

# Conflict Weekly

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*A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world*

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## North Korea's Missile Tests and Sanctions on Mali

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The recent ECOWAS meeting in Accra postponed the decision on Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea to July, thereby upholding sanctions on the three. (Image Source: ECOWAS)

## North Korea: Series of missile tests threatens peace on the Korean Peninsula

### In the news

On 5 June, the North Korean military test-fired eight short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea soon after the US conducted a three-day naval drill with South Korea in the Philippine Sea. According to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, the tests were fired between 0908 hours and 0943 hours near Sunan in Pyongyang. The Korea Herald reported that the missiles in the largest single test by North Korea flew at an altitude of 25-90 kilometres and covered 110-670 kilometres at a speed of Mach three to six. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in a statement on the tests said: “The North's continued launch of ballistic missiles are provocations which pose a significant threat to peace and security not only on the Korean Peninsula but also in the world.”

Japan responded to the test by conducting a joint military exercise with the US while the Japanese Self Defence Force raised alarm at the aggression perpetrated by North Korea. Japan's Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi commented on the missile tests and called them intolerable while also noting that one of the missiles showed capabilities to manoeuvre and evade missile defence systems.

South Korea's President convened a National Security Council meeting and ordered “expanded deterrence of South Korea and the United States and continued reinforcement of united defence

posture." On 6 June, South Korea and the US also fired eight surface-to-surface Army Tactical Missiles System missiles into the East Sea. Seven out of the eight missiles were from the South Korean military while the US used one of its missiles. Post the launch, the Joint Chief of Staff said: "The South Korea-US combined firing of the ground-to-ground missiles demonstrated the capability and posture to launch immediate precision strikes on the origins of provocations and their command and support forces."

### Issues at large

First, continuing missile tests. The latest missile test marked the 18th provocation this year and the third after South Korea's new President Yoon Suk-Yeol took office on 10 May. The eight missile tests were conducted by North Korea 11 days after the military tested short-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles. North Korea President Kim Jong-Un has increased the country's focus on military weapons of mass destruction despite the diminishing economic stability and the rising COVID-19 cases in the country. The repeated missile and nuclear tests are aimed at forcing the US and the international community into accepting North Korea as a nuclear power.

Second, South Korea's reaction to the missile tests. Yoon Suk-yeol's policy toward North Korea is different from his predecessor Moon Jae-in, who assumed a much softer stance while dealing with its neighbour. However, President Yoon has already expressed his government's shift from soft diplomacy to a much harsher response to North Korea's behaviour. A tough position on North Korea was one of Yoon's campaign strategies as well. The counter-missile tests are a by-product of Yoon's hard-line policies and may even be considered by North Korea as an unpredictable response to its actions.

### In perspective

Yoon Suk-yeol's government's response to the missile tests is evidence of the changing political scenario on the Korean Peninsula. There is a clear shift in the conservative government's actions as they move to adopt a coercive diplomatic approach. Kim Jong-un seems to be testing the international community's patience with its incessant missile and nuclear tests. However, it remains to be seen if the US and its allies are capable of responding effectively and restricting further aggression by North Korea.

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## **Mali: Sanctions to continue until an agreement with junta**

### In the news

On 4 June, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders met in Ghana's capital Accra and announced their decision to uphold the sanctions against Mali, along with Burkina Faso and Guinea. The sanctions would be lifted only if Mali's military leaders speed up plans for a democratic transition. The bloc leaders said they would continue to negotiate with the junta "with a view of reaching an agreement to ensure gradual lifting of sanctions."

On 5 June, Mali's junta leader Colonel Assimi Goita signed a new decree shortening the transitional period to 24 months starting from March this year. He said: "the duration of the transition is set at 24 months, starting on March 26, 2022."

On 8 June, the ECOWAS expressed its disappointment at the new decree by the Malian military junta. In a statement, the bloc said: "ECOWAS regrets that while negotiations are still ongoing to reach a consensus, the Malian authorities took the decision on the transition."

### Issues at large

First, Mali's coup within a coup. In August 2020, Mali's military junta seized power through a coup. Despite the international and regional condemnation, the coup was welcomed by the public, widely discontented with an impotent and corrupt government accompanied by jihadist threats and security issues. Through weeks of negotiation between the coup leaders and the ECOWAS, the junta agreed on an 18-month transitional period. However, enacting another coup in May 2021, the military junta reverted from the commitments of the transitional deal.

Second, delayed elections and extended transition. The coup leaders initially promised a democratic transition in February 2022. However, the elections were delayed citing disorganization and security issues. In January, the army-led legislature decided to extend the transition up to five years.

Third, ECOWAS sanctions and the junta's resistance. Besides being suspended from the bloc's main bodies, ECOWAS imposed strict sanctions on Mali over the junta's decision to delay elections and extend transition. The sanctions included the closure of land and air borders, and suspension of all financial and commercial trade except for food, medical products, petroleum products, and electricity. It also froze Mali's assets in ECOWAS banks, financial institutions, and financial assistance. Meanwhile, the coup leaders resisted the sanctions calling them stringent, inhumane, and unnecessary. The junta urged the citizens to demonstrate against the sanctions.

Four, economic crisis and public discontent with ECOWAS. Going through the worst food crisis in 10 years, over 7.5 million people in Mali require humanitarian assistance. The sanctions are causing serious disruption to an economy already hurt by multifaceted security challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary to weakening popular support for the transitional authority, the sanctions have provoked a public outcry against the regional body ECOWAS.

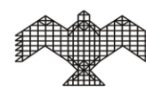
### In perspective

First, elections have never been an instrument to measure democratization in the continent, especially in west Africa. Rushed elections after coups would only lead to a dysfunctional political system.

Second, the objective of the ECOWAS sanctions- to destabilize the Malian military regime seems to be a failure. The impacts of sanctions are disproportionately affecting the public struggling with its economy and security. Moreover, the failure of sanctions adds to the ECOWAS legitimacy crisis finally discrediting it.

Third, the military junta is taking advantage of the sanctions to turn the public against the bloc and as an opportunity to legitimize its actions.

Four, the political uncertainty and crisis followed by sanctions are seemly becoming an advantage for the jihadists and insurgents, further deteriorating the security situation in Mali.



## Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Lavanya Ravi, Sruthi Sadhasivam, Vijay Anand Panigrahi, Ashwin Dhanabalan, Apoorva Sudhakar, Anu Maria Joseph, Padmashree Anandhan, and Sejal Sharma

### East and Southeast Asia

#### **China: Foreign ministry warns Canada of provocation**

On 6 June, in a statement released by China's foreign ministry, the country warned Canada of "potential severe consequences of any risky provocation." The statement was a response to Canada's military's allegations that China's warplanes harassed its patrol aircraft. They also stated China's warplanes forced Canada's planes to divert their paths. Canada patrols the North Pacific to monitor and enforce sanctions placed on North Korea, with prime minister Justin Trudeau stating "Canada was on an important mission on monitoring North Korea." However, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian stated: "The UN Security Council has not authorized any military surveillance in the area," accusing Canada of utilizing North Korea as a pretext to step up surveillance on China. The defence ministry spokesperson of China has taken adequate measures and made representations through diplomatic channels to resolve the issue.

#### **South Korea: Investigations held to tighten crypto regulations**

On 3 June, South Korea started an investigation into payment gateway services that work with digital assets. The country's financial regulator Financial Supervisory Service (FSS) demanded reports from 157 payment gateways regarding its crypto services, disclosure of digital assets, and its plans for the future. The FSS reported that only six gateways held digital assets. On 31 May, South Korea announced the upcoming launch of the Digital Assets Committee to bring structure to the virtual asset industry. New guidelines include market and trade monitoring, investor protection, and screening criteria for new assets. The move comes to prevent another incident like the Terra crash from happening in South Korea.

#### **South Korea: Seoul enhances defence systems against North Korea's missile threat**

On May 30, South Korea endorsed a plan to purchase more Lockheed Martin-made Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles along with a PAC-3 Missile segment enhancement weapons. The Defence Acquisition Program Administration has approved the spending of USD 600 million (750 billion won) by the government for this purchase. The upgradation of PAC-2 launchers to PAC-3 launchers can now intercept incoming missiles from an altitude of 40 kilometres while the former could only work till 20 kilometres. The enhancement of defence systems follows North Korea's launch of three ballistic missiles.

#### **Australia: Prime minister criticizes China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea**

On 5 June, Australia's prime minister Anthony Albanese announced the government's concerns regarding dangerous manoeuvres conducted by a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea. The actions threatened the safety of the Australian surveillance aircraft which was forced to return to the base after the encounter. According to defence minister Richard Marles, the Chinese J-16 intercepted the Australian P-8A Poseidon in international airspace. Marles said: "The J-16 ... accelerated and cut across the nose of the P-8, settling in front of the P-8 at very close distance. At that moment, it then released a bundle of chaff, which contains small pieces of aluminium, some of which were ingested into the engine of the P-8 aircraft. Quite obviously, this is very dangerous."

### **Hong Kong: Largest National Security Law case sent to trial**

On 7 June, the largest national security case in Hong Kong city was sent to trial after 15 months of pre-trial proceedings. The 47 individuals detained and charged with “conspiracy to subversion” under the National Security Law of 2020 were denied bail during the 15 months. Under the law, subversion is one of the four major crimes and can be punished with a life sentence. The 47 individuals who have been arrested are former lawmakers, district councillors, unionists, academics and other radical reformists. Out of 47, 46 defendants were committed to a senior court by the Principal Magistrate Peter Law after a hearing that lasted almost four days.

### **Singapore: Police warns against banking-related phishing scams**

On 5 June, Malaysia’s authorities stated that until now, at least 28 people had fallen to scams and have lost USD 114,000. The scammers impersonated bank staff and targeted their victims through text messages or phone calls. Thus, the police have announced measures along with the monetary authority of Singapore and the association of banks in Singapore. One of the measures is the implementation of an emergency kill switch that freezes the customer’s account if the victim suspects it may have been compromised.

### **Singapore: Formulates national policy action plan to eliminate Marine Detritus**

On 5 June, the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE) introduced National Action Strategy on Marine Litter (NASML) to manage sea waste during a beach cleansing drive in Tanah Merah Beach. The plan addresses six core areas, including means of land and sea refuse, “research and development” and the circular economy model. The MSE said: “The NASML is a first step to formalizing our actions as a nation to address marine litter.” The plan was developed with the assistance of academicians, government bodies, the public, and the like. The marine action plan also aims to bolster stakeholder engagement and global partnership.

### **Myanmar: Chin state refugees raise concerns about ASEAN's humanitarian assistance plan**

On 7 June, the refugees in Chin state called on the civil society groups and expressed their worry as the military regime would be in control of distributing humanitarian aid from Southeast Asian countries. On 5 June, ASEAN announced that it would coordinate with the regime to distribute aid. The residents of Chin state are concerned that the aid would bypass the region, leaving internally displaced people more vulnerable. Chin state has been putting up a strong resistance against the regime, and the residents speculate that they might use the aid as a way to impoverish them.

### **Myanmar: Junta attacks YPDF armed group**

On 4 June, the junta launched a mine incursion on the “Yaw People’s Defense Force (YPDF)” in Gangaw town of Yaw terrain. The armed wing members were forewarned about the attack and fled the region. However, the landmines in the inlets and outlet points of the armed wing’s bases “killed 8 soldiers.” The next day, the armed group retaliated by using landmines to strike about 100 military conveyances, demolishing one army vehicle and terminating five soldiers. Previously, as part of the Junta’s anti-resistance raids, the latter had set fire to several establishments in the northern regions of “Kinn, Upper Kinn and Ke Taung.” The junta is initiating repeated offensives in the Yaw valley due to the increased presence of National Unity Government (NUG) armed groups in the region.

### **Myanmar: UN estimates a massive rise in displacements and internet shut down post-coup**

On 31 May, the UN reported a colossal rise of “more than 1 million displaced people” in Myanmar after the fall of Suu Kyi’s democratically elected government. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said: “Almost 700,000 people have





been forced to flee their homes since the toppling of Aung San Suu Kyi's government on February 1, 2021." Furthermore, it detailed that most displaced civilians belonged to regions near the Irrawaddy river where internet services were severed. Additionally, post-coup, the body noted that 12,000 plus public goods got demolished or torched and warned about disastrous conditions of the upcoming rainy season that would worsen the distress of those residing in the "displacement camps."

### South Asia

#### **India: Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) Agni-4 undergoes successful trial launch**

On 6 June, the Ministry of Defence ran a trial launch of the strategic Agni-4 missile, which passed the test on all parameters. The Agni-4 has a range of 3,500 kilometres and was test-fired from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha as a part of a routine training launch under the Strategic Forces Command's supervision. The Ministry of Defence reiterated India's 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' Capability after the test launch where the missile was validated on all operational parameters.

#### **India: Tamil Nadu awarded the top rank in this year's Food Safety Index**

On 7 June, Tamil Nadu was awarded by Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya for being recognized as the best performer in this year's State Food Security Index. Tamil Nadu was followed by Gujarat and Maharashtra in the large states category. In the small states category, Goa led the tally, followed by Manipur and Sikkim. Also, in the Union Territories category, Jammu and Kashmir were ranked number one, followed by Delhi and Chandigarh. The health ministry defines five parameters according to which the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) prepares the State Food Safety Index (SFSI).

#### **Sri Lanka: UN FAO and UNDP are devising a food crisis response plan to avert shortage.**

On 3 June, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has begun planning for crisis response for Sri Lanka amidst severe scarcity in the country due to the ongoing economic turmoil. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe had previously warned of possible food shortages as a consequence of the economic crisis. The food crisis response program has received the support of the United Nations Development Program and is expected to be introduced in the coming month. The UNDP is devising an innovative farming assistance program while the FAO is positive that it will be able to gather enough financial support for the initiative. Wickremesinghe is hopeful that this crisis can be averted in six months if decisive actions are taken quickly.

#### **Sri Lanka: World Bank assures USD 700 million through re-purposing of existing loans.**

On 6 June, a report claimed that the World Bank will be paying Sri Lanka an amount of USD 700 million as the country nears bankruptcy. The World Bank will work along with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the United Nations to re-purpose the commitments already made with Sri Lanka. This would keep Sri Lanka afloat until the IMF bailout is worked out where they are expecting a Rapid Finance Instrument (RFI) facility as well as a larger Extended Fund Facility (EFF). IMF assured to help Sri Lanka with an amount of USD 300 million to USD 600 million but yet, but only technical level discussions have commenced between the two.

#### **Pakistan: People protest against unfair power cuts and gas price hike**

On 7 June, a large number of protestors took to the street to protest against the government for its inability to ensure an uninterrupted supply of electricity and gas. Protestors in Peshawar came from all walks of life including traders, transporters, and CNG station owners, among many others. They criticized the government for their unfair hike in power tariff along with

repeated and long outages, which also caused the CNG prices to soar. Another similar protest was held on the Swabi-Mardan road where the people blamed the government for the prevailing economic mess and the energy crises. The electricity shortfall was caused as many power plants were shut down owing to the lack of fuel in the country.

#### **Pakistan: Defence budget increased by six per cent to control inflation consequences**

On 3 June, Pakistan increased its defence budget by six per cent to meet the demands of the military. The National Assembly last year allocated PKR 1.373 trillion to their defence budget, but for the upcoming fiscal period, it may go up to as much as PKR 1.55 trillion. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet approved the PKR 80 billion budget increase along with another PKR 182 billion in supplementary grants. The ECC also added an extra 10 per cent regulatory tariff on the import of petrol from China, as several oil firms rerouted their trade to evade customs duties.

#### **Afghanistan: Defence Minister expresses willingness to train their soldiers in India**

On 4 June, the Taliban defence minister Mullah Yaqoob expressed his administration's openness to their soldiers attending a training stint on Indian soil. He stated that the Taliban would have no issues if their officers received military training in India. He further added how he expects cordial relations with all countries around the world, especially its neighbours. He also urged arch-rivals India and Pakistan to resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue and also added that none of the two countries would be allowed to use Afghani soil to use against each other.

#### **Afghanistan: Report claims Al-Qaeda and the Taliban still share a good relationship**

On 30 May, a report by the UN Security Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team claimed that the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda share a good relationship still as the latter recently renewed his allegiance to the supreme leader of the former. The report claimed that Al-Qaeda still operates freely and has a haven in Afghanistan under the Taliban. Allegedly, around 180 to 400 Al Qaeda fighters from Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Pakistan are settled in Afghanistan but the Taliban administration is yet to respond to the report.

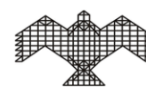
#### **Afghanistan: World Bank and Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) approve relief projects**

On 5 June, the World Bank along with the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) announced the approval of three relief projects worth USD 793 million in total for the crisis-hit nation. The projects will deliver necessary health services, essential food, and livelihood security, and it would be provided to the public directly, away from the Islamic Emirate's control. The project focused on training and supporting households to plant wheat to earn a livelihood, along with taking care of the nutritional needs of the children and the health of the people. The Central Bank appreciated the approval of the projects but some economists still speculate that it will only be a short-term remedy.

#### **Central Asia, Middle East and Africa**

##### **Kazakhstan: Civilians vote for constitutional amendments in a referendum**

On 5 June, in a referendum, Kazak nationals voted favourably for the proposed 56 changes to the constitution. The Election Commission chairman, Nurlan Abdirov said: "The referendum can be considered validated" noting that 77.18 per cent had supported the constitutional changes. However, for the new constitution to be legitimate, 50 per cent of electors from 12 of Kazakhstan's 17 areas must vote in favour of the proposed changes. The CIS-Observer mission



representatives claimed that the election was conducted as per law. Nevertheless, several election frauds were noticed in the western part of the country.

### **Kyrgyzstan: Shooting occurs at the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border**

On 3 June, the Kyrgyz border personnel was forced to shoot at Tajik border personnel after they disregarded the former's warning to vacate from the Bulak-Bashy district of Batken province, a Kyrgyzstan area. The Kyrgyz Health Ministry claimed that two of their bodyguards were injured. The Tajik guards are yet to officially release statements regarding the offensive. In the past few months, there have been recurring instances where both sides open fire at each other and report casualties. The repetitive occurrence of similar events is due to the lack of a well-defined border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

### **Lebanon: US invited to mediate maritime talks with Israel**

On 6 June, Lebanon invited the US senior energy advisor and mediator Amos Hochstein to Beirut to discuss its maritime border with Israel. This move follows the arrival of a ship into disputed waters to produce gas for Israel on 5 June. The ship arrived in Karish field, which Israel's authorities claim under their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) while Lebanon claims it falls within its maritime territory that is under negotiation. The issue has caused tensions between already rival nations. Israel has rejected Lebanon's claim to the territory while Lebanon has accused Israel of aggression into disputed waters. The US mediator has resorted to shuttle diplomacy travelling from Beirut to Tel Aviv to resolve the issue.

### **Middle East: Increase in sandstorms results in a vicious climate cycle**

In the last few years, the middle east has experienced an increase in sand and dust storms (SDSs). World Bank estimates the annual cost of destruction due to SDSs in the region to be USD 13 billion. Desertification of the region has caused heavy SDSs that affect human health and cause destruction to the environment. It has caused the closure of airports in Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait in the last month. In Saudi Arabia, sand storms have resulted in 12000 people being hospitalized with respiratory issues in May 2022. Schools were closed in Iran and hospitalizations amounted to 800 in the Khuzestan region. Iraq, described as one of the five most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world has been the most affected, with holidays being declared and the government stocking up oxygen cylinders. Terrorism has also risen with groups like ISIL using the sand as cover to carry out attacks. Climate change remains a big driver of future conflict in the region.

### **Sudan: UN calls for investigations into killings**

On 4 June, UN human rights expert Adama Dieng called for an investigation into the killings of civilians in Sudan over the last year. Violence has become more common in Sudan after army chief general Abdel Fattah asl-Burhan took over in October 2020. The death toll of civilians has touched 100 and the people injured has touched 5000. Dieng has raised concerns over arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and ill-treatment during imprisonment. He also stated the atrocities have occurred due to excessive forces used by the joint security forces. He also highlighted the spiraling economic crisis due to the pulling out of western investors and prices of food skyrocketing. Dieng is scheduled to meet al-Burhan soon to discuss these issues.

### **Libya: Asylum seekers evacuated to Rwanda**

On 2 June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated it evacuated 132 refugees from Libya to Rwanda. The group contained refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. Rwanda agreed to take refugees held in Libya's detention centers under a UN agreement with the African Union signed in 2019. Rwanda has agreed to take in 30,000 refugees from Libya, sending them in batches of 500. The agreement with



Rwanda was signed after Libya's detention centers were accused of abuse, lack of medical care, and food. Since 2017, the number of asylum seekers that have been flown out of Libya has amounted to 8,296.

### **Nigeria: 50 people killed in a gunmen attack at church**

On 5 June, at least 50 people including children were reportedly killed in a gunmen attack on a Catholic church in southwestern Ondo state. Terming the attack "vile and satanic, Ondo Governor Rotimi Akeredolu said: "Our hearts are heavy, our peace and tranquillity have been attacked by the enemies of the people." President Muhammadu Buhari released a statement: "Only fiends from the nether region could have conceived and carried out such dastardly act. No matter what, this country shall never give in to evil and wicked people, and darkness will never overcome light. Nigeria will eventually win." Though the country has regular events of gunmen attacks and ransom kidnappings, Ondo is a relatively peaceful region in Nigeria. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

### **Somalia: UNICEF outlines dire hunger situation; calls for widening gaze from Ukraine**

On 7 June, UNICEF warned of an "explosion of child deaths" in the Horn of Africa if the international community fails to tackle an impending hunger disaster. The UNICEF's Deputy Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa said 386,000 children in Somalia require immediate treatment for acute malnutrition. This figure is higher than the 340,000 children who needed treatment during the 2011 famine. Further, the Regional Director said 1.7 million children across Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia need immediate treatment for severe acute malnutrition. The UNICEF official maintained the issue will not be addressed "if the world does not widen its gaze from the war in Ukraine." The UNICEF warning comes amid a consecutive failure of four rainy seasons in two years and likely failed monsoons next October-December.

### **The Democratic Republic of the Congo: UN envoy urges military response to the M23 rebellion**

On 1 June, the UN Secretary General's special representative to the Democratic Republic of the Congo said a strong military response was necessary to tackle the M23 rebellion. The UN official suggested other measures along with military operations were necessary, including a political solution through regional mechanisms and disarmament and reintegration of the rebels by the government.

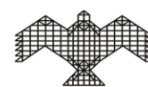
### **Rwanda: UK to begin deportation on 17 June; several asylum seekers go on hunger strike**

On 3 June, BBC reported that 17 asylum seekers near Sussex had launched a hunger strike after they received notices for deportation to Rwanda as part of the UK's latest asylum deal. The hunger strike was launched after UK Home Secretary Priti Patel said the deportation of the first batch of asylum seekers would begin on 14 June. The Home Office did not specify the number of people that would be deported; however, an aid agency estimates around 100 asylum seekers who arrived in May have received warnings of deportation. Previously, The Guardian reported having seen a letter from the Home Office which said the deportation of those observing the hunger strike may be prioritized for their health and safety. Meanwhile, aid agency Care4Calais has accused the Home Office of attempting to deport minors. The Home Office has denied these claims.

### **Europe and the Americas**

#### **Germany: Olaf Scholz promises special fund to boost security in Eastern Europe**

On 7 June, German chancellor Olaf Scholz made his first visit to Lithuania for a discussion with the Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania leaders. The discussion focused on boosting the security



of the eastern front, where Scholz pledged to allocate EUR 100 billion as a special fund to strengthen the armed forces. He assured to make Germany's forces the best at the Europe and NATO levels. After the meeting, the Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda commented that with increasing levels of security and violation of international norms by Russia, there should be no space for dialogue or cooperation or concession with Russia. He called it a terrorist state.

#### **Ukraine: Lagoons and marine life under threat due to war**

On 7 June, The Guardian reported on the damaging effect caused on the oceans and wetlands due to the Ukraine war. The Tuzly Lagoons national park on the Black Sea is known for being dug by environmentalists to ensure the flow of water bodies. They dug channels will be the path to numerous small fishes, which come to the lagoons for breeding. With the war in place, the digging cannot be done and the beaches are now being filled with mines to keep the Russian forces away. The digging has been in practice for the last 30 years and it was seen as a way to restore the marine life, environmentalists warn that this was only one affected area brought into light while many other wetlands have been impacted due to the continuity of war. Ukraine's deputy minister of environmental protection and natural resources said: "Almost 400,000 hectares and 14 Ramsar sites [wetlands designated to be of international importance by Unesco] along the coastline and lower reaches of the Dnipro river are under threat."

#### **Turkey: Produce high-tech drones with laser capabilities**

On 4 June, Turkey announced the mass production of "miniature munition" to install in the unmanned aerial vehicles. The munition will be produced by TUBITAK a Defense Industries Research and Development Institute (SAGE). It carried out various tests to integrate into Bayraktar TB2 aerial vehicle. According to the manager of the company: "Mass production of the institute's first UAV munition Bozok has started, we have developed the penetrating warhead for Bozok. We're going to have some related firing tests." The Bozok will be a compact, lightweight, and semi-active laser seeker in comparison with other Turkey drones.

#### **Dominican Republic: Minister shot multiple times in office**

On 7 June, Minister of environment and natural resources Orlando Jorge Mera passed away after he was shot at at least six times while holding a meeting in his office. The assailant is suspected to be a close friend of Mera and is held in custody. The motive behind the shooting remains ambiguous, however, the two were at odds over Mera's new environmental policies. Jorge Mera was the son of former President Salvador Jorge Blanco.

#### **Cuba: Two people dead in Hurricane Agatha's aftermath**

On 4 June, heavy rain and floods that hit the western and central areas of the country as Hurricane Agatha degenerated wreaked havoc. At Least two people were killed as a result. The downpours are expected to continue till 11 June with some areas receiving more than 20 cm of rain. About 2000 people have been displaced while tens of thousands live without power in the capital city. Evacuation centers have been set up to provide relief to the people. With climate change striding forward in the region, strong tropical storms are expected to become a common occurrence in the region.

#### **Nicaragua: Clampdown on civic bodies continue**

On 1 June, 83 civic groups and non-governmental organizations were ordered to shut down by the Ortega administration in a continued effort to suppress opposition. The move brings the number of closures to a total of 200 this year and a total of 320 since 2018. Ortega's government has taken action against several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that it considers being adversarial. The president has stated that foreign-funded organizations were part of a larger plot to depose him in 2018.

### Peru: Amazon forest conservation under duress as political crisis continues

On 3 June, according to a report released Thursday, Peru has slid into one of the worst political crises in its history, and the protection of its Amazon rainforest is failing. After Brazil, Peru has the second-largest section of the Amazon rainforest. However, according to the Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project (MAAP), a non-profit effort of the Amazon Conservation Association, deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon has reached six new highs in the last ten years. With illegal activities such as mining, and logging rampant in the forests, there is considerable concern that destroying it will not only release large amounts of carbon into the sky, complicating efforts to mitigate climate change, but also drive it past a tipping point.

### Puerto Rico: First power grid reconstruction projects introduced

On 7 June, Officials declared Monday that nearly five years after Hurricane Maria destroyed the U.S. territory, the restoration of Puerto Rico's electricity grid is finally moving forward. After a Category 4 storm destroyed the old electrical grid in September 2017, more than \$100 million in federal funds were secured for the first 15 of more than 200 rebuilding projects proposed. Several projects, including repairs to power plants, were recently completed. In the following eight years, 216 reconstruction projects are projected to be completed. Only emergency work had been completed up to this point.

### The US: Supreme Court strikes down a law regulating social media

On 1 June, The US Supreme Court struck down a Texas law prohibiting social media companies from controlling certain types of online expression. The bill would have made it illegal for larger tech corporations to ban or censor Texas users based on their political beliefs. Republicans in the state said it was necessary to combat what they called the liberal bias on social media. However, IT groups contended that the rule infringed on private firms' right to free speech. The US Supreme Court granted a motion sponsored by tech companies to temporarily halt the law's implementation in a five to four decision.

### The US: Scientists announce troubling spike in carbon dioxide levels

On 4 June, according to federal experts, the amount of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere surpassed a significant milestone, reaching unprecedented levels. Scientists claim the gas levels are continuing to rise when they should be lowering. The carbon dioxide level this year is about 1.9 parts per million higher than a year earlier, a somewhat larger increase than the climb from May 2020 to May 2021. Coal, oil, and gas combustion produce industrial carbon dioxide emissions.

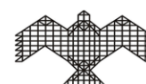
### The US: Heavy rains and flooding seen as storm hits Florida

On 5 June, parts of South Florida experienced flooding from heavy rains on account of a storm system that hit the state; intensive road flooding was seen leaving vehicles stranded. Warnings regarding travelling and movement have been issued by the state as stranded vehicles are towed away from flooded roadways. Climate change continues to be a pressing issue for low-lying areas in the region facing recurring flooding and drainage issues.

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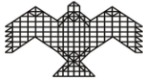
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National Institute of  
Advanced Studies



### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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 research 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. With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

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### 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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