

## IV. Armed conflict and peace processes in East Africa

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East Africa comprises 22 states or territories, 9 of which were involved in active armed conflicts in 2021 (see figure 7.1). This section focuses on five of these armed conflicts: in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan (which all saw sharp escalations or continuing large-scale armed violence in 2021). There were more than 9.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and more than 4.7 million refugees across East Africa, primarily due to conflict and violence in these five countries. Grave violations against civilians, including conflict-related sexual violence, continued to be committed in the region, while at least 33.8 million people were severely food insecure.<sup>1</sup>

Most East African conflicts are in the Horn of Africa.<sup>2</sup> States in this sub-region are particularly fragile due to a complex mix of reasons, including restricted access to natural resources, inter-group tensions, poverty and inequality, and weak state institutions.<sup>3</sup> Over the past decade, a growing number of external actors have prioritized counterterrorism and anti-piracy efforts in the Horn of Africa. This has created a crowded playing field—including China, India, the United States and other Western powers (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United Kingdom) and several Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates)—leading to growing geopolitical tensions, rivalries and risks of destabilizing proxy conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

Disputes over resource allocation and access have also been significant in the region. For example, the dispute involving Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over sharing of the eastern Nile waters remained deadlocked in 2021.<sup>5</sup> Many of the region's social, political and economic challenges are compounded by the impacts of climate change, including droughts and floods.<sup>6</sup> Three consecutive failed rainy seasons, coupled with increased temperatures,

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022* (UN OCHA: Dec. 2021), p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Geographically, the Horn of Africa is normally understood to comprise Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. There are also broader definitions (as used here) that comprise these four core countries plus all or parts of Kenya, the Seychelles, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

<sup>3</sup> Adeto, Y. A., 'State fragility and conflict nexus: Contemporary security issues in the Horn of Africa', ACCORD, 22 July 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Melvin, N., 'The foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Background Paper, Apr. 2019; and 'Gulf rivalries are spilling into Africa's Horn', *The Economist*, 11 Feb. 2021. On geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and North Africa see chapter 6, section I, in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> Asala, K., 'Tension over Nile waters between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt explained', Africanews, 8 Apr. 2021; and United Nations, Security Council, 8816th meeting, 'Peace and security in Africa', S/PV.8816, 8 July 2021.

<sup>6</sup> For a regional analysis of environment, peace and security linkages in the region with specific focus on water security and governance see Krampe, F. et al., *Water Security and Governance in the Horn of Africa*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 54 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Mar. 2020).



**Figure 7.1.** East Africa, including the Horn of Africa

particularly in Somalia and Kenya, caused the region's most severe drought in decades.<sup>7</sup>

## Ethiopia

The armed conflict that broke out in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia in November 2020 between the former administration of the northern Tigray region—the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)—and federal government forces worsened during 2021, with the conflict's expansion to the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar causing a deepening humanitarian crisis. By the end of September 2021 the number of people in the three regions in need of food assistance had increased from 5.2 million to about 7 million, and the number of IDPs stood at more than 2.4 million.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the crisis in northern Ethiopia, long-standing intercommunal tensions in other parts of the country and regional border disputes drove humanitarian

<sup>7</sup> Famine Early Warning Systems Network, 'The Eastern Horn of Africa faces an exceptional prolonged and persistent agro-pastoral drought sequence', 1 Dec. 2021.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, 'Tigray: Food aid reaches Afar and Amhara, but situation still "dire"', UN News, 5 Oct. 2021.

**Table 7.9.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Ethiopia, 2013–21

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Battles	418	237	566	999	877	730	193	1 663	5 351
Explosions/remote violence	48	2	16	15	2	22	17	235	510
Protests, riots and strategic developments	33	53	177	749	131	241	170	225	38
Violence against civilians	85	43	52	752	345	572	287	1 934	3 059
<b>Total</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>2 515</b>	<b>1 355</b>	<b>1 565</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>4 057</b>	<b>8 958</b>

Notes: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 6 Apr. 2022.

need in 2021. Across the country, 25.9 million people needed humanitarian assistance (up from 11.7 million in 2020) due to a combination of high levels of armed conflict and insecurity from climate shocks, disease outbreaks and a declining economy. The displacement trend in Ethiopia saw a rise in the number of IDPs from 3.2 million in 2018 to 4.2 million at the end of 2021.<sup>9</sup> Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Ethiopia doubled in 2021 compared with 2020 (see table 7.9).

#### *The armed conflict in Tigray and neighbouring regions*

The political roots of the war in the Tigray region—located in the north of Ethiopia, bordering Eritrea and Sudan, with a population of about 6 million people (out of a total Ethiopian population of about 115 million)—reflect a power struggle between Tigrayan elites (who once dominated Ethiopia's military and ruling coalition) and the Ethiopian government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.<sup>10</sup> The war pitted TPLF forces against Ethiopian government forces (consisting of armed forces, federal police, regional police and regional militias), with the latter supported by Amhara regional forces and Eritrean forces.<sup>11</sup> The Ethiopian government, having captured the Tigrayan capital, Mekelle, on 28 November 2020 and declared victory over the TPLF, was in the ascendancy at the start of 2021.<sup>12</sup> During the year, however, the course of the war fluctuated wildly.

In the first half of 2021 the Ethiopian government's occupation of Tigray resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and the destruction of civil infrastructure in the region. Eritrean troops were accused of committing

<sup>9</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), pp. 155–57.

<sup>10</sup> Gardner, T., 'How Abiy's effort to redefine Ethiopia led to war in Tigray', *World Politics Review*, 8 Dec. 2020; and Burke, J., 'Rise and fall of Ethiopia's TPLF—from rebels to rulers and back', *The Guardian*, 25 Nov. 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Beaumont, P., 'Diplomats back claims Eritrean troops have joined Ethiopia conflict', *The Guardian*, 8 Dec. 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Anna, C., 'UN: Ethiopia's victory claim doesn't mean war is finished', *AP News*, 29 Nov. 2020. On developments in 2020 see *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, pp. 218–21.

massacres and looting.<sup>13</sup> By the end of June 2021, however, the TPLF insurgency had wrested back control of the region, before pushing south and east through the Amhara and Afar regions.<sup>14</sup> A joint UN–Ethiopian investigation into the conflict, covering the period November 2020–June 2021, concluded that all parties to the conflict committed human rights violations, and that war crimes and crimes against humanity may have been committed.<sup>15</sup>

By November 2021 the TPLF, acting in coordination with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)—insurgents from Ethiopia’s most populous region, Oromia—were threatening the federal government in Addis Ababa.<sup>16</sup> The conflict in both Amhara and Afar regions led to further large-scale displacement, civilian casualties and sexual violence.<sup>17</sup> With the risk of a widening civil war, the government declared a nationwide state of emergency.<sup>18</sup> At the end of November the TPLF were within 130 kilometres of Addis Ababa, before being stopped by federal forces and their allies. By the end of 2021 most of the TPLF gains from earlier in the year had been reversed. A ‘popular mobilization’ of additional forces and the Ethiopian government forces’ advantage in heavy weapons and total air control were key to their battlefield success. Armed drones supplied by Turkey and others (unconfirmed reports suggest China, Iran and/or the United Arab Emirates) also played a role.<sup>19</sup>

The TPLF claimed that their withdrawal from Afar and Amhara regions was strategic and a ‘decisive opening for peace’.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Ethiopian

<sup>13</sup> Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), ‘Investigation into grave human rights violations in Aksum—preliminary findings’, 24 Mar. 2021; and Human Rights Watch, ‘Ethiopia: Eritrean forces massacre Tigray civilians’, 5 Mar. 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Akinwotu, E., ‘Interim government of Tigray flees as rebels seize capital’, *The Guardian*, 28 June 2021.

<sup>15</sup> EHRC and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Report of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC)/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) joint investigation into alleged violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law committed by all parties’, 3 Nov. 2021.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Ethiopia’s Tigray forces seek new military alliance’, Reuters, 11 Aug. 2021; and Hamza, M. M., ‘TPLF–OLA alliance is a prelude to Tigray’s secession’, *Ethiopia Insight*, 2 Sep. 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: ‘I Don’t Know If They Realized I Was a Person’: Rape and Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia* (Amnesty International: 11 Aug. 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Wintour, P., ‘Ethiopia declares state of emergency as Tigrayan rebels gain ground’, *The Guardian*, 2 Nov. 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Mitzer, S. and Oliemans, J., ‘Wing Loong is over Ethiopia: Chinese UAVs join the battle for Tigray’, *Oryx*, 11 Oct. 2021; Zwijnenburg, W., ‘Is Ethiopia flying Iranian-made armed drones?’, *Bellingcat*, 17 Aug. 2021; ‘UAE air bridge provides military support to Ethiopia gov’t’, *Al Jazeera*, 25 Nov. 2021; Spicer, J. Paravinci, G. and Coskun, O., ‘US concerned over Turkey’s drone sales to conflict-hit Ethiopia’, Reuters, 22 Dec. 2021; Anna, C., ‘Ethiopia says PM, a Nobel Peace laureate, is at battlefield’, *AP News*, 24 Nov. 2021; and Gatopoulos, A., ‘How armed drones may have helped turn the tide in Ethiopia’s war’, *Al Jazeera*, 10 Dec. 2021. On arms transfers to Ethiopia see also chapter 9, section III, in this volume.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Tigrayan fighters announce they are withdrawing from rest of Ethiopia’, *Deutsche Welle*, 20 Dec. 2021.

**Table 7.10.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Mozambique, 2013–21

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Battles	116	43	41	45	40	39	269	880	717
Explosions/remote violence	3	0	0	0	0	0	8	73	105
Protests, riots and strategic developments	3	3	3	2	71	6	20	19	23
Violence against civilians	22	11	4	58	18	179	367	813	313
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>1 785</b>	<b>1 158</b>

Notes: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 6 Apr. 2022.

government announced a temporary halt to its advance into the Tigray region, paving the way for a planned national dialogue in 2022.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Other key developments in 2021*

Ethiopian security forces were also fighting several other anti-government insurgencies during 2021, with those in Oromia and Benshangul-Gumuz regions particularly virulent.<sup>22</sup> Intercommunal tensions over unequal access to land and resources also continued to fuel violence. A coalition of eight anti-government factions, including the OLA, was formed in November 2021.<sup>23</sup>

In the mid-year general election, which had been postponed twice due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the ruling Prosperity party won 410 of 436 seats in the federal parliament, assuring a second term for Prime Minister Abiy. Opposition parties cited harassment and intimidation, and voting was delayed or cancelled in 111 constituencies (of 547 constituencies nationally) owing to insecurity and logistical problems.<sup>24</sup>

Border tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan, which had escalated in late December 2020 in the fertile al-Fashaga borderland, continued in 2021, resulting in inter-state clashes between Sudanese and Ethiopian troops.<sup>25</sup> Relations between the two countries were already strained due to the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the River Nile. In December 2021 Sudanese forces announced full control over the disputed region. The recurrent clashes raised fears of an escalation that could draw in regional allies.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> 'Ethiopia government says military won't cross into Tigray for now', Reuters, 24 Dec. 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Ochieng, Z., 'Ethiopia grapples with Oromo attacks', News Africa, 1 July 2021; and Sew, M., 'EIEP: Marginalization and persecution in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz', Ethiopia Insight, 10 Aug. 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Pamuk, H. and Fick, M., 'New alliance wants to oust Ethiopia's PM by talks or force', Reuters, 5 Nov. 2021.

<sup>24</sup> 'Ethiopia election: Abiy Ahmed wins with huge majority', BBC News, 11 July 2021.

<sup>25</sup> 'Six Sudanese soldiers killed in Ethiopian attack—Sudan military sources', Reuters, 28 Nov. 2021.

<sup>26</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Containing the volatile Sudan–Ethiopia border dispute', Africa Briefing no. 173, 24 June 2021; and 'Sudanese army deployed along the disputed border with Ethiopia', Africanews, 15 Dec. 2021.

## Outlook

While the government's planned national dialogue offered some grounds for optimism, finding solutions to Ethiopia's numerous deeply rooted and complex conflicts is likely to be a lengthy process. Intercommunal grievances across Ethiopia and the ethno-federalist system of governance, which is used to compete for contested territory and governance rights, will make politically negotiated settlements difficult to agree and implement.

## Mozambique

The insurgency in Cabo Delgado province in the north of Mozambique, which began in 2017, continued to escalate in the first half of 2021. The conflict also became more internationalized, with both Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) authorizing military deployments in July 2021 in support of Mozambican government forces. These forces managed to drive the insurgents out of their main strongholds, but smaller-scale attacks continued. Throughout 2021 the crisis in Cabo Delgado deepened the needs of displaced people, with an estimated 745 000 IDPs in northern Mozambique by September 2021, while more than 900 000 people were severely food insecure. At the end of 2021 at least 1.5 million people needed humanitarian assistance and protection in northern Mozambique.<sup>27</sup> Overall, estimated conflict-related fatalities in Mozambique decreased by about 35 per cent in 2021 (compared to 2020) but remained almost twice as high compared to 2019 (see table 7.10).

### *International intervention in Cabo Delgado*

The main insurgent group in Cabo Delgado is Ansar al-Sunna, although locals call it 'al-Shabab' (there is no connection to the al-Shabab group in Somalia). Motivations for joining the group are diverse: though some are committed jihadists, many are likely driven by economic and political exclusion.<sup>28</sup> During 2019 the group reportedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and analysts now refer to it as being part of the Islamic State Central Africa Province.<sup>29</sup> Despite the extent of the group's fragmentation and links to the Islamic State being difficult to discern, the US government designated the insurgents

<sup>27</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), pp. 163–65.

<sup>28</sup> On the roots of the insurgency see International Crisis Group, *Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado*, Africa Report no. 303 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 11 June 2021), pp. 3–24; and Jentzsch, C., 'Ignorance, denial and insurgency in Mozambique', Africa is a Country, 17 Dec. 2021.

<sup>29</sup> On the origins of Islamist groups in northern Mozambique see Habibe, S., Forquilha, S. and Pereira, J., *Islamic Radicalization in Northern Mozambique: The Case of Mocímboa da Praia*, Cadernos IESE no. 17/2019 (Institute for Social and Economic Studies: Maputo, Sep. 2019).

**Table 7.11.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Somalia, 2013–21

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Battles	1 985	2 893	2 785	3 729	2 686	3 034	2 154	1 891	1 989
Explosions/remote violence	543	955	784	1 518	2 493	1 765	1 696	869	804
Protests, riots and strategic developments	15	19	8	27	74	48	23	24	81
Violence against civilians	629	602	562	676	890	573	640	465	387
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 172</b>	<b>4 469</b>	<b>4 139</b>	<b>5 950</b>	<b>6 143</b>	<b>5 420</b>	<b>4 513</b>	<b>3 249</b>	<b>3 261</b>

Notes: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 6 Apr. 2022.

an international terrorist organization in March 2021.<sup>30</sup> With Mozambique state forces stretched by the conflict, local communities formed self-defence militias. The government also increasingly relied on military assistance from private security contractors from South Africa.<sup>31</sup>

In March 2021 Ansar al-Sunna attacked the coastal town of Palma, close to a major liquefied natural gas project run by French company Total, and in late April Total suspended its operations.<sup>32</sup> By the end of May 2021 pressure was building for Mozambique to accept international military assistance to contain the insurrection.<sup>33</sup> In June 2021 the SADC Summit established the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and on 15 July it was deployed to the region. Although the mission has an authorized ceiling of just under 3000 personnel, by the end of 2021 only about a third of this number had been deployed.<sup>34</sup> Although initially mandated for three months, the mission was extended for an additional three months on 5 October 2021. SAMIM operates in cooperation with Mozambique government forces and a Rwanda Joint Force contingent, initially numbering 1000 personnel, that had also arrived in July.<sup>35</sup>

Government and allied foreign forces began to recapture territory in the second half of 2021. In August 2021, for example, the port town of Mocimboa

<sup>30</sup> US Department of State, 'State Department terrorist designations of ISIS affiliates and leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique', 10 Mar. 2021; and Hamming, T. R., 'The Islamic State in Mozambique', *Lawfare*, 24 Jan. 2021.

<sup>31</sup> 'Paramount and Lionel Dyck massively boost Nyusi's firepower', *Africa Intelligence*, 10 Dec. 2020; and Cenola, T. and Kleinfeld, P., 'Mozambique's Cabo Delgado: Militants advance as aid access shrinks', *New Humanitarian*, 21 Dec. 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Burke, J. and Beaumont, P., 'Isis claims deadly attack in northern Mozambique', *The Guardian*, 29 Mar. 2021; and Ahmed, K., 'Mozambique insurgency: 20,000 still trapped near gas plant six weeks after attack', *The Guardian*, 7 May 2021.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. International Crisis Group, *Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado*, Africa Report no. 303 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 11 June 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government, 23 June 2021. For further details on SAMIM's mandate and personnel deployed see chapter 2, section II, in this volume.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Defence, Republic of Rwanda, 'Rwanda deploys joint force to Mozambique', 10 July 2021. For further details about the Rwanda Joint Force see chapter 2, section II, in this volume.

daPraia, which had been the centre of the insurgency and captured by Ansar al-Sunna a year earlier, was reclaimed in an operation led by the Rwanda Joint Force.<sup>36</sup> By the end of 2021 the Rwanda Joint Force contingent had increased to 2500 troops.<sup>37</sup>

### *Outlook*

While the international military intervention dealt a significant blow to the insurgency, small groups of insurgents continued to destabilize pockets of territory in Cabo Delgado and spread into neighbouring Niassa province and Tanzania.<sup>38</sup> Resolving the crisis will require measures aimed at addressing root causes, including a more equitable distribution of the proceeds from the province's mineral and hydrocarbon resources.<sup>39</sup>

## **Somalia**

Since 2012 the main armed conflict in Somalia has been between the Somali government, backed by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and US forces, and al-Shabab insurgents, which still dominate most rural parts of south-central Somalia. Government forces have struggled to mount a cohesive response, partly due to ongoing political factionalism in Somalia. In addition, Somalia's rural populations continued to suffer from clan-based violence, with weak state security forces unable to prevent clashes over water and pasture resources.<sup>40</sup> Overall, estimated conflict-related fatalities in 2021 were similar to 2020, and although these two years were the lowest in the past eight years, annual fatalities remained above 3200 (see table 7.11).

This armed violence has contributed to a prolonged humanitarian crisis in Somalia, which is also characterized by climate shocks (such as floods), drought, disease outbreaks (including the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020–21) and weak social protection. A third consecutive season of below-average rainfall caused water shortages in 2021, adding to food insecurity. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from 4.2 million in 2019 to 7.7 million in 2021, while the number of IDPs rose from 770 000 in 2019 to 2.9 million in 2021.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> 'Why Mozambique invited foreign troops to fight its jihadists', *The Economist*, 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>37</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Winning peace in Mozambique's embattled north', Africa Briefing no. 178, 10 Feb. 2022, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> International Crisis Group (note 37), pp. 7–9; and Miguel, R. and Baptista, A., 'Officials say insurgency in northern Mozambique is spreading', VOA, 17 Dec. 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Hanlon, J., 'Mozambique's jihadists and the "curse" of gas and rubies', BBC News, 18 Sep. 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Hujale, M. and Davies, L., "'Nothing to eat": Somalia hit by triple threat of climate crisis, Covid and conflict', *The Guardian*, 23 Aug. 2021.

<sup>41</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), pp. 168–71. On the impact of climate-related change in livelihood options and migration, as well as peacebuilding in Somalia, see also Eklöv, K. and Krampe, F., *Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Somalia*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 53 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Oct. 2019).



*The future of AMISOM and US forces*

In 2018 the AU Peace and Security Council adopted a security transition plan for AMISOM for the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali forces, with final withdrawal of the mission to take place by the end of 2021.<sup>42</sup> An independent assessment in May 2021 recommended that it be replaced by a hybrid AU–UN multidimensional stabilization mission.<sup>43</sup> In October 2021, however, the Somali government rejected the proposal and AMISOM’s mandate was subsequently renewed until the end of March 2022 in order to allow the AU, the Somali government, troop contributors and donors to agree on the mission’s future.<sup>44</sup>

The USA continued its engagement in Somalia, conducting 12 air strikes in 2021 (compared to 54 in 2020), with an independent assessment recording 19 incidents in 2021 (and 72 in 2020).<sup>45</sup> The USA has been carrying out air strikes against al-Shabab in Somalia since 2007 and from a US airbase in Niger since 2019. The number of air strikes in 2021 was the lowest since 2015. In December 2020 President Donald J. Trump announced the withdrawal of all US troops from Somalia (thought to number about 700), and on 17 January 2021 the US military confirmed that the drawdown had been completed.<sup>46</sup> However, reports suggested that many of these troops had been repositioned to neighbouring countries in East Africa and were ‘commuting’ to deployments in Somalia. US training of allied forces and special operations activity also continued.<sup>47</sup>

*Political fragmentation and Somalia’s federalism*

Political relations between the federal government and some of the federal member states remained tense in 2021. Electoral processes and the decision by Somalia’s parliament in April 2021 to extend the incumbent president’s mandate by two years were the primary sources of tension.<sup>48</sup> Power-sharing

<sup>42</sup> Oluoch, F., ‘AMISOM ready to withdraw’, *East African*, 10 Nov. 2018. On developments within AMISOM in 2018 see *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 169–71. On the force strength of AMISOM and other mission developments in 2021 see chapter 2, sections II and III, in this volume.

<sup>43</sup> African Union, ‘Report of the Independent Assessment Team on the African Union’s engagement in and with Somalia post 2021’, 30 May 2021.

<sup>44</sup> AU, Communiqué of the 1042nd Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the Level of Heads of State and Government on the update on the situation in Somalia, 28 Oct. 2021; UN Security Council Resolution 2614, 21 Dec. 2021; and International Crisis Group, ‘Reforming the AU Mission in Somalia’, Africa Briefing no. 176, 15 Nov. 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Airwars, ‘Declared and alleged US actions in Somalia’, accessed 6 Apr. 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Cooper, H., ‘Trump orders all American troops out of Somalia’, *New York Times*, 4 Dec. 2020; and Anna, C., ‘US military says its troop removal from Somalia is complete’, *AP News*, 17 Jan. 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Myers, M., ‘US troops now “commuting to work” to help Somalia fight al-Shabab’, *Military Times*, 27 Apr. 2021; and Turse, N., ‘Washington is not telling the truth about US troops in Somalia’, *Responsible Statecraft*, 3 Nov. 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Walsh, D., ‘Somalia’s president extends term by two years, drawing condemnation’, *New York Times*, 14 Apr. 2021; and Sperber, A., ‘Back from the brink? Somalia’s political crisis explained’, *New Humanitarian*, 20 May 2021.

arrangements along clan lines are common at all levels of Somali governance. In September 2020 it was decided to maintain the country's indirect voting system, whereby state legislatures and clan delegates select lawmakers for the national parliament, who in turn choose the president. However, for most of 2021 the electoral process remained contested and subject to delays amid disagreement between Somalia's political leaders.<sup>49</sup> By the end of 2021 the election of the 54-member Senate chamber had been completed, and over half of the 275 lawmakers in the House of the People had also been elected. Once the latter election process is completed the long-awaited presidential elections will take place in 2022.<sup>50</sup>

## South Sudan

On 9 July 2021 South Sudan marked its 10th anniversary as an independent state. The year also marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).<sup>51</sup> Although a post-independence civil war (2013–15) was curtailed by a 2015 peace agreement, the legacy of violence continued in the form of an armed conflict waged primarily between two groups: the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) led by President Salva Kiir, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) and the Nuer White Army, led by Vice President Riek Machar. Although the main division in the subsequent conflict has been between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, underlying conflict dynamics are primarily political and vary considerably across the country. Opposition groups have become more fractured and localized.

Kiir and Machar signed a new peace deal in September 2018—the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan—but since then implementation has been contested, partial and slow.<sup>52</sup> In February 2020 one of the key deadlocks was broken by the formation of a long-awaited unity government, alongside changes to the number and boundaries of regional states (with the number of such states reduced from 32 to 10). Though some progress was made in 2021 in implementing the 2018 peace agreement, armed conflict continued to impact communities in multiple parts of the country, and further fragmentation of SPLM/A-IO occurred.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Kahiye, M., 'Somali elections delayed again; no new date set', VOA, 26 July 2021.

<sup>50</sup> 'Somali president, PM trade accusations over delays to ongoing elections', Reuters, 27 Dec. 2021.

<sup>51</sup> On personnel numbers and other developments within UNMISS in 2021 see chapter 2, sections II and III, in this volume.

<sup>52</sup> Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, 12 Sep. 2018.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan submitted pursuant to resolution 2521 (2020), S/2021/365, 15 Apr. 2021. On developments in South Sudan in 2017–21 see *SIPRI Yearbook 2018*, pp. 99–100; *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 140–43; *SIPRI Yearbook 2020*, pp. 208–11; and *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, pp. 225–28.

**Table 7.12.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in South Sudan, 2013–21

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Battles	1 340	4 456	2 309	2 541	3 395	1 133	825	1 701	1 203
Explosions/remote violence	18	61	61	46	18	30	10	12	5
Protests, riots and strategic developments	0	11	24	1	4	5	4	7	11
Violence against civilians	2 999	1 886	1 208	958	1 424	532	972	660	937
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 357</b>	<b>6 414</b>	<b>3 602</b>	<b>3 546</b>	<b>4 841</b>	<b>1 700</b>	<b>1 811</b>	<b>2 380</b>	<b>2 156</b>

Notes: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 6 Apr. 2022.

### *The humanitarian situation*

Humanitarian needs in South Sudan remained exceptionally high in 2021 due to years of persistent armed conflict, enduring economic and climate-related vulnerabilities, and weak basic services. Over two-thirds (8.4 million people) of the population needed humanitarian assistance, and the country faced its highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition since declaring independence: an estimated 7.2 million people were acutely food insecure from April to July 2021, and over half a million people were brought back from the brink of famine during the year.<sup>54</sup> A third consecutive year of flooding affected 809 000 people, while humanitarian operations were disrupted by increased levels of violence against humanitarian workers. Some 4 million people in South Sudan were displaced during 2021 due to conflict, insecurity and weather shocks (1.7 million people internally displaced and an additional 2.3 million refugees in neighbouring countries).<sup>55</sup>

More broadly, a climate of repression and political intolerance, arbitrary arrests, disappearances and extrajudicial killings continued in 2021. The armed conflicts were characterized by gross human rights violations and abuses, with South Sudanese women and girls facing extreme levels of conflict-related sexual violence: over 65 per cent of South Sudanese women have experienced sexual or physical violence—double the global average.<sup>56</sup> Economic crimes were described by the UN Human Rights Council as 'constituting a grand-scale theft of the nation's oil and non-oil fiscal revenues'.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), pp. 172–77.

<sup>56</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), p. 146; and United Nations, Human Rights Council, 'Conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan', A/HRC/49/CRP.4, 21 Mar. 2022.

<sup>57</sup> United Nations, Human Rights Council, Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, A/HRC/49/78, 15 Feb. 2022, p. 18. See also United Nations, Human Rights Council, 'Human rights violations and related economic crimes in the republic of South Sudan', A/HRC/48/CRP.3, 23 Sep. 2021; and International Crisis Group, *Oil or Nothing: Dealing With South Sudan's Bleeding Finances*, Africa Report no. 305 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 6 Oct. 2021).

*Implementation of the 2018 peace agreement and ongoing conflict*

Implementation of the 2018 peace agreement continued, albeit with further delays and missed deadlines. Key benchmarks for the transition achieved in 2021 included: completion of the appointment of governors for all 10 regional states (January); appointment of 550 legislators for the reconstituted national parliament (11 May) and its subsequent inauguration (30 August); establishment of a taskforce to oversee and coordinate transitional justice and other judicial reforms (10 May); and the launch of a constitution-making process (25 May).<sup>58</sup> Electoral preparations are due to be conducted in parallel with the constitution-making process, with elections potentially slated for early 2023 (although there is no consensus on the exact timeline).<sup>59</sup> A major challenge, however, was the lack of progress in transitional security arrangements. These are pivotal to almost every aspect of the agreement, but the formation, graduation and deployment of unified forces continued to be delayed.<sup>60</sup>

While violence directly attributable to the conflict parties to the civil war has reduced significantly since 2018, the scale and intensity of intercommunal violence has increased in virtually every region of the country.<sup>61</sup> In June 2021 UNMISS reported that more than 80 per cent of civilian casualties suffered that year were attributable to intercommunal violence and community-based militias.<sup>62</sup> There was a particularly fierce upsurge in fighting in June–October 2021 in Western Equatoria.<sup>63</sup>

This widespread violence is reflected in the continuing high level of estimated conflict-related fatalities in 2021 (see table 7.12), although violence against civilians documented by UNMISS saw a 42 per cent reduction in 2021 compared to 2020. At least 3414 civilians were subject to killing, injury, abduction or conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan in 2021 according to UNMISS, compared to 5850 in 2020. These incidents resulted in

<sup>58</sup> United Nations, Security Council, 8801st meeting, 'Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan', S/PV.8801, 21 June 2021.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations, Security Council, 8859th meeting, 'Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan', S/PV.8859, 15 Sep. 2021.

<sup>60</sup> United Nations, Security Council, 8931st meeting, 'Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan', S/PV.8931, 15 Dec. 2021.

<sup>61</sup> For details see United Nations, Security Council, 'Situation in South Sudan', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/566, 14 June 2021, pp. 4–5; United Nations, Security Council, 'Situation in South Sudan', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/784, 9 Sep. 2021, pp. 4–6; and United Nations, Security Council, 'Situation in South Sudan', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/1015, 7 Dec. 2021, pp. 3–5. For analysis of the forces and structures that regulate, permit, or intensify intercommunal conflicts see Watson, D., 'Surface tension: "Communal" violence and elite ambitions in South Sudan', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 19 Aug. 2021.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, S/PV.8801 (note 58), p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> International Crisis Group, 'South Sudan's other war: Resolving the insurgency in Equatoria', Africa Briefing no. 169, 25 Feb. 2021; and Amnesty International, 'South Sudan: Survivors describe killings, mass displacement and terror amid fighting in Western Equatoria', 9 Dec. 2021.

1907 civilian deaths (compared to 2425 civilian deaths from armed violence in 2020).<sup>64</sup>

## Sudan

A major transition of power occurred in Sudan in 2019 following the removal of President Omar al-Bashir by the Sudanese army. Under a subsequent power-sharing agreement reached between the Sudanese Transitional Military Council and a coalition of opposition and protest groups, Sudan was scheduled to hold elections following a 39-month period of shared rule between the military and civilian groups.<sup>65</sup> The new transitional administration inherited a deepening economic and humanitarian crisis, as well as a legacy of armed conflict in Darfur (involving a fragmented mosaic of non-state armed groups) and in the southern border states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan (where the Sudan People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) controls significant chunks of territory).<sup>66</sup> Some of the armed groups from Darfur were also present in Libya and South Sudan. In 2020 further significant but complex peace agreements were reached with the main armed groups.<sup>67</sup> A military coup in October 2021, however, produced a new crisis in Sudan's political transition process.

### *From peace process to military coup*

On 3 October 2020 the Sudanese government and representatives of several armed groups signed the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan (JPA), a highly complex agreement that brought together and expanded the individual agreements signed earlier in the year.<sup>68</sup> It consisted of 10 different chapters—including 6 chapters of bilateral agreements with the different armed groups—and set out in considerable detail the future federal system. Moreover, it established a complicated web of transnational justice mechanisms and extensive transitional security arrangements, as well as implementation deadlines for many of these issues.<sup>69</sup> While there was

<sup>64</sup> Human Rights Division, UN Mission in South Sudan, 'Annual brief on violence affecting civilians, January–December 2021', Feb. 2022.

<sup>65</sup> Burke, J. and Salih, Z. M., 'Sudanese military and protesters sign power-sharing accord', *The Guardian*, 17 July 2019.

<sup>66</sup> For details of the armed groups in Darfur see United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan, S/2022/48, 24 Jan. 2022, pp. 17–23. On the key armed opposition groups in Sudan as a whole see *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, table 7.15, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> On developments in Sudan in 2019–20 see *SIPRI Yearbook 2020*, pp. 211–14; and *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, pp. 228–32.

<sup>68</sup> Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Parties to the Peace Process, Official English version, 3 Oct. 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Ali, Z., 'The Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan: Summary and analysis', Version 5, International IDEA, 23 Oct. 2020.

positive support for the JPA in many parts of Sudan, eastern Sudan became the epicentre of demonstrations against it.<sup>70</sup>

Though the Sudanese government and the signatory armed groups continued to support the JPA in 2021, progress on implementation—aside from power-sharing arrangements—was either slow (on security arrangements) or negligible (in respect of provisions relating to IDPs, refugees, nomads and herders, land, justice and accountability).<sup>71</sup> The expected funding from international donors to implement the JPA's provisions did not materialize, jeopardizing its overall implementation and the peace process.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, by mid 2021, tensions between the civilian and military sides of the transitional government were growing.<sup>73</sup>

After several rumoured coup attempts and one failed coup attempt on 21 September 2021, a military coup occurred on 25 October 2021. Prime Minister Hamdok, senior officials and political activists were arrested, triggering widespread protests and condemnation.<sup>74</sup> At least 44 people were killed, and hundreds were injured as a result of the excessive use of force by security forces.<sup>75</sup> Implementation of the JPA also became more problematic, especially as bilateral development cooperation measures to support the transition were suspended following the military coup, as was Sudan's membership of the AU.<sup>76</sup> After weeks of domestic and international efforts to find a way out of the crisis, a political agreement was reached on 21 November that included the reinstatement of Prime Minister Hamdok. However, there was significant opposition to this new agreement from large segments of Sudanese society, and it did little to assuage the concerns of foreign partners and donors—especially given Hamdok resigned just 42 days after his reinstatement.<sup>77</sup>

### *Conflict and humanitarian needs*

In 2021 parts of Sudan—including Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan—witnessed increased insecurity and localized violence. Clashes occurred among armed groups and with the security forces. There were also attacks on

<sup>70</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan, S/2021/40, 13 Jan. 2021, pp. 7, 11–12.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations, S/2022/48 (note 66), pp. 6–9, 14–17.

<sup>72</sup> Takpiny, B., 'South Sudan's peace deal under serious threat, warns UN', Anadolu Agency, 8 Dec. 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Zaidan, Y., 'Sudan's democratic transition needs a jumpstart', World Politics Review, 13 July 2021.

<sup>74</sup> 'Condemnation, civil disobedience actions against Sudan military coup continue', Dabanga, 28 Oct. 2021; and 'Marches of the Millions: Sudan doctors count 98 injured from tear gas and stun grenades', Dabanga, 2 Dec. 2021.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations, Security Council, 8925th meeting, 'Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and the South Sudan', S/PV.8925, 10 Dec. 2021, p. 2. See also Human Rights Watch, 'US Congressional briefing statement: Human rights situation in Sudan', 13 Dec. 2021.

<sup>76</sup> 'African Union, World Bank suspend Sudan over military coup', Africanews, 27 Oct. 2021.

<sup>77</sup> 'Sudan's Hamdok resigns as prime minister amid political deadlock', Al Jazeera, 2 Jan. 2022.

**Table 7.13.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Sudan, 2013–21

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Battles	5 595	3 049	2 440	2 939	851	700	321	565	1 037
Explosions/remote violence	479	263	263	294	33	28	17	13	13
Protests, riots and strategic developments	342	15	9	27	34	37	213	34	83
Violence against civilians	380	831	756	639	373	289	225	345	519
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 796</b>	<b>4 158</b>	<b>3 468</b>	<b>3 899</b>	<b>1 291</b>	<b>1 054</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>1 652</b>

*Notes:* For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

*Source:* ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 6 Apr. 2022.

villages and communities hosting IDPs and outbreaks of violence involving nomads, pastoralist communities and farmers, mostly due to disputes over land ownership, access to resources and criminality.<sup>78</sup> Finally, clashes between Sudanese and Ethiopian forces occurred in the fertile al-Fashaga borderland.<sup>79</sup> Overall, estimated conflict-related fatalities increased by over 70 per cent in 2021 (and battle-related fatalities almost doubled) compared to 2020, reaching the highest level since 2016 (see table 7.13). Sexual and gender-based violence remained endemic in Darfur.<sup>80</sup>

Sudan has had a UN inter-agency humanitarian appeal for at least 20 consecutive years, with humanitarian needs in Sudan continuing to rise in 2021 due to localized conflict, climatic events, disease outbreaks and economic crisis: 14.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance by the end of the year, up from 7.5 million at the end of 2020. Over 365 000 people were displaced during 2021, many of whom had already been displaced as a result of earlier crises and conflict. The country also hosts about 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers (two-thirds from South Sudan), making Sudan one of the top 10 refugee-hosting countries in the world. Heavy rains and floods affected about 314 000 people during the year, and during the first nine months of 2021 about 1.6 million cases of malaria were reported across Sudan.<sup>81</sup>

Having been deployed in Darfur since 2007, the joint UN–AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)—a major joint peace operations mission that at its height in 2007 was authorized to have about 26 000 personnel—closed on 31 December 2020 and by 30 June 2021 had completed the withdrawal of its remaining 6600 personnel. It was replaced on 1 January 2021 with the much smaller special political mission (just under 100 personnel), UN Integrated

<sup>78</sup> See e.g. 'At least 138 have died in ongoing West Darfur attacks while Jebel Moon leaders sign non-aggression pledge', Dabanga, 10 Dec. 2021; and United Nations, S/2022/48 (note 66), pp. 25–28.

<sup>79</sup> International Crisis Group (note 26); and '20 Sudan troops killed in Ethiopia border clash', Dabanga, 29 Nov. 2021.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations, S/2022/48 (note 66), pp. 29–31.

<sup>81</sup> UN OCHA (note 1), pp. 21, 178–81.

Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS).<sup>82</sup> The transfer of arms and other military materiel into Darfur continued, in violation of the UN arms embargo.<sup>83</sup>

### *Outlook*

The future of the Sudanese transition remains uncertain, with the military coup of 25 October a major setback for a civilian-led democratic future. Slow implementation of the JPA and rising intercommunal tensions in Darfur and other areas of the country remain sources of concern.

<sup>82</sup> United Nations, 'Withdrawal of Hybrid Peacekeeping Operation in Darfur completed by 30 June deadline, under-secretary-general tells Security Council, outlining plans to liquidate assets', SC/14587, 27 July 2021. On the closure of UNAMID and comparisons of mission size with UNITAMS see chapter 2, sections II and III, in this volume.

<sup>83</sup> The UN embargo on Sudan prohibits transfers to non-state actors in the region of Darfur. For further details see chapter 14, section II, in this volume.