool designed to help decision-makers prevent deadly violence by keeping them up-to-date with developments in the world's shifting conflict landscape, identifying trends and alerting them to risks of escalation and opportunities to advance peace. Updated on the first working day of every month, it provides succinct summaries of the past month's political and security developments in over 70 conflicts, crises and vulnerable countries.

In addition to the individual country entries, the [Global Overview](#) succinctly explains deteriorations and improvements in the past month and alerts for the month ahead, and provides up-to-the-minute analysis and policy recommendations to support conflict prevention and resolution efforts. The [interactive map](#) helps users navigate quickly to the countries they follow, and the [searchable database](#) offers access to all country entries dating back to September 2003. Additionally, every month Crisis Group's President and CEO, Robert Malley, offers his insights on the world's most pressing crises in [The President's Take](#).

[Subscribe](#) to receive monthly e-mail alerts as soon as CrisisWatch is updated.

## Iran-U.S. Trigger List

The [Iran-U.S. Trigger List](#) is an interactive early-warning platform aimed at monitoring, analysing and providing regular updates on the key and increasingly tense flashpoints between Iran and the U.S. or between their respective allies. Based on our evaluation of these developments individually and collectively, we measure the likelihood of confrontation, based on a five-level, colour-coded risk assessment: low, moderate, substantial, severe or critical. We also identify opportunities stemming from potential positive developments in these various areas (e.g. a prisoner release, a ceasefire agreement in Syria or Yemen, or a high-level meeting between Iranian and U.S. officials). Finally, we propose concrete measures to avert the most dangerous outcomes.

## EU Watch List

Crisis Group's early-warning [Watch List](#) identifies countries and regions at risk of conflict or escalation of violence, but where early action – driven or supported by the EU or its member states – would generate stronger prospects for peace. The list, published in January, includes a global overview, regional summaries, and detailed analysis on select countries and conflicts. We follow this up with three updates throughout the year, bringing fresh insights to new developments or added focus on particular risks.

[Watch List 2019](#), EU Watch List N°14, 28 January 2019

The Watch List 2019 includes Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Iran, Myanmar, Pakistan, South Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen.

[Watch List 2018 – Third Update](#), EU Watch List N°13, 25 October 2018

The third update included entries on economic reforms in Libya, preserving the fragile quiet in Syria's Idlib province, addressing the plight of civilians in eastern Ukraine, supporting Colombia's uneasy peace process and averting violence in Nigeria's upcoming elections.

[Watch List 2018 – Second Update](#), EU Watch List N°12, 19 July 2018

The second update included entries on seizing a chance for peace in Mali, avoiding escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh, mitigating conflict in Syria's peripheral regions, and helping Somalia overcome obstacles to reform.

[Watch List 2018 – First Update](#), EU Watch List N°11, 14 May 2018

The first update to our Watch List 2018 included entries on Burundi's dangerous referendum, militant Buddhists and anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka, the impact of the Venezuelan crisis on the region, and the situation in Yemen.

[Watch List 2018](#), EU Watch List N°10, 31 January 2018

The Watch List 2018 included entries on Afghanistan, Bangladesh/Myanmar, Cameroon, Colombia, Egypt, Iraq, Sahel, Tunisia, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

## 10 Conflicts to Watch

Every January, Foreign Policy publishes Crisis Group's ten conflicts to watch in the year ahead, highlighting trends, potential triggers and risks of deterioration. The most recent article, [10 Conflicts to Watch in 2019](#) (28 December 2018), identified diverse conflicts and crises across the globe, namely Yemen, Afghanistan, U.S.-China tensions, Iran, Syria, Nigeria, South Sudan, Cameroon, Ukraine and Venezuela.

## Special Report on Early Warning

[Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action](#), 23 June 2016

Wars can be prevented or mitigated by early, clear and well-designed political and diplomatic engagement. Yet policymakers are increasingly stretched by a myriad of global crises. Refocusing on knowledge, relationships, frameworks, strategic communication and pathways to peace is crucial to limiting and resolving the world's current upsurge in deadly conflict. This report, drawing on Crisis Group's field-centred analysis and policy recommendations from the previous five years, sets out a broad strategic framework for preventive diplomacy. Its primary focus is on conflicts, like those in Ukraine and Syria, which directly involve outside powers.

## Recent Reports & Briefings

### [Defusing the Crisis at Jerusalem's Gate of Mercy,](#)

Middle East & North Africa Briefing N°67, 3 April 2019

At Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade (Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount), Israeli authorities and Palestinian worshippers are struggling over control of a building next to the Gate of Mercy. Shut by Israeli authorities since 2003, Palestinians forcibly regained access in February, turning it into a prayer hall. Israel seeks to reverse the change. Previously, minor incidents at the Holy Esplanade have triggered major escalations, especially at times of relative volatility in Gaza and the West Bank. The highly symbolic dispute over the Gate of Mercy building has put significant strain on Israel's relations with Jordan, the esplanade's Muslim custodian. Following overdue repairs, Israel should permit the building to reopen and allow the Waqf, which runs the esplanade under Jordanian auspices, to operate it as it sees fit, possibly as an Islamic educational institute or as a prayer space, to help mend Israel-Jordan relations and lower the risk of violence.

### [The Best of Bad Options for Syria's Idlib,](#)

Middle East & North Africa Report N°197, 14 March 2019

An agreement between Turkey and Russia that protects Syria's rebel-held Idlib governorate from a regime offensive is under increasing stress. Clashes between jihadists and other militants inside Idlib and regime forces have escalated. Newly launched Turkish patrols mark progress toward implementing the bilateral deal, but more has to be done. The Idlib area is the Syrian opposition's last main bastion, and home to nearly three million people. There is no obvious way to neutralise Idlib's jihadists without exacting a terrible human toll. A regime offensive would send waves of refugees toward the Turkish border and potentially scatter Idlib's jihadists globally. Turkey and Russia should recommit to their Idlib agreement, staving off a disastrous military confrontation and containing the area's militants. Turkey should expand its patrols inside the area, as both Turkey and Russia push the regime and rebels to halt violence. Lastly, they should secure Idlib's major highways for trade.

### [Managing Ethiopia's Unsettled Transition,](#)

Africa Report N°269, 21 February 2019

Ethiopia's new premier, Abiy Ahmed Ali, has made peace with Eritrea, extended a conciliatory hand to opponents, and promised moves to free and fair elections, expanded political space and economic reform. His bold moves have won plaudits from Ethiopians who have been protesting for change since 2014 and from donors who are eager to see democratic reform. But he now must make changes to his governance style in order to defuse ethnic and communal tensions and garner support for critical reforms, as the number of internally displaced people mounts and the economy struggles. In seeking to restore security and calm ethnic tensions, Abiy should govern more inclusively, working collaboratively with state institutions on reforms and involving civil society in reconciliation efforts. He should also begin preparing for the 2020 elections (ensuring broad political support for any violence-related delays) and focus on economic modernisation.

### [A New Dimension of Violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State,](#)

Asia Briefing N°154, 24 January 2019

Arakan Army attacks on remote police outposts in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State left thirteen officers dead, prompting the government to order military "clearance operations" against the ethnic Rakhine insurgents. Despite the main ethnic Rakhine party's election victory in 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi installed a minority National League for Democracy government in the

state and the government imprisoned a popular Rakhine politician on high treason charges. Rising violence in Rakhine State will deepen the longstanding political crisis there and undermine prospects for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees. It will also impede Myanmar's broader peace process and political transition. The military, government and insurgents should exercise restraint and seek a negotiated solution to the violence to avoid further inflaming ethnic tensions. China should work to bring all sides to the negotiating table. The government should initiate dialogue with ethnic Rakhine representatives over key political, economic and social issues.

[Prospects for a Deal to Stabilise Syria's North East](#),

Middle East Report N°190, 5 September 2018

In March 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced his intention to withdraw U.S. forces from north-eastern Syria and suspended stabilisation funding for the area. A precipitous U.S. pull-out could unleash competing forces as they scramble for advantage. Our report suggests that the best chance for avoiding new conflagration is through an agreement on decentralised governance in Syria's north east that accounts for the security concerns of neighbouring Turkey. Washington and Moscow should help their respective allies in the Syrian war achieve such an arrangement before U.S. troops depart. Without a prior negotiated agreement, the risk of escalating conflict could rise.

## Recent Commentaries, Op-Eds & Statements

[Yemen Cannot Afford to Wait](#),

Middle East & North Africa Commentary, 10 April 2019

The question today is less how the U.S. got into this mess than how it can end this war even if the coalition's original ambitions. The coalition long has believed that seizing the port city would deal the insurgents a decisive blow, depriving them of the money they collect in taxes and of smuggled weapons. But the most crushing blow would be to Yemeni civilians, 10 million of whom depend on goods arriving in the port city. A deal on Hodeida would mitigate the war's impact, but it would not end the conflict between the coalition and the Houthis. That would require, for starters, an understanding between Saudi Arabia and the insurgent group on principles governing their future relationship.

[The Darkest Hours: Power Outages Raise the Temperature in Venezuela](#),

Latin America & Caribbean Commentary, 15 March 2019

The crippling blackouts across Venezuela are a grim portent of things to come as U.S. oil sanctions kick in and the country's crisis deepens. All concerned to end Venezuelans' suffering should vigorously pursue a negotiated transition leading to a power-sharing deal.

[Bashir Moves Sudan to Dangerous New Ground](#),

Africa Statement, 26 February 2019

Faced with the most serious protests against his 30-year rule, President Omar al-Bashir's declaration of a state of emergency will not save his bankrupt, unpopular regime. Instead, security forces must halt worsening violence, Bashir should step down and all sides should work on a broadly inclusive transitional government.