

*"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"*

# Cultural Relations Policy

## News and Background

# November 2014





## About CRP News & Background

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background is a part of ICRP Monthly Review Series and an initiative of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy Budapest. Launched in 2012, its mission is to provide information and analysis on key international political events. Each issue covers up-to-date events and analysis of current concerns of international relations on a monthly basis.

As an initiative of ICRP, the content of this magazine is written and edited by student authors. The project, as part of the Institute's Internship Programme provides the opportunity to strengthen professional skills.



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## Contents

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- 
- 01** The IS and the war for the Middle East

---

  - 03** Civil war in Libya

---

  - 06** Al-Qaeda operations in Yemen

---

  - 08** Civil war in Somalia

---

  - 10** Boko Haram: over 300 victims in November

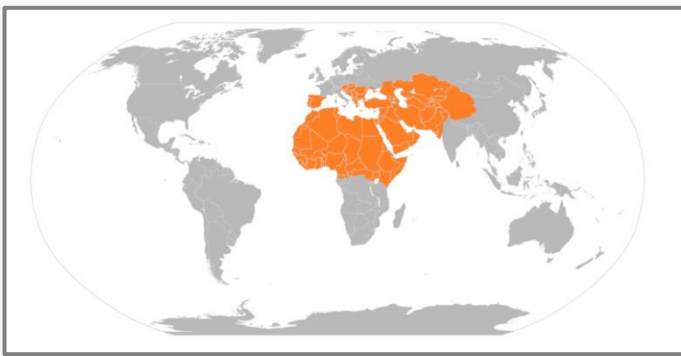
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  - 12** Taliban and al-Qaeda threat in Afghanistan

---

  - 13** News in Brief

# The IS and the war for the Middle East



*Claimed territories by the ISIS.  
Map: Débora Cabral*

**The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)** is still fighting against the Iraqi and Kurdish military forces, in order to expand the area under its control. In the last month, the ISIS question has become an internationally recognized problem. Indeed, the threat of the Islamic State had been extended also towards the Western countries, in Europe and America.

This problem has led to the creation of a coalition, which at least for now, is conducting airstrikes on the enemy's sensitive targets.

Especially, the United States reported to have seriously wounded the leader of the IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Nonetheless, IS-affiliates, through Twitter, denied the fact, stating that al-Baghdadi is alive and in good health conditions. They could not

have done otherwise, because al-Baghdadi has become an important symbol of their jihad, and the moral of the soldiers would be affected by such news. Anyway, the truth is still uncertain.

Recently, the US led thirty airstrikes, and half of them were conducted on Raqqa, the proclaimed capital of the Islamic State in Northern Syria. Other strikes were directed on different bases, and especially on Kobane. Surely, there was a huge quantity of victims, both among IS militiamen and Kurdish fighters. Witnesses have testified many deaths also among women and children. What is certain, is that with the only airstrikes the war could not be won. Indeed, the President of the United States



*Iraqi armed forces in Mushahada in 2006. Photo: Michael Larson*



Barack Obama approved the deployment of 1,500 American troops in the area. They will not take part in the conflict. Nonetheless, they will serve as instructors for the Iraqi and Kurdish military forces.

Notwithstanding its partial weakening, the IS offensive is far from over. Just at the beginning of November there were several bomb attacks. In Baiji, in Iraq, a suicide bomber killed eight people, and six of them were soldiers. The attack was directed to this particular city in order to strengthen the

killed. Finally, another shocking video was diffused by the IS. This video reported the beheading of a US hostage, Abdul-Rahman Kassig, and eighteen Syrian troops.

Kassig was a former US ranger who served in Iraq. He converted to Islam, and was helping to rescue refugees when he was captured one year ago. Anyway, these reasons were not enough for the Islamic State affiliates, who considered him as an unfaithful. For the US forces, the murder of

“From a military standpoint, also their violence and blood’s thirst did not decrease. They killed 322 people in a village of the Western Anbar province, in Iraq. Among them there were at least fifty women and children”

position on the close oil refinery. The IS is making multi-million dollars of profit from the illegal trade of the Iraqi oil industry.

Moreover, also in Syria, they have taken control of the second biggest gas field of the country, in the province of Homs. This is the second gas field they took in one week. From a military standpoint, also their violence and blood’s thirst did not decrease. They killed 322 people in a village of the Western Anbar province, in Iraq. Among them there were at least fifty women and children. Soon after, other seventy-five people of the same tribe were

Kassig is a sign of the IS frustration towards their airstrikes.

Meanwhile, the Kurdish city of Kobane is still under siege. The IS militiamen attempted five suicide attacks, and entered with tanks in various parts of the city.

Nonetheless, the Kurdish fighters are resisting the assaults and conducting an effective defence. Indeed, reports suggest that forty people died on both the sides, and at least twenty-five were part of the IS militia.

Kobane does not surrender, but every day is a war chronicle.



## Civil war in Libya

**Two governments are struggling** for power in a country where Gaddafi's dictatorship had maintained the order for years. In the meantime, the spectre of the IS is at the horizon.

Libya is a Northern African country six times bigger than Italy. Nonetheless, the great part of its territory is desert. Since 2011, with the Arab Spring, Libya has fallen into chaos, after the collapse of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Gaddafi ruled the country for forty-two years, from 1969 to 2011, when he was killed.

Colonel Gaddafi was a very discussed figure around the world. His supporters lauded his strong positions against the alleged imperialist countries and his support to the people of Africa. Nonetheless, he was also internationally condemned as a dictator and autocrat whose actions provoked serious violations of Libyan citizens' human rights. Surely, he was able to keep under control for many years all the forces that were threatening his power, and as a result, also the unity of the country.

In 2011, during the Arab Spring, the National Transitional Council (NTC) started a war against him, in order to restore the



*Graffiti of Muammar Gaddafi in Tennessee. Photo: Joel Kramer*

democracy in the country. NATO intervened through airstrikes in support of the NTC. Gaddafi lost the civil war and was killed in Sirte, by soldiers of the NTC.

From that moment, the forces that seized the power in the country were not able to rule its territory, and to bring the so much





desired democracy within its borders. Today in Libya there are two different governments: one in Tobruk, and one in Tripoli.

The Tobruk's government is led by Abdullah al-Thani. This government has resulted from the elections of the past June. Still today, al-Thani's government is the one

central state. Today, the Islamist forces, that refused the defeat in the elections, have taken the capital with an attack from Misrata, and the Supreme Court was forced to nullify the elections and the legitimacy of Tobruk's government.

While the Islamist forces are supported by Qatar and Turkey, Tobruk is supported by



*Secretary Kerry and Libyan Prime Minister al-Thinni. Photo: U.S. Department of State*

internationally recognized as legitimate. The Tripoli's government, led by Omar al-Hassi, resulted from the transitional assembly. The paradox is that these two formations, in 2011, were allied in the NTC to defeat Ghaddafi, while today are fighting each other for the power and OPEC's oil resources.

The civil war is in process, and the battles between the two forces have seriously weakened the unity of the country. Only in 1963, the regions of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan were put together into a

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. In this situation, a civil war has become a center of international interest.

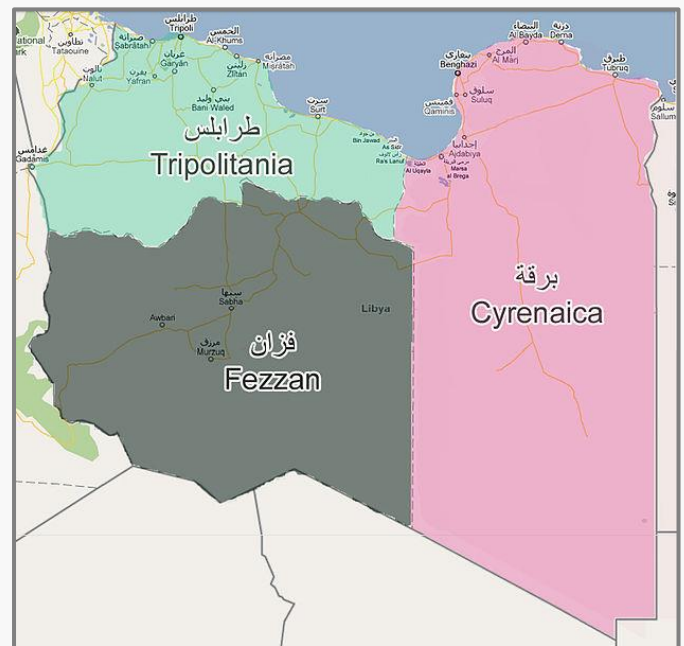
On November 13th, bombs exploded near the Egypt and the United Arab Emirates embassies in Tripoli. This was the last blast after some others occurred in towns under the control of Tobruk's government. One occurred in Tobruk itself, and provoked one death, and another strike occurred in al-Bayda, with four deaths and at least twenty-one injuries among the population. Anyway, it is not yet clear if the car-bomb



were suicidal attacks. As an answer to these strikes, the Tobruk's government, now fighting under the name of Operation Dignity, has bombed Tripoli's International Airport. The bombing was justified by Tobruk, with the fact that it was fallen in the hands of the terrorists. This airport was, along with the already destroyed airport of Benghazi, one of the most important of the country.

Anyway, according to a witness, the bombing did not destroy but partially the airport. Moreover, two near houses were destroyed, and at least two civilians were killed during the strike.

While the two rivals are weakening each other, a third competitor has appeared in the chaos of the civil war. Three beheadings of activists in the city of Derna, testimonies the presence of IS militiamen in the country. A figure of around one hundred men, linked to al-Baghdadi and probably coming from Iraq and Syria, are taking part in the conflict. The United Nations intervened to ask for a dialogue



The three provinces of Libya.  
Map: Wikimedia Commons

between the parties causing the conflict. Anyway, no dialogue was reached yet. Also Sudan intervened in the question, proposing a peace initiative in Khartoum. Nonetheless, not even this attempt had relevant results yet. The impression that we can draw from these facts is that the civil war is far from its conclusion.

### **Libyan Supreme Court delegitimizes Tobruk's government**

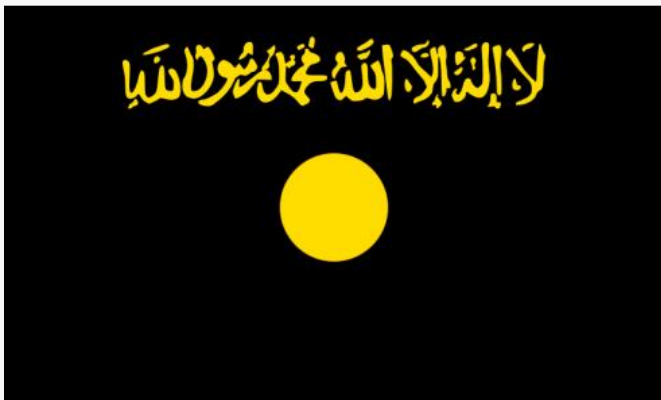
The Libyan Supreme Court has recently come to the decision of annulling the last June elections. This decision had serious consequences on the delegitimized Tobruk's government. Anyway, there are still many doubts around the question. Indeed, the Court expressed its opinion only after the Islamist takeover of Tripoli. Thus, there are serious suspects on possible pressures over the Court. Moreover, the reasons that led to the annulment of the elections are not clear. A member of the Court said that the main reason was that the government does not reside in the capital city anymore.

Anyway, the House of Representatives in Tobruk has rejected the Court's decision reconfirming the legitimacy of the government that is still the internationally recognized one.





## Al-Qaeda operations in Yemen



Flag of Al-Qaeda. Picture: Wikimedia Commons

**Al-Qaeda insurgency** in Yemen shakes the country even further while Houthi minority forces seize more and more Yemeni regions. In the conflict that brings numerous deaths with each clash, freeing eight Yemeni hostages means a sliver of hope.

Yemen is a country that has been torn by a civil war with three belligerents in it: the Yemeni government, the al-Qaeda militants and the Houthi forces. The latter two are religiously opposed to each other: they both consider one another heretics. The Houthi forces are a minority Zaidi Shi'a Muslim group whereas the al-Qaeda is a Sunni Salafist organisation. Both of the groups aim to take control of the entirety of Yemen, while the Yemeni government and soldiers hope to prevent this. The country

finally lost its last fragments of stability in 21 September 2014: the date when the Houthis caused the Prime Minister Mohammed Basindawa to resign – and simultaneously taking control of more and more central and western regions of the country now that they already took control of the capital, Sanaa.

In this struggle, the clashes between the sides are rather frequent: this month started with the deaths of twenty Yemeni soldiers and three suspected al-Qaeda militants as they staged an attack due to being antagonised by the recent Houthi successes. This led to at least 33 people being killed in the month according to Yemeni military sources. Further, since the United States also uses drones in the region (although it does not publicly comment on how), this activity resulted in at least seven al-Qaeda deaths. On 5 November 2014, American drones killed al-Qaeda affiliates and even officials that were wanted by the United States: Nabil al-Dahab and Shawki al-Badani; and four other members of the organisation. The US is involved in the conflict on partly because the its instable ally Yemen shares a border with Saudi Arabia, a key ally and oil exporter in the



region. In the recent clashes that broke out on 10 November 2014 in the rural village of al-Khibza in Rada'a district, the al-Thaalab Mountain played a significant strategic part until ultimately it was taken by al-Qaeda militants. In a following raid, eight hostages have been freed from a mountainside cave in Hadhramaut region with the support of United States Special Operations commandos. Six of the captives were Yemeni, one Ethiopian and one Saudi, says Yemen in a statement. Despite the active collaboration between the American and Yemeni troops, the US wants to downplay its role, redirecting questions

and concerns to Yemen – which, however, does not mention the US participants in its official statement. This could be related to a former unsuccessful US political attempt to restore Yemeni stability by posing sanctions on two Houthi leaders which resulted in more antagonism towards the Yemeni government. The current state of Yemen therefore resembles a sectarian war between the two quasi-religious groups with southern Yemen attempting to detach from the already torn country. It remains to be seen how the tensions will develop since no ceasefire agreement has been effective so far.

“The current state of Yemen therefore resembles a sectarian war between the two quasi-religious groups with southern Yemen attempting to detach”



Map of Yemen. Map: Wikimedia Commons



## Civil war in Somalia

**Somalia was one of the first** and internationally recognized cases of failed state. Indeed, for large part of its history, the state was never capable of maintaining the order within its borders. The last civil war that inflamed the country is still in an ongoing process.

The Transitional Federal Government was established in 2004. This government was internationally recognized, and military supported by the Ethiopian troops in its war against the Islamic Courts Union. The fight lasted until 2009. At the end of January of that year, Sheikh Ahmed was elected as new TFG President. Nevertheless, from that moment, the al-Shabaab radical Islamists accused the new president of accepting the secular transitional government. This is the reason for which they continued the civil war until February.

The present phase of the civil war originated from that moment. The conflict is fought in Southern Somalia by the Federal Government of Somalia, whose troops are assisted by the African Union peacekeeping forces, and different Islamist groups. Al-Shabaab militants, linked to al-Qaeda, have been very proactive in the latest years. Just recently, they were able to



*Burundi peacekeepers prepare for next rotation to Somalia. Photo: U.S. Army Africa*

capture Kudhaa island, in Southern Somalia. Kudhaa is distant forty-five kilometres from the Southern port of Kismayo. This island was firstly taken by the Kenyan-AMISOM peacekeepers and the Jubaland forces on the 1st of November.

A few days ago, al-Shabaab attacked the Jubaland forces, causing not less than twenty-three deaths. Kenyan, as Ethiopian forces, suffered several bomb attacks since 2011, by al-Shabaab and other Islamist groups, for their help towards the UN-mandated interim government of Mogadishu. For instance, al-Shabaab was responsible for the attack on Nairobi's Westgate Shopping Mall, where sixty-seven people were killed on September 2013.

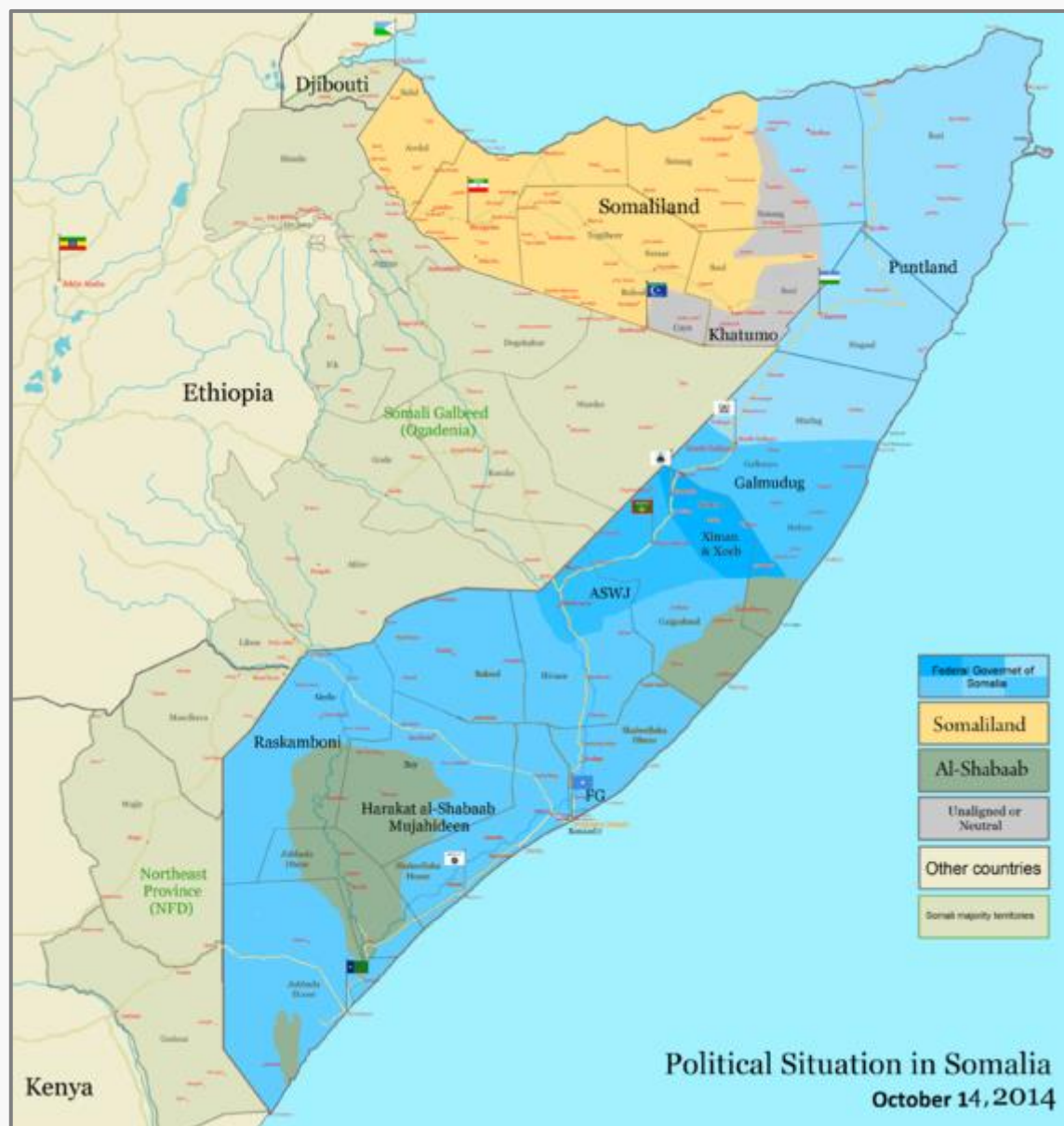


There were tensions in Kenya's coastal regions when the authorities closed five mosques. More than one hundred people were arrested on suspicion of undergoing militant training, for recruitments of al-Shabaab.

The last attack was towards a bus with sixty people on board, headed from Mandera, near the borders of Somalia

and Ethiopia, to Nairobi. Al Shababa militants ambushed the bus, killing twenty-eight people that were not able to recite Quran verses. Also ISIS militants were responsible of similar deeds in the last months.

While Somali Civil War proceeds, Africa and the Middle East are more and more resembling to religious wars theaters.



Political situation in Somalia on 14 October 2014. Photo: James Dahl



## Boko Haram: over 300 victims in November

**Several attacks against civilians** were perpetrated by the Boko Haram militant group in north-eastern Nigeria during November. There had been series of coordinated actions carried out by members of the militant group mostly every week. During the aggressions more than 300 civilians have been killed this month.

On 10 November at a boys' school in Yobe state, Nigeria a suicide bomber disguised

them were carried out against schools. The Boko Haram does not agree with girls attending to school and boys getting non-Islamic education.

Another attack took place in Azaya Kura village on 19 November after four Boko Haram members were shot by soldiers in the village market. The revenge left at least 45 people dead. Azaya Kura is located close to the border with Cameroon; this

“The Boko Haram does not agree with girls attending to school and boys getting non-Islamic education”

as a student killed 48 people and left another 79 injured. According to police it is very likely that Boko Haram militants are behind the explosion although no claim of responsibility was announced. The attack caused anger amongst the crowd blaming the soldiers for not being able to protect them. The city of Potiskum is often targeted by the militant group. There have been several attacks in the north-eastern state of Nigeria during the last year and many of

area is mostly controlled by Boko Haram. Only one day later on 20 November another attack was carried out where 48 Nigerian fishermen were killed on their way to Chad. The attackers did not use guns not to bring the attention from the multi-national troops. Furthermore since Boko Haram members destroyed all mobile phone masts nearby there were no news of the attack for a few days.

A week after the killing of the fishermen a







*Mangaizé refugee camp, municipality of Tondikiwindi, Niger. Photo: Priyanka Pruthi*

roadside bomb was detonated at Marabi-Mubi junction which is also close to the border with Cameroon. Forty people were killed in the explosion and although no claim of responsibility was made it is very probable that Boko Haram is behind the attack.

The violent actions have not ceased in Nigeria. On 28 November another heavy attack was launched against prayers in the central mosque in Kano. Two suicide bombers and several gunmen who were members of Boko Haram killed over 120 people and injured another 270. Two weeks before the attack in the same mosque Muhammad Sanusi II, the emir of Kano called upon people to obtain weapons and start defending themselves against Boko Haram. This was not the first attack in the city of Kano, a previous incident took place in 2012 when 180 people were killed. Because of the years long crisis thousands of people are leaving Nigeria. The recent capture of Damask on 24 November is causing large crowds to flee to Niger. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees there were 50 people killed in the attack and more than 3,000 left the country. Many people do not

wait for the boats to carry them across the Komadougou Yobé River flowing between the two countries but they try to swim through. Many of them drown in the river and many of them are shot by Boko Haram militants. Among those who successfully arrive to Niger are many children who got separated from their family. On the other hand the large number of refugees are cause serious difficulties. Since May 2013 at least 100,000 arrived to Niger and the economy is not strong enough to bear with this situation.

A remarkable success was among the series of atrocities that on 13 November the Nigerian army with the help of the local vigilante force succeeded in taking back Chibok, the town that had been seized by Boko Haram back in April. However the area did not become safe because of the continued presence of Boko Haram in the surrounding territories. Also there are other towns held by the jihadists but Chibok became an important symbol since the abduction of the 219 schoolgirls. The recapture of Chibok is a significant event giving some hope but the crisis is definitely not over yet.



*Logo of Boko Haram. Picture: Wikimedia Commons*



## Re-emerging Taliban and al-Qaeda threat in Afghanistan



*British soldier in Afghanistan.  
Photo: Sgt Rupert Frere RLC*

**The war in Afghanistan** starting in 2001 has been more than a decade long; finally it has been coming to an end in this year. However, the withdrawal of NATO forces has not been a smooth process nevertheless. Although Britain and the United States officially ended their operations in Afghanistan in October 2014 and handed over their last bases to Afghan forces, the country still faces challenges posed by Taliban activity. This endangers civilians in particular: this year only, the United Nations estimates 5,000 civilian deaths and injuries.

The method of the jihadist Taliban for this has been waves of suicide attacks; the

most deadly occurred in July with 89 victims. In November, there has been a suicide bomber at a volleyball match who killed 45 people and wounded 50 more (mostly civilians) in the crowded place; in the capital, Kabul, another bomber hit a British embassy vehicle that killed a citizen of the United Kingdom and injured another; in eastern Kabul, there has been a detonation targeting NATO forces and killing two American citizens. The Taliban claims responsibility for most of the attacks. They mostly reside near the porous border with Pakistan and their successful activities have increased significantly in this year as NATO troops are pulling out. This is why 12,000 international troops will ultimately stay in Afghanistan even after 1 January 2015 in order to aid the Afghan security forces in dealing with the insurgency and carry out counterterrorism to clear out the remaining al-Qaeda activity. Should the future of Afghanistan go as efficiently as planned, the US will have nothing more than the normal embassy activity by 2016 according to the Bilateral Security Agreement between the United States and Afghanistan.



## ■ News in Brief

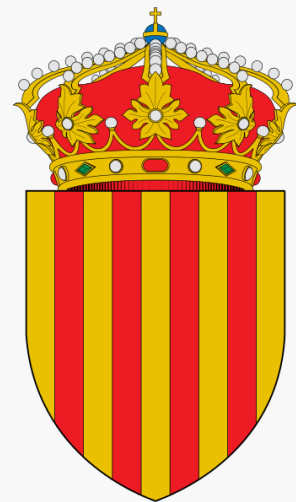
# Domestic affairs affecting international relations

### **Catalonia holds non-binding vote on independence**

■ The people of Catalonia vote on independence on 9 November 2014 – albeit the Spanish government hoped to block it via the Constitutional Court of Spain which suspended the referendum. However, Catalonia pushed through the vote with appealing to self-determination and asked voters whether they want a Catalan state and whether a Catalan state should be independent. The vote will have no effect; its value is in showing more accurately what the majority of Catalonia leans towards.



*Catalonia in Spain.*  
Map: Wikimedia Commons



*Coat of arms of Catalonia.*  
Picture: Wikimedia Commons

### **Finnish Parliament approves same-sex marriage**

■ A bill legalising gender-neutral marriage has passed through the Finnish Parliament with a vote of 105 to 92. Registered partnerships had been legal in the country since 2002 but now with the newly adopted law, Finland became the last Nordic country to legalise same-sex marriage. The decision is a milestone in the country's history, as it was the first time that a citizens' initiative has been successful to become an officially adopted law in Finland.



### **Presidential elections in Romania**

■ Romanians vote on who to replace Traian Băsescu with on 2 and 16 November 2014. Between the two rounds, protests were staged at polling stations particularly abroad, since Romanians living abroad are the main critics of Prime Minister Victor Ponta. After his less than promising first round, Klaus Iohannis of the Christian Liberal Alliance – new person in the Romanian politics hoping to break down corruption – won in the second round with 54.5%.

### **Elections in Moldova**

■ On the 26th November elections, Moldova has given the majority of the votes to the three pro-European parties. The pro-Russian Socialist party resulted as the strongest party of the country. Nevertheless, the pro-European coalition took the 45% of the votes against the 39% of the pro-Russian coalition. This situation occurred soon after the decision of the Central Election Commission to exclude Patria, a pro-Russian party, from the elections, because financially supported from abroad. Moldova, as Ukraine, is living a very delicate situation, divided between a European integration and a Russian embargo of some of its products. This has been a serious blow to the Moldovan economy.

“Moldova, as Ukraine, is living a very delicate situation, divided between a European integration and a Russian embargo”

### **Controversial elections in Ukraine**

■ Presidential and parliamentary elections are going to take place in the two rebel areas of Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk on 2 November. The transparency of the electoral process is questionable, as voters can cast their ballots by post or online and the location and closing time of polling stations can be changed in case of Ukrainian military attacks. Russia will authorize the results of the polls of the separatists elections. In reference to an agreement with Russia and the separatists, Ukraine, the US and the European Union will not recognise the results in the regions in question.



### **Elections in Tunisia**

■ Tunisia elects president on 23 November 2014 after having voted for parliament in October. This will be the first free election of the country which has had three presidents throughout its history. Although the candidates are plentiful, the elections will likely split between two candidates. Béji Caïd Essebsi of a secularist political party Nidaa Tounes (Tunisia's Call) that has won the parliamentary elections and might represent a "return to the past"; and Mohamed Moncef Marzouki from the centre-left secular party, Congress for the Republic, once a president from 2011 and 2014. The election is a milestone and is described by Tunisians as the most important one in the country's history.

### **Charges against Mubarak dropped**

■ The Egyptian court has dropped charges against the former President, Hosni Mubarak and seven senior ex-officials over the killing of hundreds of protesters during the 2011 uprising. As the verdict became official supporters erupted in cheers, while around 2000 people gathered close to Tahrir Square – where the revolution has started back in 2011 – to protest against the verdict.

### **Elections in Bahrain**

■ In Bahrain, this month, were held parliamentary elections for the first time since the Arab Spring protests in 2011. The country is governed by a Sunni monarchy, even if the majority of the Bahraini population is Shias. Thus, the oppositions were asking the election of a prime minister different from the al-Khalifa monarchy. Nevertheless, 27 out of 40 seats have been won from the pro-government Sunnis. Among them, there are also members of the Muslim Brotherhood Islamist, a group banned in the neighbouring countries of the Gulf. Anyway, the oppositions are denouncing the boycott, claiming that thousands of people were pressured to vote against their will.

### **Burkina Faso named a transitional president**

■ After the recent resignation of the former President Blaise Compaore, Burkina Faso has named a transitional president. Michel Kafando, former foreign minister and twice ambassador to the United Nations, has been chosen to guide the country to a process of restoration of the democratic civilian rule. His candidacy was proposed by the army. Anyway, he is perceived as sufficiently detached from the previous president. Indeed, also the oppositions agree with this choice. The new president first task will be to name a new prime minister of a transitional government.





### **Hong Kong protesters are getting under arrest**

■ The pro-democracy protest in Hong Kong going on since September still has not come to an end. On 11 November the acting chief requested the protesters to abandon the occupied sites. After the protesters refused to leave asserting that they are prepared to stay even for a year the police started arresting the activists. The police also put under arrest seven of their own officials who took part in the incident of 15 October when a handcuffed protester was assaulted. Police are now holding almost 150 people in detention including two student leaders, Joshua Wong and Lester Shum after emptying one of the three protest zones.

### **Attacks in Xinjiang, China**

■ On 28 November civilians were attacked by a group of separatists in the mostly Muslim Xinjiang region in China. Fifteen people lost their lives in the incident, eleven of them were attackers shot by the police and another fourteen civilians were taken to hospital. The students of Ilham Tohti, the Uyghur intellectual who was sentenced to death earlier in September were taken to secret trial on charges of separatism before a Chinese court just five days before the attack. The long lasting tension in Xinjiang does not seem to ease and according to human rights activists the repressive policies of the Chinese government are further worsening the situation.

### **American mid-term elections**

■ The United States has held its 2014 mid-term elections on 4 November 2014. The election became the most expensive one in history, however turnout has reached the lowest level in more than 50 years. The overall election results indicate a Republican victory in the entire country as the Republicans have gained control in the Senate, and also increased their majority in the House.

### **Colombia: FARC release hostages**

■ The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), have recently released an army general and two other hostages. The reason for this action was the necessity to start peace talk with the President Juan Manuel Santos: a meeting that will soon take place in Cuba. General Ruben Alzate and the other two hostages were captured during an international humanitarian mission led by the Red Cross. They are in good health conditions, and soon will be able to see their families. Anyway, the general will have to answer some questions due to the fact that he apparently violated the military protocol.



## ■ News in Brief

### International relations

#### **Humanitarian emergency in the Gaza Strip**

■ Due to two days of heavy rains and flooding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) has declared a state of emergency in the Gaza Strip. According to the UNWRA's statement, hundreds of residents had been evacuated, over a hundred schools had been closed and the flooding had worsened the already critical humanitarian situation in the area caused by the latest Israeli offensive.

#### **Hamas denies shelling Israel**

■ The Eshkol Regional Council, the southern district of Israel that borders with the Gaza Strip in the west, was shelled from the territory of Gaza on October 31. While Hamas affirmed their commitment to the ceasefire, Israel reacted immediately and closed the border between two countries following the closure of borders between Egypt and Gaza due to Sinai suicide attack. As a result, the second rocket shot from the territory of Gaza since the termination of the Operation Protective Edge in August sealed off the strip as blockade continues.

“▲Angela Merkel:  
nothing has to stay as it is”

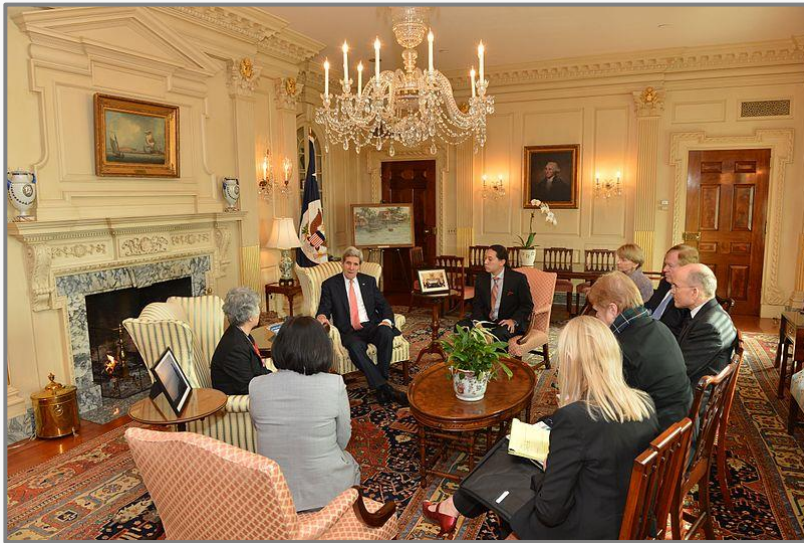
#### **Berlin celebrates the Silver Jubilee of the fall of the Berlin Wall**

■ Around 8000 helium balloons were released to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Tens of thousands of people gathered to see the event as the white balloons were released one by one to symbolise the breaching of the wall that had been built in 1961 and fell in 1989. Chancellor Angela Merkel, while attending the events emphasised the importance that “Nothing has to stay as it is”, reflecting to the crisis in Ukraine and Iraq.



### **Two Americans released from North Korea**

■ Kenneth Bae and Todd Miller are back in the United States of America after 2 years of detention in North Korea. James Clapper, US director of intelligence delivered a letter by President Barack Obama to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The North Korean government's statement says they received a sincere apology from Obama. Bae and Todd are reunited with their families after two years of imprisonment.



*U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry meets with the family of Kenneth Bae in January 2014.  
Photo: U.S. Department of State*

### **Introducing women bishops in the Church of England**

■ A new legislation has formally adopted after it was passed in the general synod with a show of hands. It states female bishops can be ordained in 2015. It is the first step towards creating equality in the Church and it encourages women to participate. Although there are several opponents of the change, Archbishop Welby believes it is only a matter of time to come to an agreement.

“It is the first step towards creating equality in the Church and it encourages women to participate”





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