

Conflict Weekly

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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(During a rally in the city of Quito, a supporter displays a leaflet of assassinated presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio. Image Source: Carlos Noriega, AP Photo)

Political Violence in Ecuador, Wildfires in Hawaii, and Two Years of Taliban Rule



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



Ecuador: Increasing political violence

Madhura Mahesh

In the news

On 9 August, Ecuadorian presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was killed at a political rally in Quito. Villavicencio had previously received death threats from Los Choneros, a powerful gang in Ecuador allegedly associated with the Sinaloa Cartel. He was one of the eight presidential candidates in the snap elections and campaigned on fighting corruption and gang violence in the country. After the assassination, incumbent President Guillermo Lasso announced a three-day nationwide state of emergency. The Ecuadorian State Attorney General's Office said six Colombians were arrested for the assassination.

On 14 August, a member of the Citizen Revolution Movement (CRM) party, Pedro Briones, was shot in Esmeraldas. Briones belonged to the same party as former President Rafael Correa and leading presidential candidate Luisa Gonzalez. Gonzalez has reportedly increased her security and said: "Ecuador is experiencing its bloodiest era."

Issues at large

First, the strategic location of Ecuador and its vulnerability to drug exports and gang violence. Ecuador is located between Colombia in the north and Peru in the south. While it is not a coca cultivator or cocaine producer, Ecuador historically has been a transit country whose ports were used to export drugs to the US and Europe. After the 2016 peace deal between the Colombian government and the FARC rebels, the resulting rebelling factions took refuge in Ecuador and, along with local gangs, established drug export operations. This also drew transnational crime groups and powerful cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel to Ecuador to ship their drugs to the US and Europe. The 2016 peace deal also led to a crackdown on drug production and exports from Columbia, whose operations were shifted to Ecuador through the porous borders between the two countries. On 28 December 2022, the Colombian and Ecuadorian armed forces signed an agreement to combat drug trafficking and organised crime along the 586-kilometre border between the two countries.

Second, increasing gang violence. Manta, Guayaquil, and Esmeraldas have seen a surge in gang violence after the Covid-19 pandemic. Ecuador's worsening economic situation has resulted in many people joining gangs. Additionally, weakening state institutions and the increasing use of informal labour have paved the way for the rise of gangs in Ecuador. Increasing gang presence in Ecuador has resulted in rising homicide rates. Human Rights Watch recorded an over 80 per cent increase from 2021 to 2022. In 2022, homicide rates increased to 25 per cent per 100,000 from 13.7 per cent per 100,000 in 2021. The Ecuadorian national police reported that in the first six months of 2023, 3,568 people died due to gang violence compared to 4,600 deaths recorded in 2022. On 30 April, Guayaquil witnessed a brutal armed attack where ten people were killed overnight in a supposed turf war between rival gangs. On 23 July, Manta Mayor Agustin Intriago was killed while he was on a routine inspection.

Third, the rise of prison gangs. Since 2021, Ecuador has seen several prison riots, the latest being on 22 and 23 July. Ecuadorian prisons act as the base for all gang activity in the country. Leaders of the dominant gangs are all imprisoned in Ecuadorian prisons. After 2016, the rise of gang-related violence in Ecuador was dealt with mass arrests and strict pre-trial

detention, which led to various gangs making deals and forming alliances in prison. The gangs are run from prisons with funding from other powerful transnational criminal organisations from Mexico and the Balkans. Along with gang violence outside prisons, the leaders also organise riots, hold guards hostage, and have turf wars in prisons. The gangs have been able to take control of the prisons due to a lack of trained prison guards and lax reforms for improving inmates' conditions and laws regarding overcrowding of prisons. Ecuador follows a pre-trial detention policy and arrests anyone suspected of a minor drug offence. This has crowded prisons as Ecuador's prisons have a capacity of 30,169 detainees; however, they currently house over 32,798 detainees. Additionally, many prisons are not in use due to structural and safety issues. These prisons have become recruitment centres for gangs, forcing prisoners to swear their allegiance to gangs controlling the prisons.

Fourth, snap elections. On 17 May, incumbent President Guillermo Lasso dissolved the National Assembly, a day after his impeachment trial called for snap elections on 20 August. Afterwards, eight presidential candidates registered amid the tense situation of rising gang violence. Each candidate has outlined reforms to Ecuadorian security infrastructure and combating increasing gang influence and power.

In perspective

First, a dichotomy in response to gang violence across South America. After the assassination of Villavicencio, the rest of the presidential candidates have proposed various solutions to combat the rising gang violence. The solutions reflect the larger debate in South America regarding the same. There are two main camps: the tolerant and El Salvadorian methods. The tolerant method focuses on the root cause of the rise in gang violence and holds the leaders of the gangs accountable. In some regions, it also includes peacefully working with rebels and gangs to reduce gang violence. The El Salvadorian method introduced by President Nayib Bukele outlines using military power and combating gang violence with a "heavy hand." This approach has been heavily criticised by the UN and other human rights organisations for the indiscriminate arrests, killings and the erosion of human rights in the country. The challenge in Ecuador is to combat gang violence and outside influences, including the Albanian mafia, who provide arms and money to the gangs. Until 2020, Albanians could enter Ecuador without a visa, leading to a migration of Albanian organised crime groups, who were attracted to Ecuador's booming local cartel business.

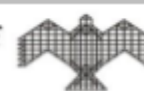
Second, lax governmental policies. The recent killings have shed light on previous presidents' lax governmental policies, which led to the rise of gangs in Ecuador. The 2009 decision by former President Rafael Correa not to extend the lease of a US military base in Manta left a gap in the Ecuador-Colombia border protection, making it easier for drugs to enter the country. Former President Lenin Moreno largely focused on clearing Ecuador's foreign debt. Moreno introduced budget cuts where he slashed spending on prisons and police, which weakened Ecuador's security.

Hawaii: The wildfires

Dhriti Mukherjee

In the News

On 8 August, land and atmospheric conditions created "fire weather," leading to a bushfire developing into wildfires that spread across the Hawaiian island of Maui. The blaze has



affected the city of Lahaina, claiming 100 lives and forcibly displacing thousands over nine days. Although investigations are underway as the cause is yet to be ascertained, more casualties are to be expected. Hawaii Governor Josh Green stated: "It is a product, in my estimation, of certainly global warming combined with drought, combined with a super storm, where we had a hurricane offshore several hundred miles, still generating large winds." However, the blame is not solely on climatic conditions. In response to the unfolding crisis, local officials have taken measures to manage the situation and provide support. However, evacuation plans have received heavy criticism in recent days for failure to issue warnings on time, sending out statements that generated a false sense of safety and hope, not having adequate quantities of water, and being inefficient in the rescue and identification of victims.

President Joe Biden commented on the issue: "Not only our prayers are with those impacted – but every asset we have will be available to them." Additionally, he approved a complete federal reimbursement for any emergency expenditure that would be incurred. Although the federal government has promised USD 2.3 million in aid to families, the fires continue to burn and the island braces itself for more inevitable losses.

Issues at Large

First, lack of government preparedness. None of the established emergency systems were implemented efficiently, leading to Hawaii's attorney general announcing an investigation. As per an official report released by the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency in 2022, the danger of wildfires was ranked as "low," which has been used to justify the state's ill-preparedness and "inadequate resources." The country's fire department plan included "nothing about what can and should be done to prevent fires." However, reports over the last five years have predicted an increase in similar hurricane winds, meaning that officials were aware of the potential threat. Emergency officials also confirmed that none of the 80 sirens went off.

Second, the environmental impact of tourist activities. Hawaii has been a popular tourist destination for decades. The fires, however, unmasked the darker side of over-tourism that the island has been grappling with for a while now. Historically, Hawaii is not an island that is prone to severe wildfires due to its humid weather and lush natural environment. However, the increase in tourists led to wetlands being paved to construct hotels and vacation homes to meet the demand. Scientists have also come forth with claims that non-residents with vacation homes who are ignorant of the native flora and fauna are responsible for planting dry grass that increases the possibility of wildfires.

Third, community displacement and societal fragility. The aftermath of the wildfires has exposed the vulnerabilities of communities and the potential for displacement during natural disasters. The town of Lahaina, once the royal capital of Hawaii, is a "heritage museum." Furthermore, natives have expressed that they are facing a deep sense of community loss with the burning of sites which are of cultural and ancestral significance.

Fourth, the state of emergency response. The handling of wildfires has underlined the inefficiency of emergency response systems. It has brought Hawaiian Electric, the largest electricity supplier in the US state of Hawaii, into negative limelight. 95 per cent of the state's residents are customers of this company, which failed to deploy a public power shut-off plan. The emergency siren systems also failed to go off. Hawaiian Electric now faces a lawsuit by

Lahaina residents for its inaction and failure to shut off power lines once the wildfires began. Residents stated that the company "chose not to de-energize their power lines during the High Wind Watch and Red Flag Warning conditions for Maui before the Lahaina Fire started."

In perspective

First, sustainable tourism versus economic ramifications. The confluence of Hawaiian wildfires and the impact of the growing tourism industry has exposed the difficulty in balancing economic vitality and human empathy. Regulation of the industry extends beyond potentially limiting the number of tourists visiting Hawaii, and should include monitoring actions taken by hotels and resorts to meet the demand. However, there is another side to the argument: tourism is the island's "economic engine" and could bring in the revenue needed to minimise losses posed by these wildfires. Thus, it is a tricky equation between ensuring sufficient resources for locals and securing long-term financial health.

Second, adaptive ecosystem management. The destruction of the environment, which grew as per the island's natural mild tropical climatic conditions, has led to suggestions by experts to restore the native vegetation. This can help create a natural barrier against other wildfires. Exploring the indigenous practice of implementing controlled burns to reduce flammable vegetation is also a solution.

Third, a blueprint for future crises. Despite knowing the importance of a power shut-off plan and studying Californian wildfire mitigation plans, Hawaiian Electric presented an inefficient front. This showcases the need for companies to have practice drills and locals to be informed of how to respond in these situations. The construction of adaptable infrastructure that facilitates evacuation, and emergency shelters, can enhance the quality of responsiveness.

SPECIAL COMMENTARY

Afghanistan: Two Years of the Taliban's Rule

As the Taliban completes two years in power, the struggle for legitimacy continues amid the repression of women's rights and worsening humanitarian and economic crisis.

Abigail Miriam Fernandez

On 15 August 2023 marked two years of the Taliban Takeover of Kabul and the establishment of the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." The day was flanked with parades and rallies as Taliban supporters claimed: "Death to the Europeans, death to the Westerners, long live the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, death to the Americans," among other slogans. In a statement, the spokesperson for the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid, stated: "On the second anniversary of the conquest of Kabul, we would like to congratulate the mujahid nation of Afghanistan and ask them to thank Almighty Allah for this great victory," adding, "Now that overall security is ensured in the country, the entire territory of the country is managed under a single leadership, an Islamic system is in place, and everything is explained from the angle of Sharia." Although the day was marked with celebrations in a few parts of the country, the realities for the Afghan people are far from celebrations.

In the past two years, the Taliban has secured its position in Afghanistan without direct opposition. However, the Taliban has remained largely unsuccessful in their agenda and failed to deliver their promises made in 2021. The Taliban's rule in the past two years has



been one of repressive gender laws, economic turmoil, a humanitarian crisis and a struggle for legitimacy.

The following are the major takeaways.

1. Persisting repression of women's rights

The Taliban's repressive policy towards women and girls has not only increased but also has been strident in the past two years. According to a US Institute of Peace (USIP) report, over 70 restrictive decrees have been issued in Afghanistan against women and girls. The Taliban has issued various decrees banning female students from attending school past the sixth grade and university education; additionally, restricting women from working for NGOs and UN agencies operating in the country. Women are also restricted from entering parks and sporting events and are also not allowed to travel without the company of a male family member. The Taliban has been heavily criticised for these restrictive decrees; however, these rulings have been viewed by the Taliban as not against women but for their benefit to ensure that women are protected. Unlike in the past, Afghan women have taken to the streets demanding freedom of movement, education, profession and inclusion in the acting government.

The Taliban's repressive policy towards women and girls is the opposite of what they had initially promised in 2021. They promised that women would be allowed to exercise their rights within Sharia law, including the right to work and pursue their education. However, the Taliban has systematically restricted and confined women to their homes, stripping them of their fundamental rights. Any hopes of the Taliban 2.0 regime having a different approach towards women's rights have been completely tarnished. In prospects, the plausibility of the Taliban giving room for the development of Afghan women and girls is unlikely.

2. Deteriorating economic and humanitarian crisis

Afghanistan's economy had been in shambles even before the Taliban's takeover in 2021. However, the Afghan economy fell into steep decline in the following months, following the halt of international aid. Additionally, the Da Afghanistan Bank, the country's central Bank, is being isolated from the international banking system, around USD nine billion of the Central Bank's reserves in American and European banks have been frozen, and the Taliban is restricted from accessing these funds. Over the past two years, several economic developments have taken place to reduce the shock on the economy. The most important development is regarding frozen assets. The United States, in cooperation with Switzerland, established a trust fund for the USD 3.5 billion Afghan assets, which is half of the USD seven billion reserve of the New York Banks. Other developments include the printing and transfer of 100 billion Afghani banknotes for Afghanistan by a Polish company. Additionally, international aid was restarted towards the end of 2022 to stabilise the economy. According to the World Bank, the economy was stabilising around a "fragile low-level equilibrium." However, two-thirds of Afghan households still cannot afford food and other basic needs. However, the Bank noted that job opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers have increased since March 2023.

While the economy witnesses slight improvements, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has worsened under the Taliban's rule. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi, more than 28 million people require humanitarian assistance in 2023, compared to the 18.4 million in need in early 2021. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), more than 17 million Afghans did not

have enough food to eat in April 2023, with 3.4 million Afghans on the brink of famine. The Taliban government has failed to address the humanitarian crisis as it lacks adequate financial resources to address these problems. Going forward, the Taliban government would continue to cooperate with external institutions and actors administering aid in the country independently, as the Taliban by themselves do not have the financial and administrative capacity to address the crisis.

3. Taliban's struggle for legitimacy

Over the past two years, the Taliban government has consolidated their power and secured its position in the country. The Taliban leadership has strategically shifted their seat of power from Kabul to Kandahar, where Taliban chief Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada and other prominent leaders, including Acting Defense Minister Maulvi Mohammad Yaqoob, are keeping a tight grip on the organisation. The leadership has also managed to keep internal discord within the Taliban under control to avoid any threats to the regime's stability. Recently, there has not been any armed or political opposition to oppose the Taliban in power. The National Resistance Front (NRF) and other groups resisting the Taliban's rule have also been heavily pushed back.

With almost no direct threat to their rule, the Taliban regime has failed to legitimise its rule with the international community. This has become a major setback for the Taliban, who desperately seeks legitimacy to remove diplomatic barriers to facilitate crucial finance and investment deals abroad. Over the last two years, the Taliban leadership has engaged with the international community at several diplomatic forums. This has resulted in a few positive developments as several countries resumed or reopened diplomatic operations in Afghanistan and certain economic agreements with countries, including China. However, these engagements have not emanated in a positive sign for recognition of the Taliban government. Rather, the international community remains sceptical of the Taliban's promises to build an inclusive government in Afghanistan and address their security concerns. Another major factor in granting legitimacy to the Taliban government has been linked to women's rights; the international community has become highly cautious because of the Taliban's track record on this count. Going forward, the Taliban government will continue to be in a predicament regarding them gaining legitimacy as they clash with the international community on numerous matters; however, the Taliban is unlikely to restrict their diplomatic engagement with the international community in the future.

Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

Rishika Yadav, Anu Maria Joseph, Femy Francis, Padmashree Anandan, Dhriti Mukherjee and Akriti Sharma

East and Southeast Asia

South Korea: Protest against Fukushima radioactive water release

On 14 August, South Korean civilian fishing boats organised a maritime parade in the western port city of Incheon, protesting against Japan's Fukushima radioactive wastewater discharge. Nearly 50 fishing vessels hosted banners quoting: "The ocean is not a dumpster for the Fukushima nuclear-contaminated wastewater," and "Use the Fukushima contaminated wastewater as drinking water in Japan." The South Korean protestors are concerned that the



release will affect the ecosystem and their livelihood, arguing that it would affect the demand for their marine products.

North Korea: Kim Jong Un demands increase in ammunition production

On 12 August, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, visiting ammunition factories, demanded increased production of missiles. He stated that this needs to be achieved to secure "overwhelming military force and get fully prepared for coping with any war" to "surely annihilate" enemies. He pushed for the increase in ammunition production and stated: "Our army must thoroughly secure overwhelming military power and solid readiness to handle any war at any time, so that the enemy does not dare to use force, and would be annihilated if it does." The development comes in response to the US and South Korea announcing the beginning of the Ulchi Freedom Shield joint military drills on 21 August against North Korea's evolving nuclear threats.

The Philippines: Enhances security focus amid geopolitical concerns

On 15 August, Channel News Asia reported that the Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr approved a six-year national security policy to bolster the country's ability to address threats while emphasising stronger ties with its allies, including the US. The policy highlights the growing strategic competition between the US and China, heightened major power rivalries and concerns over the cross-straits relations contributing to the tense geopolitical landscape. The document states: "Any military conflict in the Taiwan Strait would inevitably affect the Philippines given the geographic proximity of Taiwan to the Philippine archipelago and the presence of over 150,000 Filipinos in Taiwan." The document also underscores the importance of food and energy security priorities and highlights the South China Sea as a "primary national interest."

The Philippines: Australia's warship joins Philippines for South China Sea exercises

On 14 August, Voice of America (VOA) reported that Australia's biggest warship, HMAS Canberra, is heading to the Philippines to engage in joint military drills with the US and Filipino forces amid escalating tensions in the disputed South China Sea. China's recent use of a water cannon against Philippine vessels carrying supplies for Filipino soldiers based in one disputed Spratly Islands sparked accusations of being "excessive and unlawful." Australia aims to promote peace in the region through its participation. VOA quoted Australia's Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammon: "The South China Sea has been an area of tension now for many, many years. We have continued to conduct our operations and activities and exercises with allies and partners safely and securely despite those tensions. So, I'm not particularly concerned about this deployment any more so than any of the other deployments that we do."

Myanmar: Chin resistance seizes junta outpost amid airstrikes in Thantlang

On 15 August, Myanmar Now reported that anti-regime factions, including the Chinland Defence Force (CDF), launched raids in Thantlang Township in the state of Chin, capturing a military outpost and triggering junta airstrikes. According to the Chin Human Rights Organization, the airstrikes damaged buildings, including a church in Khuafo village. At least ten civilians were killed during the attack. The Thantlang Township has witnessed intensified conflict since the military offensive in September 2021. Resistance forces have increasingly targeted junta positions, leading troops to retreat. The regime's months-long campaign for control over the Timit River Valley, which separates Thantlang from the state capital Hakha, has witnessed clashes.

South Asia

India: Heavy rains and landslides in the Himalayan states

On 15 August, the Times of India reported that at least 59 people were killed due to heavy rains and landslides in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Torrential rains that began over the weekend in the state of Himachal Pradesh have flooded highways and washed away homes while rescuers struggle to help those trapped behind the debris. Two people have died so far in the neighbouring state of Uttarakhand. Both states have been experiencing above-average rainfall. In July, at least 100 people died in the northern states of India, including Himachal Pradesh, following the record monsoon rains. During the June-September monsoon season, landslides and floods are widespread in India's Himalayan north. According to scientists, they are becoming frequent as global warming contributes to the melting of glaciers, rise in land and sea temperatures, arctic amplification, and urbanisation in the region. According to a 2018 European Geosciences Union study, India accounted for 20 per cent of fatal landslides caused by human activity between 2004 and 2016.

Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

Israel: Two Palestinians killed in a raid

On 15 August, Reuters reported that two Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces during a raid on a refugee camp in the city of Jericho in the West Bank. The West Bank has seen increased violence in recent months due to Israeli raids on refugee camps, attacks by Jewish settlers on Palestinian villages, and Palestinian street attacks on Israelis. According to AFP, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces this year has reached 216.

Syria: 20 soldiers killed in an ISIL attack

On 11 August, Al Jazeera reported that at least 20 Syrian soldiers were killed in an attack by armed men in the eastern town of Mayadeen, in the Deir Ez-Zor province that borders Iraq. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has sleeper cells in territories it once ruled, claimed responsibility for the attack. Earlier this month, the organisation designated Abu Hafis al-Hashimi al-Qurashi as its new leader, confirming the death of its previous leader, Abu Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurashi, whom Turkey claimed it killed in April. ISIL lost its final foothold in Syria in March 2019 to a Kurdish-led counteroffensive backed by a US-led coalition. However, sleeper cells continue to carry out lethal attacks.

Libya: 55 killed in clashes

On 16 August, Al Jazeera reported that at least 55 people were killed and 146 were wounded in a clash between armed groups in the Libyan capital Tripoli. The fighting erupted on 14 August between two armed groups, the 444 Brigade and the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), active since the overthrow of the decedent former longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The clashes were triggered following the detention of the head of the 444 Brigade, Colonel Mahmoud Hamza, by the rival Special Deterrence Force. On 15 August, the social council in the eastern suburb of Souq al-Jumaa, an SDF stronghold, said that an agreement had been reached with Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, head of the UN-recognized government based in Tripoli, for Hamza to be handed over to a "neutral party." The council said that a ceasefire would be initiated following the transfer of Hamza. Both armed factions are aligned with Dbeibah's government.

Ethiopia: 26 civilians killed in clashes in Amhara

On 14 August, Al Jazeera reported that at least 26 people were killed in Ethiopia's Amhara



region in a suspected airstrike by the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF). The new wave of clashes erupted on 7 August after the Amhara regional militia Fano accused the Ethiopian government of trying to weaken Amhara's defences by incorporating the regional militia with the ENDF. The clashes in the Amhara region erupted nine months after the end of a two-year conflict in the neighbouring Tigray region. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) raised "grave concern" over the "deadly hostilities" and called on "conflicting parties to immediately end" all alleged human rights violations. Previously on 4 August, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had announced a six-month state of emergency across the region.

Niger: 17 soldiers killed in jihadist attack; ECOWAS to discuss potential intervention post-coup

On 16 August, BBC Africa quoted the Ministry of Defence and the National Guard of Niger, which reported that at least 17 soldiers were killed in a jihadist attack in the Tillabéri region, close to the border with Burkina Faso. The ministry stated: "The prompt reaction of the military and the air-land response initiated at the scene of the clash made it possible to deal with the enemy." This is the seventh Islamist militant attack in the country since the coup on 26 July. Meanwhile, on 15 August, ECOWAS announced that army chiefs of the member states will be meeting in Ghana's capital Accra on 17 August to discuss a potential military intervention to reinstate civilian rule in Niger.

Europe and the Americas

Georgia: Joint statement demanding Russia to return South Ossetia and Abkhazia

On 11 August, the US, the UK, France, and Albania, along with Japan and Malta, issued a joint statement demanding the return of the regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which once made up 20 per cent of Georgia's territory. In 2008, when Georgia attempted to capture the two regions, Russia fought a four-day war with Georgia, recognized them as independent regions and set up its military bases. The joint statement called on Russia to return the regions while condemning its aggression in Ukraine. In response, Russian Deputy UN Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky termed it a "Russophobic West."

Germany: To acquire second largest NATO helicopter fleet

On 11 August, Reuters reported on Germany's acquisition of 60 Chinook helicopters from Boeing that will cost up to EUR eight billion. German Air Force Chief Ingo Gerhartz noted it will make Germany "the second largest helicopter nation in NATO after the US." He added that approximately 50 helicopters will be stationed at the Holzdorf/Schoenewalde site in eastern Germany alongside 1,000 additional soldiers. The move highlights Germany's emphasis on strengthening its defence capabilities and contribution to NATO's collective security efforts.

Romania: To pay foresters to prevent cutting of trees

On 10 August, the European Commission approved EUR 200 million in the form of an aid scheme allowing Romania to pay its foresters in exchange for not cutting down trees until 2027. The scheme aims to reverse biodiversity loss, boost the ecosystem, and preserve the habitat. In the press release, the European Commission stated: "The scheme was necessary and appropriate to support the development of the forestry sector." In 2020, the commission began an infringement procedure against Romania to protect the Natura 2000 forests (The forest sites with a high biodiversity value) and prevent the illegal cutting of trees. Romania, which was under EU pressure to address illegal logging for years, has implemented similar

measures to control illegal activities and deployed a police force to follow such crimes. However, such measures were ineffective.

Nicaragua: Catholic University seized, termed as "centre of terrorism"

On 16 August, the Nicaraguan government took control of the Jesuit-run Central American University (UCA) after accusing it of being "a centre of terrorism organized by criminal groups." This is in lieu of President Daniel Ortega's approach of stifling dissent, as the university was known to have been a part of the 2018 anti-government protests. The Jesuits are a faction of the Roman Catholic church, targeted by Ortega's administration after it tried to mediate the 2018 protests. The United Nations High Commissioner has condemned this move for Human Rights (OHCHR) and has been termed an act of "dictatorship" by Nicaraguans.

Haiti: Gang leader Jimmy Cherizier opposes foreign intervention

On 16 August, the leader of the gang, G9 Family and Allies, Jimmy Cherizier, warned against foreign forces being sent to control the violence in Haiti. Recently, the UN, the US, and Kenya agreed to Prime Minister Ariel Henry's calls for a "specialized armed force" to address the gang violence in Port-au-Prince. However, a previous UN mission had been linked to sexual abuses and a cholera outbreak, which is why Cherizier and other civil society groups are against foreign intervention. Cherizier, who has previously committed human rights violations and carried out attacks that "disturbed the stability of Haiti," stated, "We will fight against them until our last breath. It will be a fight of the Haitian people to save the dignity of our country."

The US: Prisoner exchange deal with Iran

On 12 August, AP News reported that the United States and Iran tentatively agreed to a deal regarding releasing five detained US citizens in Iran and an undisclosed number of Iranians imprisoned in the US. This agreement is contingent on transferring USD six million in frozen Iranian assets from South Korean banks to Qatar. The complex deal, reached after months of indirect negotiations, was announced after Iran moved four of the five US citizens from prison to house arrest. The prisoners have been acquitted of spying, and it is post the American imposition of economic sanctions on Iran that a settlement is in the process. Nevertheless, following the US-Iran nuclear deal's activity, regional tensions remain high.

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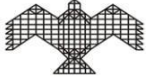
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of
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The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI researches are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

About Conflict Weekly



The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

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