

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In February, the Russian Federation will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Russia is expected to organise two signature events. The first event is a debate on [sanctions](#) with a particular focus on preventing their humanitarian and unintended consequences.

The second is a debate on the [relationship between the UN and the Collective Security Treaty Organization](#).

Aside from these two signature events, Russia intends to convene a briefing based on its 13 April 2014 letter (S/2014/264) to discuss the implementation of the Minsk Agreement in relation to the situation in [Ukraine](#). Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group Mikko Kinnunen, and Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission Yaşar Halit Çevik are expected to brief.

The Security Council is scheduled to hold a briefing on threats to international peace and security caused by [terrorist acts](#) based on the Secretary-General's report presented to the Council every six months on this issue. Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov and Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) Weixiong Chen are the anticipated briefers.

The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the [1540 Committee](#)—which addresses the concern that non-state actors might use weapons of mass destruction for terrorist purposes—and its Group of Experts.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meeting(s) on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks;

- [Yemen](#), renewal of financial and travel ban sanctions and the monthly meeting on developments;
- [“The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”](#), the monthly meeting on developments;
- [Iraq](#), meeting on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI); and
- [Iraq/Kuwait](#), meeting on the completion of the work of the UN Compensation Commission (UNCC).

African issues on the programme of work in February are:

- [Somalia](#), meeting on the situation in Somalia and the activities of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and briefing by the chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee (Ireland);
- [Central African Republic](#), meeting on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and
- [Sudan](#), renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

The [DPRK](#) is the one Asian issue expected to be on the programme, as the DPRK Sanctions Committee Chair (Norway) is expected to brief Council members in February.

In terms of issues in the Americas, there will be a briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Office in [Haiti](#) (BINUH).

A number of additional issues could be raised in February depending on developments, including [Ethiopia](#), [Myanmar](#), [Sudan](#), and the situation in [West Africa and the Sahel](#).

31 January 2022

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council and Cyber Threats, an Update

When Security Council Report (SCR) published an In Hindsight on [The Security Council and Cyber Threats](#) in January 2020, the Council had never held a formal session on the effects of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on the maintenance of international peace and security. But the issue seemed likely to gain greater prominence in the Council, as incoming member Estonia had identified cybersecurity as one of its priorities, and the Council held its first formal meeting on cyber threats in June 2021.

Council members agree that implementing existing norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and confidence- and capacity-building measures help minimise mistrust between member states and contribute to stability in the cyber domain. Most members believe that Security Council discussions on cyber issues raise awareness of emerging threats posed by new technologies and highlight the importance of effective deterrence against the malicious use of ICTs by states. However, there are stark divisions between members over the Council's role in addressing cyber threats as well as the applicability of international law in cyberspace.

### The Security Council and Cyber Threats since 2020

In the past two years, the Council has become progressively more involved in addressing cyber threats to international peace and security, culminating in a high-level open debate on cybersecurity on 29 June 2021. This signature event of Estonia's presidency marked the first time the Council addressed this issue in a formal setting. By then, differences among Council members—particularly regarding the right of self-defence and the applicability of international humanitarian law in cyberspace—had become evident through several informal Council meetings on cyber during the previous fifteen months.

Consensus reports from the General Assembly-mandated Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (GGE) have acknowledged the applicability of the UN Charter in its entirety, including the principles of state sovereignty, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and non-intervention. However, the applicability of the right to self-defence under article 51 of the UN Charter has been more contentious. Member states, including China and Russia, have supported the view that recognition of the right to self-defence may lead to the “securitisation” of cyberspace, legitimising military intervention and unilateral sanctions in the context of ICTs. In its national contribution on the subject of how international law applies to the use of ICTs by states, submitted during the 2019-2021 GGE, Russia also noted the difficulty of attributing responsibility for particular actions to states.

At the 29 June meeting, Estonia expressed its view that “existing international law, including the [UN Charter] in its entirety, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, applies in cyberspace”. Non-Council member Germany took the floor to suggest that the “common *acquis* is not enough” and that various instruments, including sanctions, can be considered to deter states from committing malicious cyber activities. Russia criticised certain states for “incorrectly interpreting” as “automatic” the applicability of international law in cyberspace which, they argued, “would justify unilateral pressure and sanctions...and the possible use of force” against other member states. They also objected to the Council's engagement on this issue, saying that they oppose any attempts by the Council to “revise...the balanced agreements reached within the

designated General Assembly forums”.

Following the open debate, Estonia circulated a draft presidential statement on cybersecurity to Council members. The draft text acknowledged that malicious cyber activities posed a threat to international peace and security and that, as a cross-border issue, addressing cyber threats requires multilateral cooperation. It also recognised the work of the GGE and the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (OEWG) (see below) while seeking to differentiate their roles from that of the Council in addressing cyber threats. In addition to some Council members' concern that a Council product would interfere with the dual-track discussions at the General Assembly, the ultimate sticking point was the inability of Council members to agree on an operative paragraph on the applicability of international law in cyberspace.

### Informal Council Meetings on Cyber

When the COVID-19 pandemic immobilised life in New York City in March 2020, the Security Council relied on video teleconferencing to conduct its meetings. In many parts of the world, ICTs contributed to the resumption of business activities and essential public services, underlining the need to ensure cybersecurity.

The Council discussed states' malicious use of cyber in three informal settings during 2020. On 5 March, Council members discussed Georgia in the context of cyber threats and hybrid warfare under “any other business”. The meeting was initiated by Estonia, the UK and the US, after Georgia informed the Council that its government and media websites had been targeted by a large-scale cyber-attack in October 2019. In a joint statement to the media after the meeting, the three members attributed the cyberattacks to Russian military intelligence agencies and said that these actions represented a wider pattern of Russian activities. Estonia's Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu issued a press statement following the meeting, suggesting that such conduct was an “example of irresponsible behaviour” by Russia. Russia denied these accusations and said there was no evidence to support the claims.

Two Arria-formula meetings related to cyber threats were held in 2020. On 22 May, Estonia organised a meeting on “[Cyber Stability, Conflict Prevention and Capacity Building](#)”, focusing on the application of international law, existing frameworks for responsible state behaviour, and capacity- and confidence-building measures in cyberspace. At that meeting, Ukraine accused Russia of committing “hybrid aggression” and advocated for the enforcement of accountability mechanisms to “bring to justice those who intentionally organise and carry out cyber-attacks”. Every Council member took the floor, except Russia, which boycotted the meeting after Estonia, the UK and the US did not participate in Russia's Arria-formula meeting on the situation in Crimea the previous day. Russia published a statement online claiming that an “elite minority” of states were “actively pursuing the militarisation of cyberspace” and exploiting the pretext of the application of international law to “justify unilateral pressure and sanctions...and even possible use of force”.

On 26 August 2020, Indonesia organised an Arria-formula meeting on “[Cyber-Attacks Against Critical Infrastructure](#)” to raise awareness of the vulnerability and need for protection of critical infrastructure to such attacks. The meeting explored how norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace protect critical

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council and Cyber Threats, an Update

infrastructure and contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. While most Council members recognised the applicability of international law in cyberspace during times of peace, divisions over its application during armed conflict came to light. Although China has recognised the importance of raising the Council's awareness of cyber threats to international peace and security, including from emerging technologies, it indicated that the Council should approach the issue with prudence, arguing that several questions pertaining to "definition and scope" remain unanswered.

In 2021, Council members organised three Arria-formula meetings on issues related to cyberspace and peace and security. On 17 May, China convened a meeting on "[The Impact of Emerging Technologies on International Peace and Security](#)", which also examined efforts to prevent and mitigate potential risks caused by the use of these technologies. On 28 October, Kenya organised a closed Arria-formula meeting on "[Addressing and Countering Hate Speech and Preventing Incitement to Discrimination, Hostility, and Violence on Social Media](#)", and on 20 December, Estonia and the UK co-organised a closed Arria-formula meeting on "[Preventing Civilian Impact of Malicious Cyber Activities](#)". At the meeting, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu applauded the Council for its increasing engagement on the peace and security aspects of cyberspace.

The positions expressed in Council meetings by China and Russia echo those of several member states at First Committee meetings of the UN General Assembly and in two General Assembly-mandated processes, the GGE and the OEWG. The OEWG is open to all member states, while the GGE is composed of 25 member states, chosen on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, and with one seat reserved for each of the permanent members of the Security Council.

There have been six GGEs since 2004, and two OEWGs, the first of which was established in 2019 through a Russian-sponsored General Assembly resolution. While the GGEs can be credited with having established a set of 11 norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in 2015, including recognition of the applicability of

international law and the UN Charter therein, some member states such as China and Russia have repeatedly indicated that further research is needed to identify precisely when and how international law applies in the cyber domain. They maintain that international humanitarian law applies only in the context of armed conflict and on issues related to the protection of civilians and critical infrastructure.

### Looking Ahead

Cyber threats to the international security environment are becoming increasingly frequent, sophisticated and destructive. According to Secretary-General António Guterres' 2018 Agenda for Disarmament, "global interconnectivity means that the frequency and impact of cyberattacks could be increasingly widespread, affecting an exponential number of systems or networks at the same time." In his report "Our Common Agenda", published in September 2021, Guterres says that the gaps in the cyber governance architecture are cause for concern and calls for a New Agenda for Peace that provides stronger measures to deter cyberattacks on civilian infrastructure and to de-escalate cyber-related tensions.

The spate of Council meetings on cyber threats has helped raise awareness in the Council and among the wider membership. Current differences suggest that member states seeking to advance discussions on cyber threats to peace and security will find greater consensus around confidence-building and cooperative measures, including prevention and risk reduction in the use of ICTs by states, and the protection of civilians and critical infrastructure in conflict situations. Discussions could also focus on identifying measures to support capacity-building in less developed countries to ensure a stable cyber environment.

A normative or legal framework addressing the applicability of international humanitarian law and self-defence in cyberspace may be distant, with divisions between members over the Council's role in tackling cyber threats and the applicability of international law in cyberspace likely to persist. But the extent of malicious cyber activities by states gives the Council no choice but to remain engaged on the topic.

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## Status Update since our January Forecast

### West Africa and the Sahel

On 10 January, the Security Council held a briefing (S/PV.8944), followed by consultations, on West Africa and the Sahel. Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) Mahamat Saleh Annadif presented the Secretary-General's latest report on the region and the activities of UNOWAS (S/2021/1091). Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Ghada Fathi Waly and Cécile Thiombiano Yougbare from Médecins du Monde, who spoke on behalf of the People's Coalition for the Sahel, also briefed. During the meeting, Ghana and Ireland, the co-penholders on UNOWAS, announced that they planned to propose a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel, which Council members started negotiating at the end of January.

### Mali

On 11 January, the Security Council held a briefing (S/PV.8945), followed by consultations, on the Secretary-General's quarterly report on Mali (S/2021/1117) and biannual letter (S/2022/8) on the operations, performance and implementation of the integrated strategic framework for Mali of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Special Representative and head of MINUSMA El-Ghassim Wane and Executive Director Adam Dicko of the Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy briefed. Council members were unable to agree to press elements due to objections from China and Russia, prompting joint press remarks by the A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) reaffirming their support for the decisions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including its imposition of sanctions on the military authorities in Mali, and encouraging the

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transitional authorities in Mali to fulfil ECOWAS' conditions for the gradual removal of the sanctions by immediately developing an acceptable calendar for elections.

### Security Council President's Retreat on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation

On 13 January, Norway convened a one-day Security Council president's retreat in Manhasset, New York, on preventive diplomacy and mediation. Held under the Chatham House rule, the retreat provided an informal platform for Council members to discuss how their efforts interact with those of other actors to promote conflict prevention and resolution. During the retreat, members held a lunch with Secretary-General António Guterres, in which he presented his vision for the future of preventive diplomacy as he starts his second term as Secretary-General. In addition, Council members convened for an informal "sofa talk" on "Talking with all conflict actors". There were also two sessions addressing specific conflict situations (Colombia and Afghanistan), in which mediators, negotiators and other peacemaking actors from the field participated.

### Cyprus

On 17 January, the Council held consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Colin Stewart briefed the Council on the recent developments and key findings from two Secretary-General's reports on UNFICYP: one was the semi-annual report on the mission (S/2021/1110) and the second focused specifically on UNFICYP's good offices (S/2021/1109). On 27 January, Council president Norway read the results of the written voting procedure for resolution 2618, which was adopted unanimously and extended the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months.

### Women, Peace and Security

On 18 January, the Security Council met for a ministerial-level open debate on women, peace and security entitled "Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes" (S/PV.8949). The meeting, one of the signature events of Norway's presidency, was chaired by Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Anniken Huitfeldt. The briefers were: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet; Executive Director of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security Kaavya Asoka; and Executive Director of the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation Zarqa Yaftali. This was the first time that the Security Council has held a formal meeting on reprisals and their effects on women's participation.

### Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 19 January, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.8950). The meeting was held at ministerial level and chaired by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anniken Huitfeldt. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed the Council. The Israeli and Palestinian co-directors of EcoPeace Middle East, Gidon Bromberg and Nada Majdalani, also briefed.

### Colombia

On 20 January, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.8951), followed by closed consultations, on Colombia. Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2021/1090). The Council was also briefed by Luz Marina Giraldo, a former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) combatant and a leader of reintegration initiatives for former combatants. This marked the first time that a former FARC-EP member has briefed the Security Council. Immediately prior to the meeting, Security Council members participated in an immersive virtual reality experience to learn more about the peace process from actors on the ground in Colombia via virtual reality headsets. On 27 January, Council members issued a press statement on Colombia. Among other things, members called on Colombian actors to ensure safe, peaceful and inclusive participation in the upcoming congressional and presidential elections, including the full participation of women.

### Libya

On 24 January, the Security Council discussed the situation in Libya (S/PV.8952). Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo briefed on ongoing mediation efforts by Special Advisor Stephanie Williams and on postponed elections, announcing that the House of Representatives was elaborating an electoral roadmap to include a new electoral timeline. Elham Saudi of Lawyers for Justice in Libya (a UK-based civil society organisation) also briefed, arguing that the elections need to be grounded in a legitimate constitutional framework. On 31 January, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2619, which a straightforward technical rollover, until 30 April.

### Protection of Civilians

On 25 January, the Security Council held a high-level open debate on "Wars in cities: protection of civilians in urban settings" (S/PV.8953). Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre chaired the meeting. The briefers were UN Secretary-General António Guterres; ICRC President Peter Maurer; and Radhya al-Mutawakel, Chairperson and co-founder of the Mwatana Organization for Human Rights. At the meeting, member states expressed their views on how to reduce and address the cumulative and protracted civilian suffering exacerbated by urban warfare.

### UNRCCA

On 27 January, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) Natalia Gherman briefed Council members in closed consultations, apparently updating them on the UNRCCA's work pertaining to counter-terrorism, the women, peace and security agenda, transboundary water management, and the UNRCCA's contact with regional organisations, among other matters. The situation in Afghanistan and the unrest in Kazakhstan in early January were also discussed during the meeting.

### Ethiopia

On 27 January, Security Council members discussed the situation in Ethiopia under "any other business". The meeting was requested

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by Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths briefed. During the meeting, which had a humanitarian focus, Griffiths said that no humanitarian convoy has reached the Tigray region of Ethiopia in over six weeks.

### Myanmar

On 28 January, the Security Council convened for a private meeting

on Myanmar. The briefers were the UN Special Envoy for Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer and Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs Prak Sokhonn, who briefed in his capacity as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Special Envoy for Myanmar. Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ramesh Rajasingham briefed on the humanitarian situation. At the time of writing, Council members were discussing a draft press statement.

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## Sanctions

### Expected Council Action

In February, Russia intends to convene a debate on “General issues relating to sanctions” with a particular focus on preventing their humanitarian and unintended consequences.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

The Security Council considers sanctions—as envisaged in Article 41 of the UN Charter—an important tool to enforce its decisions. In the UN’s first several decades, Chapter VII sanctions were imposed only twice, on Rhodesia in 1966 and South Africa in 1977, but following the end of the Cold War, their use has become quite extensive. Over several decades, the Council has established 30 sanctions regimes, of which 14 are currently active. Following the experience of the 1990s when several sanctions regimes were created, and the negative consequences resulting from comprehensive sanctions became evident, the Security Council made a shift towards targeted sanctions which focus more closely on certain individuals, entities and groups. In recent years, the Council has also at times granted humanitarian exemptions to alleviate negative humanitarian effects of sanctions; the work of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is a case in point.

“General issues relating to sanctions” was added to the Council’s agenda more than two decades ago to allow it to consider a range of UN sanctions-related matters. At the first meeting on this thematic item, on 17 April 2000, Council members underscored the need to improve the design and effectiveness of sanctions, as well as to address challenges faced in their implementation, including their unintended consequences. The Council has held only six meetings under this thematic item since it was introduced in 2000, most recently a briefing in August 2017 during the Egyptian Council presidency, shortly after Egypt organised an Arria-formula meeting in July 2017 to discuss how to improve the design of UN sanctions. Liberia and Sierra Leone shared their experiences as countries that were previously under UN sanctions during the meeting; the Democratic Republic of Congo shared its views as a country still under UN sanctions.

Venezuela organised a debate on “General issues related to sanctions” in February 2016, which focused on the working methods of subsidiary bodies, particularly sanctions committees. Countries

affected by sanctions were invited to speak under Rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. While some shared their experiences in implementing sanctions, others used the opportunity to highlight their unintended consequences.

Earlier, Australia had convened a briefing in November 2014 under the same thematic item. As an outcome of the briefing, Australia prepared a draft resolution which, among other things, requested the Secretary-General to establish a Policy and Coordination Unit within the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) of the Department of Political Affairs to provide a range of guidance and support on sanctions implementation. The draft resolution was opposed by China and Russia, however, apparently due to concerns that the Secretariat could become a de facto policymaking body challenging the authority of the Council, and eventually Australia decided not to table it for a vote.

The Council’s November 2014 briefing coincided with the High-Level Review on UN Sanctions launched in May 2014 and sponsored by Australia, Finland, Greece, and Sweden in partnership with Brown University and the sanctions consulting firm Compliance and Capacity International (CCI) to assess existing sanctions and to develop forward-looking recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of sanctions. The findings of the review were submitted to the Council and the General Assembly in June 2015. One of the recommendations was for the Secretary-General to “provide a report on key sanctions trends, implementation issues, linkages between Security Council sanctions regimes and other Council-mandated activities, including the intended and unintended impact of sanctions measures on human rights, due process, and on humanitarian work”.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue for discussion is what additional steps the Council can take to mitigate the unintended consequences of sanctions. One option is for the Council to listen to voices from the field, including local civil society actors, on the impact of sanctions on civilian populations in order to have a better appreciation of the challenges that may be encountered during implementation.

Another option is for the chairs of sanctions committees to give particular attention to this issue as part of their field visits to countries targeted by sanctions and highlight their observations in their

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SANCTIONS** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1732](#) (21 December 2006) This resolution welcomed the report of the Working Group on General Issues of Sanctions and requested its subsidiary bodies to take note of methodological standards and best practices proposed in the report. [S/RES/1730](#) (19 December 2006) This resolution established “a focal point” within the UN Secretariat to process submissions for de-listing under Council resolutions involving targeted sanctions. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8018](#) (3 August 2017) This was a briefing on general issues related to sanctions. [S/PV.7620](#) (11 February 2016) This was a debate titled “Working Methods of Security Council Subsidiary Organs”. [S/PV.7323](#) (25 November 2014) This was a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and Interpol Secretary-General Jürgen Stock regarding sanctions.

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# Sanctions

reports to the Council.

The Council could also consider requesting the Secretary-General to undertake a study through extensive consultation with various stakeholders and to submit a report with appropriate recommendations on how to curtail the unintended consequences of sanctions. In preparing the report, the Secretariat could consult with member states; UN agencies, funds and programmes; targeted individuals and local populations; private industry; and academia, among others.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Discussions in the Council on country-specific sanctions have become increasingly controversial. China and Russia, supported by some elected members, have been abstaining on resolutions renewing sanctions regimes and the mandates of panels of experts such as Somalia and South Sudan for quite some time, but sanctions renewals became more distinctly contentious in 2021. Russia, underscoring the need to increase geographical diversity in the appointment of UN experts, also placed a hold on the appointment of experts of several sanctions regimes.

Some Council members continue to highlight the unintended socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences of sanctions in discussions and negotiations related to specific sanctions regimes. This issue drew particular attention following the Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan and in relation to the adoption of resolution 2165 of 22 December 2021, which determines that humanitarian assistance does not violate the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime. Resolutions renewing the various sanctions regimes established by the Council also now contain standard language which stresses that the measures imposed by the resolution are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population.

While Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs) are, as the name makes clear, sanctions not imposed by the Security Council, China, Niger, Russia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and South Africa organised a virtual Arria-formula meeting on 25 November 2020 to discuss this topic. The UN Special Rapporteur on the impact of UCMs on the enjoyment of human rights was among those who briefed the meeting, which focused on the negative effects of UCMs and how to mitigate those effects.

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# Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

The mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) expires on 3 June.

## Key Recent Developments

Sudan faces an ongoing political crisis following the military coup d'état of 25 October 2021. On 2 January, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok announced his resignation after failed mediation attempts between civilian and military leaders. In a televised address, he said that the country is at a "dangerous turning point that threatens its whole survival". His resignation came amidst ongoing widespread demonstrations in the country against the October 2021 coup and following the subsequent power-sharing agreement between the civilian and military entities announced on 21 November 2021, which included Hamdok's reinstatement as prime minister. Several parties rejected the agreement, including the main opposition alliance, the Forces for Freedom and Change Coalition (FFC).

On 10 December 2021, the Council received a briefing from Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes on the Secretary-General's 90-day report, while then-Chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia) provided the quarterly briefing on the committee's work. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 9 December 2021.) In his briefing, Perthes said that "Sudan's political transition has been undergoing its greatest crisis to date...but discussions on a way forward have begun". He added that the "military takeover

ha[d] exposed and deepened the mistrust between the military and civilian components and within the civilian component itself". Jürgenson noted that the security situation in Darfur remained fragile, and referred to the fact that the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid faction (SLA/AW) continued to refuse to sign the Juba Peace Agreement.

In a statement on 8 January, Perthes announced the launch of a "UN-facilitated intra-Sudanese political process which is aimed at supporting Sudanese stakeholders in agreeing on a way out of the current political crisis". Noting that "measures taken to date have not succeeded in restoring the course of this transformation", Perthes said in the statement that "all key civilian and military stakeholders, including armed movements, political parties, civil society, women's groups, and resistance committees will be invited to participate". On 12 January, Perthes briefed members on Sudan under "any other business". (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 11 January.) A 16 January UNITAMS statement, following the first week of UN-facilitated consultations, asserted that participants saw the consultations as critical to resolving the ongoing crisis and welcomed the facilitation role played by the UN. However, while the UN initiative has been welcomed internationally, there has been opposition to it from civilian groups in the country, including the Sudanese Professionals Association. On 26 January, several thousand people demonstrated outside the UNITAMS headquarters in Khartoum demanding that the mission be expelled and that Perthes leave the country.

As at 24 January, 76 people have been killed (including seven people on 17 January) and over 2,200 people injured by state security forces during protests since the October 2021 coup, according

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2562](#) (11 February 2021) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts for one year. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/1008](#) (3 December 2021) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. [S/2021/696](#) (31 July 2021) was on benchmarks to assess the sanctions measures on Darfur, as requested in resolution 2508. [Security Council Meetings S/PV.8948](#) (17 January 2022) was the semi-annual briefing by the ICC prosecutor on the court's work in Darfur. [S/PV.8925](#) (10 December 2021) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNITAMS. [S/PV.8924](#) (10 December 2021) was the quarterly briefing on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

# Sudan

to the non-governmental organisation the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors. On 18 January, the spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that “the human rights situation in Sudan continues to be of serious concern, with peaceful protesters killed or injured on a near-daily basis by security forces, as well as a clampdown on critics of the authorities and on independent journalists”. The spokesperson also highlighted the continuing arbitrary arrest and detention of protesters and journalists.

On 11 February 2021, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2562, extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until 12 March the following year. As in previous years, it expressed the intention to “take appropriate action regarding the further extension of the mandate” by 12 February. The resolution requested the Secretariat to produce a report by the end of July 2021 with recommendations for clear and well-identified key benchmarks that could guide the Council in reviewing the sanctions measures on Darfur. It expressed the Council’s intention to establish those benchmarks by 15 September 2021. On 31 July 2021, Council members received the report of the Secretary-General recommending four key benchmarks and related targets, namely progress on: political and economic governance issues, transitional security arrangements in Darfur, the National Plan for Civilian Protection, and transitional justice and accountability. (The Council did not establish benchmarks by 15 September 2021; see below for further details.) In January, the Panel of Experts submitted its final report as requested in resolution 2562. (The report was not yet publicly available at the time of writing.)

ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan provided the semi-annual briefing on the court’s Darfur-related activities on 17 January. Khan stressed that the ICC cases in relation to Darfur are not “against Sudan” but against “individuals for whom the evidence discloses their responsibility in relation to crimes” within the court’s jurisdiction. He added that Sudan “is a partner, not an adversary” in the court’s work.

## Women, Peace and Security

On 23 December 2021, Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten expressed grave concern at reports of sexual violence, including rape, against women and girls perpetrated by security forces during their dispersal on 19 December 2021 of protesters demonstrating against the October coup and the 21 November power-sharing agreement. The protest also marked the third anniversary of the demonstrations leading to the fall of former President Omar al-Bashir. Patten demanded “the immediate and complete cessation of all human rights violations and abuses including sexual violence”. She called on the authorities to ensure access to medical, psychosocial and legal support for the survivors, as well as to put in place accountability mechanisms in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2467 regarding women, peace and security. Patten also called on the international community, including the members of the Security Council, to use their good offices with the Sudanese leaders to demand an end to violence and intimidation against civilians, including sexual violence. On 23 January, through its official Twitter account, UNITAMS expressed outrage at the arrest of women’s rights advocate Amira Osman and called for her release.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 January, the expert on human rights in Sudan, Adama Dieng, announced that his visit to Sudan, scheduled to take place from 22 to 27 January, had been postponed at the request of Sudanese authorities. The High Commissioner for Human Rights appointed Dieng in November 2021, in line with Human Rights Council resolution S-32/1. “I was very much looking forward to having a candid conversation with State and non-State actors, including victims of human rights violations”, he said in the statement. He called on “the authorities in Sudan to communicate the dates for my next visit as soon as possible”.

## Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts. Given the ongoing political crisis in the country, another issue is whether it is feasible to consider reviewing the sanctions measures on Darfur, as signalled in past resolutions that renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts. A further issue is whether to consider establishing clear, well-identified and measurable key benchmarks to guide the Council in reviewing the sanctions measures, an intention expressed by the Council in resolutions 2455, 2508 and 2562.

Another key issue is the crackdown on protesters since 25 October 2021. Some Council members may seek to emphasise the need to conduct timely investigations into casualties during the demonstrations and the importance of accountability for this violence. A less likely option is to consider expanding the regime’s designation criteria to include acts of rape or sexual violence.

A further issue is the situation in Darfur, including after looting and attacks against UN facilities, equipment and supplies that took place during December 2021 by unknown armed groups.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

There is a significant divergence of views in the Council regarding the utility of the Sudan sanctions regime, as was seen during negotiations on resolution 2562 in February 2021. (See our What’s In Blue story of 10 February 2021.) The resolution expressed the Council’s intention to establish benchmarks to review the sanctions measures by 15 September 2021. The US (penholder on Sudan sanctions) apparently circulated a draft presidential statement in September 2021 that endorsed all the key benchmarks and related targets proposed in the Secretary-General’s 31 July 2021 report. While this was acceptable to some members, apparently other members expressed the view that the benchmarks adopted by the Council should be limited to those focusing only on the situation in Darfur and that some of those contained in the Secretary-General’s report went beyond this scope. Members were unable to agree, and a presidential statement was ultimately not adopted.

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions. Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana) chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. The vice-chair for 2022 is Ireland.

# Somalia

## Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold a briefing on the situation in Somalia, followed by closed consultations. James Swan, the Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM), and Francisco Madeira, head of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), are the expected briefers. Ahead of the meeting, the Council will receive the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the country and on the activities of AMISOM.

The Council will also hear the periodic briefing by the Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland), covering the committee's activities during the last 120 days.

## Key Recent Developments

The political landscape in Somalia continues to be dominated by the discussion surrounding elections for Somalia's lower house (the House of the People) in all federal member states and escalating tensions between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo" and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble.

When the Council last met on Somalia on 17 November 2021, Swan welcomed the commencement of the lower house elections, with two out of 275 seats filled. He called for the swift completion of the electoral process "to ensure that the full Parliament is elected before the end of this year [2021]". By the year's end, however, the electoral process had progressed only slowly, and amid the delays, tensions between Farmajo and Roble re-emerged.

On 26 December 2021, Villa Somalia, the office of the president, published a statement on elections, criticising "the delay and slow pace of the Prime Minister in conducting the elections as tasked by the President" and asserting that Roble posed a serious threat to the electoral process. The statement called for a consultative meeting between the federal government and its member states to chart a new direction and to agree on "capable leadership" to advance the process. In a statement released the following day, Villa Somalia announced the suspension of Roble based on allegations that he had misappropriated public land owned by the Somali National Army and announced an investigation into the matter.

Roble dismissed the allegations as a coup attempt aimed at derailing the ongoing elections and demanded that the security forces henceforth respond only to his command. In early January, he convened a national consultative meeting, the forum consisting of representatives from the federal government and its member states, established to bridge electoral differences. The forum concluded with a 9 January statement announcing a revised electoral timetable under which the outstanding elections would be completed between 15 January and 25 February.

The political dispute renewed concerns that the government might lose its focus on the fight against Al-Shabaab. The militant group continued to conduct attacks in wide areas of the country, including several bombings in Mogadishu, causing many casualties.

A 16 January suicide bombing injured the government spokesperson, Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimuu, who was flown to Turkey for treatment.

In a 29 December 2021 joint communiqué, the government of Somalia and the AU acknowledged the need for a reconfigured AU mission and agreed to finalise by 11 February outstanding tasks towards the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan, the document outlining the gradual handover of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali National Army. During talks in Addis Ababa from 21 to 24 January, Somalia and the AU also reportedly agreed to extend the presence of AU peacekeepers in the country for another 33 months and rename the mission the AU Transition Mission to Somalia (ATMIS).

These steps appear to represent progress in resolving the dispute between the Somali federal government and the AU over the future of AMISOM. Previously the AU had called on the Council to mandate an AU-UN hybrid mission funded by UN assessed contributions, while Somalia had envisioned a reconfigured AMISOM mission as the best option during a transition period leading to its own forces taking over responsibility for security in the country.

The dispute has delayed the development of a joint proposal by the AU, the UN and the Somali federal government on future security arrangements in the country. The Council had requested this proposal in resolution 2568 of 12 March 2021.

In order to allow more time for the AU and Somalia to reach an agreement on security arrangements—and in light of the expiration of AMISOM's authorisation on 31 December 2021—the Council adopted resolution 2614 of 21 December 2021, which reauthorised AMISOM's mandate without substantive changes for three months until 31 March. At the time of writing, Somalia, the AU, the EU (as the largest donor to AMISOM), and the UN were engaged in talks at the technical and senior leadership levels with the goal of producing such a proposal.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 10 December 2021, Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten briefed the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, noting trends of sexual violence emerging across Somalia. She also presented recommendations on how the committee could counter these trends.

On 16 December, Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of five individuals to the Panel of Experts. A sixth candidate, who had been approved by the committee, indicated that she was no longer available to serve on the panel. Recruitment to fill her position is currently ongoing. The appointments followed a prolonged hold by Russia on several expert appointments across sanctions regimes, citing a need for increased geographical diversity among UN experts.

## Key Issues and Options

The shape of the future AU security presence in Somalia is a key issue for the Council, as well as for the AU and the Somali government.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2608 (3 December 2021) renewed the anti-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia for three months. S/RES/2607 (15 November 2021) renewed for one year the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces S/RES/2592 (30 August 2021) extended UNSOM's mandate until 31 May 2022. S/RES/2568 (12 March 2021) renewed the AMISOM authorisation until 31 December 2021. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2021/944 (11 November 2021) was on the situation in Somalia covering developments from 1 August to 4 November 2021. **Security Council Letter** S/2021/858 (29 September 2021) was from the Secretary-General to the Security Council president requesting an extension of the deadlines to submit a proposal on a reconfigured AMISOM and options for continued UN logistical support **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8905 (15 November 2021) covered the adoption of resolution 2607, including several explanations after the vote. **Sanctions Committee Document** S/2021/849 (5 October 2021) was the final report of the Panel of Experts.

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## Somalia

The AU mission will be expected to counter Al-Shabaab while gradually handing over security responsibilities to the Somali government. With the 31 March deadline for the current AMISOM reauthorisation approaching, the Council could convene an informal interactive dialogue with Somalia, the AU, the EU, the UN and troop-contributing countries to allow for a frank discussion on the efforts to produce a proposal on transitional security arrangements, including possible Council action to best support this process.

The Council is also likely to monitor closely the completion of the lower house elections, which will pave the way for the holding of an indirect presidential election on 25 February. To that effect, Council members could consider issuing a press statement welcoming the progress achieved so far and urging all stakeholders to further advance the electoral process in a way that promotes the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Recent developments on the Council and at AU headquarters in Addis Ababa may change Council dynamics. At the beginning of

this year, the UAE, which has an interest in Somalia and the region and maintains close ties with some Somali political stakeholders, joined the Council as an elected member. On 7 January, Roble publicly apologised to the UAE for the Somali government's seizure of some \$9.6 million in UAE funds at the Mogadishu airport in 2018, ordering the funds to be returned to the Emirates. However, Farmajo subsequently ordered the Central Bank not to release what he called "illicit money" and alleged that the funds had been intended to destabilise Somalia. According to the UAE, these funds were intended for training Somali troops.

The agreement reached in Addis Ababa in January between the AU and the government of Somalia may also have an impact on the position of the African Council members. The agreement foresees, among other things, the position of the ATMIS force commander being held by the largest troop contributor. The views of the troop-contributing countries of AMISOM, including Council member Kenya, to the latest proposal by Somalia and the AU is not yet known. Regardless of the new proposal, the financing of the mission may also continue to be an issue.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In February, the Council is expected to adopt a resolution renewing the Yemen financial and travel ban sanctions, which expire on 26 February, and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts, which expires on 28 March. (The targeted arms embargo established by resolution 2216 in April 2015 against the Houthi rebel group is open-ended.)

The Council is also expected to hold its monthly briefing and consultations on Yemen with UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA. The head of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), Major General Michael Berry, who was appointed in December 2021 and assumed his duties on 19 January, is expected to brief in consultations.

### Key Recent Developments

Fighting in Yemen intensified during January. Yemeni government-aligned forces retook the governorate of Shabwa and areas of southern Marib governorate, a setback to the Houthi offensive to capture the government stronghold of Marib. In retaliation, the Houthis launched a missile and drone attack against the United Arab Emirates (UAE), triggering a spate of reciprocal violence and new concern about the spillover of the war in the region.

Earlier in the month, on 2 January, the Houthis seized the Emirati-flagged ship RWABEE in the Red Sea off Yemen's western coast. The Houthis claimed that the vessel was transporting military equipment and later released video that appeared to show armoured vehicles and military patrol boats on the ship. The Saudi Arabia-led military coalition, which supports the Yemeni government, said that the ship was carrying medical equipment from a Saudi field hospital on

the Yemeni island of Socotra and called its seizure "an act of piracy" that threatened maritime security and international trade. At an 8 January press conference, coalition spokesperson Colonel Turki al-Maliki asserted that the Houthis were using the Hodeidah ports, in particular Salif port, to import and assemble missiles and explosive-laden boats used in maritime attacks.

UNMHA expressed "great concern" over "allegations of the militarization of the [Hodeidah] Ports", according to an 11 January press statement. Two days later, it announced that an UNMHA patrol team had visited Salif port, where it observed the RWABEE and spoke to its crew members. "No indication of militarization was observed in the areas patrolled", according to UNMHA.

On 10 January, the Giants Brigades—one of the armed groups that form the Emirati-backed Joint Forces, which withdrew from Hodeidah city in November 2021 to reinforce other frontlines—announced that it had pushed the Houthis out of Shabwa governorate after ten days of fighting. The Giants Brigades also re-captured nearby areas of southern Marib governorate.

Special Envoy Grundberg told the Council at its 12 January briefing on Yemen that "the parties are doubling down on military options" and "the prevailing belief of all warring sides seems to be that inflicting sufficient harm on the other will force them into submission". Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ramesh Rajasingham reported that fighting over the past month in Al Jawf, Marib and Shabwa governorates had displaced 15,000 people. He also said that hostilities had intensified in Al Bayda governorate and that coalition airstrikes had escalated in Sana'a and elsewhere. According to Rajasingham, 358 civilian casualties were recorded in December 2021 as a direct result of fighting, tied

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2564 (25 February 2021) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8946 (12 January 2022) was a briefing on Yemen. Security Council Press Statement SC/14771 (21 January 2022) condemned the "heinous terrorist attacks" in Abu Dhabi on 17 January that were committed and claimed by the Houthis SC/14765 (14 January 2022) condemned the Houthi seizure and detention of the UAE-flagged vessel RWABEE off the coast of Yemen on 2 January 2022.

# Yemen

for the highest monthly number in three years. Two days later, in a 14 January press statement, Council members condemned the Houthi seizure and detention of the UAE-flagged RWABEE.

On 17 January, a Houthi-claimed attack, using a combination of ballistic and cruise missiles and drones, struck an industrial zone in Abu Dhabi, causing three petroleum tanker explosions, and a construction site at Abu Dhabi International Airport. Two Indian nationals and one Pakistani civilian were killed, and six other civilians were injured in the attack. At the request of the UAE, Council members discussed the attack in closed consultations on 21 January, and in a press statement, members “condemned in the strongest terms the heinous terrorist attacks in Abu Dhabi”.

In response, the coalition intensified airstrikes against the Houthis starting 17 January. On the evening of 20 to 21 January, airstrikes hit a detention facility in Saada city that killed 91 detainees and injured 236 according to a statement by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which noted that the facility was holding 1,300 pre-trial detainees as well as 700 migrants. That same evening a strike on a telecommunications building in Hodeidah knocked out internet service in much of Yemen.

At the time of writing, the situation appeared to be escalating, as the Houthis warned foreign companies to leave the UAE and promised further attacks. The UAE and the US intercepted two missiles on 24 January targeting the Al Dhafra Air Base near Abu Dhabi, which hosts US forces. Secretary-General António Guterres issued statements condemning the Houthi attack on 17 January in Abu Dhabi and the airstrikes on the detention facility in Yemen.

Also in January, Iran named Abdul Reza Shahlai to replace its ambassador to the Houthis, Hassan Irloo, who died from COVID-19 in December 2021, shortly after being evacuated from Sana'a. Shahlai, a high-level commander in Iran's Quds force, was already in Yemen, where he was unsuccessfully targeted by a US drone strike on the same day in January 2020 that the US killed Qasem Soleimani, the head of the Quds Force, in Iraq.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 21 January, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee met with the Yemen Panel of Experts to consider the panel's final report, which details, among other issues, evidence of arms smuggling from Iran to the Houthis and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 28 December 2021 statement, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet expressed concern “for the well-being of two of their staff members who were detained in early November in Sana'a, Yemen”. According to the joint statement, the UN did not receive information about the grounds or legal basis for their detention or their current status.

In a press briefing on 18 January, the spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over the “continuing escalation of the conflict in Yemen.” According to the spokesperson, the conflict had intensified since the start of the year, noting that “figures collected by the UN Human Rights Office indicate that, so far in January, there were 839 airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition, compared with 1,074 for the whole of December”. The spokesperson added there were “some 16 drone strikes, and 12 ballistic missiles and three other projectiles fired by Ansar Allah [Houthi] forces towards Saudi territory in December” and “to date in January, reports indicate there have been 10 drone strikes towards Saudi Arabia”

## Women, Peace and Security

Norway elected to focus the 12 January Yemen monthly meeting on women, peace and security (WPS) to “draw attention to the urgency of strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding”, as stated by Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) during the session. This is consistent with the commitments jointly undertaken in December 2021 by Albania, Norway, the UAE, and former Council member Niger to make WPS a “top priority” of their presidencies. (See our brief on WPS in the January Forecast.) During the meeting, Grundberg said that his Office will continue to convene consultations with women from political parties, civil society and the private sector and urged all actors to respect the rights and work of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders. Among other issues affecting women in Yemen, Rajasingham noted that access to reproductive healthcare remains precarious “with one woman dying every two hours during childbirth from almost entirely preventable causes”. A civil society briefer, co-founder and CEO of the Sheba Youth Foundation for Development Ola al-Aghbary, also participated in the meeting. She spoke of local mediation initiatives in the city of Taiz and of the efforts to establish a youth consultative council which would be in contact with the Office of the Special Envoy to promote the participation of young people in peace negotiations. Several Council members referenced the situation of women in their statements to varying degrees. Ireland, which co-chairs the informal expert group on women, peace and security with Mexico, focused its statement heavily on this issue. Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) said that the persistent exclusion of Yemeni women from political and peace initiatives is unjustifiable. She lamented the fact that, thus far, no women have been included in the UN-facilitated prisoner exchange negotiations. While Byrne Nason welcomed Grundberg's commitment to consult with women's groups, she noted that “consultation should not be a substitute for meaningful participation” and strongly encouraged Grundberg and all parties to work towards securing Yemeni women seats at the negotiating table.

## Key Issues and Options

Key issues include the fighting for Marib, the war's escalation and the risk of further regional spillover. Grundberg's effort to restart a political process remains critical. He continues to develop a framework for an inclusive political process addressing political, security and economic issues. At the January briefing, Grundberg said the framework aims “at facilitating incremental progress” in these different areas for a sustainable political settlement.

Members may encourage Grundberg to continue to develop and complete his framework for an inclusive political process, which the Council could then endorse. In renewing the Yemen sanctions regime, the Council could, similarly to last year's resolution 2564 extending the sanctions, condemn the Houthi offensive in Marib and attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE, express concern about recent reciprocal violence and stress the need for de-escalation and a ceasefire.

Key issues related to Yemen's humanitarian crisis include protecting civilians, preventing famine, improving humanitarian access and supporting the economy. Council members could call on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principle of proportionality. Members could further encourage donors to support the 2022 humanitarian response plan (HRP), which is expected to require funding similar to last year's \$3.85 billion HRP. They could also urge UN member states to support the economic framework that the UN has developed to stabilise the Yemeni rial, lower commodity prices and pay civil servants' salaries.

The threat posed by the FSO Safer oil tanker, which holds around 1.15 million barrels of oil and is moored in the Red Sea off the Houthi-held Ras Isa oil terminal, is an ongoing issue of concern.

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# Yemen

The Council could call on the Houthis in the upcoming sanctions resolution to allow a UN technical team to assess the ship's condition and stress the group's responsibility for the deteriorating condition of the vessel, which risks causing an environmental, economic and humanitarian catastrophe in the event of an oil spill or fire.

## Council Dynamics

Council members support UN-led mediation efforts and share concerns about the humanitarian situation and the threat posed by the Safer oil tanker. Despite these general areas of agreement, differences exist among members. Russia often seeks to reduce references in Council products singling out the Houthis, and it sought, unsuccessfully, to reverse new sanctions designations on three Houthi military figures in November 2021 after it failed to raise its objections within the allotted time. Mentioning Iran's support for the Houthis in Council products has been a red line for Russia and China, which have in the past contested the veracity of the Panel of

Experts' conclusions about related arms transfers.

Council member UAE is a leading member in the coalition. While significantly scaling back its military presence in 2019, it remains an important actor, including through its support of various armed groups, such as the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the Joint Forces. In previous reports, the Yemen Panel of Experts has noted that the UAE, along with the other conflict parties, has committed violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and indicated that the UAE's support for the STC undermines the Yemeni government, "acting against the spirit of resolution 2016", which the Council adopted in April 2015 at the outset of the coalition military intervention in Yemen. In January, the US, which along with the UK has supported the coalition, announced that it is considering a UAE request to re-designate the Houthis as a "Foreign Terrorist Organisation". The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania) chairs the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee.

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# Ukraine

## Expected Council Action

In February, Russia is expected to convene a briefing on the situation in Ukraine to mark the anniversary of the "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements", also known as the Minsk II agreement, and to discuss its implementation. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is expected to brief. Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) Mikko Kinnunen and OSCE Special Monitoring Mission Chief Monitor Halit Çevik may also brief.

## Background

The Minsk II agreement, which was adopted on 12 February 2015, outlined steps for ending the conflict in Ukraine through a political settlement. The agreement has failed to achieve tangible progress to date, as fighting continues between the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian separatists in the two breakaway provinces of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. The conflict, which erupted shortly after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, has claimed the lives of more than 14,000 people, including approximately 3,000 civilians, and injured more than 7,000 civilians, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In addition, some 1.5 million people have been internally displaced since the outbreak of the conflict, according to Ukrainian government figures.

The Security Council endorsed the Minsk II agreement in resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015. In a presidential statement adopted in June 2018, the Council reiterated the need for strict compliance with resolution 2202 and encouraged parties to implement the measures set out in the Minsk agreements, as well as other agreements reached within the Normandy format—a group comprised of France,

Germany, Russia, and Ukraine that was created in 2014 to address the conflict in Ukraine—and the TCG, which consists of the OSCE, Russia and Ukraine.

Since 2019, Russia has convened annual Council briefings in February to mark the anniversary of the Minsk II agreement and discuss the status of its implementation. These meetings have taken place ahead of the annual debate in the General Assembly on the agenda item "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine", which is scheduled for 23 February. These Council meetings have displayed the tensions between Russia and Ukraine, with Moscow consistently blaming Kyiv for the lack of implementation of the Minsk agreements. On the other hand, Ukraine has accused Russia of interfering in its internal affairs by supporting the separatists in its eastern regions and violating international law in connection with the annexation of Crimea—a position which has been supported by the US and European members of the Security Council.

## Key Recent Developments

Since November 2021, the situation of Ukraine has again garnered increased international attention following reports that Russia has been transporting an irregularly high quantity of troops and military hardware to Ukraine's borders. According to US and NATO officials, Russia has amassed more than 100,000 troops and military equipment, including tanks and rocket launchers, along Ukraine's borders with Russia, Belarus and Moldova.

US officials have been warning in recent months that Russia's moves may portend a significant military action, such as an incursion into Ukraine. Moscow, for its part, has repeatedly denied plans to invade Ukraine, with Russian officials publicly maintaining that their country does not want war. According to media reports, Ukrainian officials say that while the threat posed by Russia is concerning, it is uncertain whether Moscow will undertake military action.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2202 (17 February 2015) endorsed the Minsk II agreement. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/12 (6 June 2018) encouraged parties to implement the measures set out in the Minsk agreements.

# Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reportedly argues that the stark public warnings by US and European allies might complicate diplomatic efforts towards a solution to the crisis and harm his country's economy, advocating instead for "quiet military preparation and quiet diplomacy".

Analysts have differed in their assessment of the probability of a Russian military operation against Ukraine, its possible form, and its ramifications on both countries and on Europe's stability. Some have suggested that Russia is bolstering its presence along Ukraine's border to extract broader concessions from the US and NATO regarding security arrangements in Europe, which are a matter of concern for Moscow. Those analysts have noted that Russia's current military build-up near Ukraine's border constitutes the second such major build-up in the past year; in April 2021, Russia transported some 80,000 troops to its border with Ukraine in response to a two-month joint US-NATO exercise, which took place in Albania and parts of eastern Europe. Media sources have quoted Russian President Vladimir Putin as telling a gathering of Russian security officials in December 2021 that Moscow might resort to "military-technical" means if Western nations "continue the[ir] obviously aggressive stance".

On 17 December 2021, Russia publicly presented a list of demands in two draft treaties, one with the US and another with NATO. The draft treaties codified several demands made by Russian officials in various meetings with western counterparts in the preceding weeks, including during a 7 December 2021 videoconference (VTC) meeting between Putin and US President Joe Biden. In addition to seeking guarantees that Ukraine would not be offered NATO membership, many of Moscow's demands go beyond the immediate conflict in eastern Ukraine; these include a call for NATO to withdraw its troops and weapons from former Soviet countries that joined the alliance after 1997, and for the US to remove nuclear weapons positioned in Europe.

The US and NATO delivered their written responses to Russia's demands on 26 January. The responses, which were not made public, reportedly rejected barring Ukraine from NATO membership. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters that the US response includes proposals for "reciprocal transparency measures" regarding force posture in Ukraine, measures to increase confidence regarding military exercises and manoeuvres in Europe and measures relating to arms control in Europe. The New York Times reported that NATO's response similarly outlined proposals for "areas of negotiation about arms control and transparency of military exercises" and suggested the reopening of liaison offices between NATO and Moscow. In a 28 January VTC meeting between Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron, the former said that the US response does not address "Russia's principal concerns" regarding NATO expansion and the deployment of strike-weapons systems near Russia's borders, among other things, according to an official transcript of the call issued by the Kremlin.

Throughout the tense stand-off with Russia, the US and NATO have taken a "dual-track approach", as characterised by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, which involves pursuing a diplomatic solution to the crisis while preparing for possible military confrontation. Several diplomatic initiatives have been pursued in recent months in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. These include a 13 January meeting under OSCE auspices in Vienna and a 21

January meeting between Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Geneva. On 26 January, a meeting of the Normandy format was held in Paris, marking the first time the group has met since December 2019. Zelenskyy described the Paris meeting as a positive step, while emphasising the importance of upholding the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine stipulated by the Minsk II agreement. Another meeting of the format is scheduled to take place in Berlin during the second week of February. A Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson reportedly said that the next meeting could identify "solutions to problems that have been piling up for seven years". In his 28 January videoconference meeting with Macron, Putin called for Kyiv's compliance with the Minsk II agreement's terms, "primarily on establishing a direct dialogue with Donetsk and Lugansk and legalising the special status of Donbas".

On 27 January, the US requested an open Council meeting on Ukraine, citing the threat to international peace and security caused by the Russian military build-up on Ukraine's borders. Russia requested a procedural vote in an effort to block the meeting. The meeting was held on 31 January, following the procedural vote in which ten members voted in favour of holding a meeting, while China and Russia voted against and Gabon, India and Kenya cast abstentions on the vote. (A procedural motion requires at least nine affirmative votes to pass, and the veto does not apply.) During the meeting, which featured a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, many Council members urged dialogue to resolve the current crisis and expressed support for the talks in the Normandy format. Some members characterised the situation as a threat to international peace and security, while Russia stated that it had no intention of invading Ukraine.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Security Council is how to support the full implementation of the Minsk II agreement to achieve a sustainable solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Council members may consider a press statement calling on the parties to pursue dialogue to resolve outstanding issues through the TCG and the Normandy format. They may wish to encourage the group to maintain a steady momentum of meetings. (The Normandy format was dormant between 2016 and 2019 and only convened once in December 2019 prior to the recent tensions.)

While the current military build-up on Ukraine's border is not the focus of February's briefing, developments on the issue are likely to colour the discussions. Some members may advocate for a preventive approach by the Council to de-escalate the situation and may wish to convene Council meetings on the matter to remain informed of recent developments and to demonstrate to actors on the ground that the issue has the Council's attention.

Other members may feel that open Council meetings on the issue can be counterproductive and amplify the divisions in the Council. They may therefore consider discussing the broader situation in Ukraine in a closed format, such as consultations or an informal interactive dialogue.

Agreement on Council products on Ukraine is difficult because of members' sharply diverging positions on the conflict. Nonetheless, Council members could encourage the Secretary-General to consider the appointment of a personal envoy—a position that does not require Security Council approval—to support existing diplomatic initiatives.

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# Ukraine

## Council Dynamics

Deep divisions, particularly between Russia, on the one hand, and the US and European members of the Council, on the other, colour Council dynamics on Ukraine. The US and European members have accused Russia of interfering in Ukraine's internal affairs by supporting the separatists in eastern Ukraine and claim that the annexation of Crimea is a violation of international law. Russia, for its part,

blames Western countries for trying to “pull Ukraine into their orbit”, accusing them of fomenting the 2014 Maidan protests, among other things. The difficult dynamics around Ukraine have been reflected in the frequent convening of Arria-formula meetings in which members present competing narratives about various aspects of the conflict, including the situation in Crimea.

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# Haiti

## Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will receive a briefing from the Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), Helen La Lime, on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH, due by 12 February. The meeting may be followed by closed consultations.

## Key Recent Developments

An increasingly precarious security situation and a fractured political landscape in Haiti has remained at the forefront of the international community's concerns since the Council last met to discuss the situation in the Caribbean nation on 4 October 2021.

On 17 December 2021, the US convened a meeting with Haiti and international partners to identify steps to address Haiti's security, political and economic challenges. Participants agreed that the Haitian National Police needed to be strengthened and that continued political dialogue among all sectors of Haitian society had to accompany this process.

In a similar vein, Canada hosted a virtual ministerial-level meeting on Haiti on 21 January with the participation of 19 member states and several multilateral organisations, including the EU, the Organization of American States and the UN. According to a statement issued by Canada following the meeting, discussions centred on “the current situation in Haiti and the importance of strengthening international support and the coordination of international assistance with a view to ensuring effective and structured efforts over the long term”. The participants also agreed to strengthen their current and future support for Haiti's security sector and called for the Haitian government and civil society to work in unison to bring about a viable political solution, required to re-establish long-term security in the country.

A stable security environment remains crucial for Haiti to organise long-delayed elections. Following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, Ariel Henry, whom Moïse had nominated as prime minister shortly before his death, took over government affairs and pledged to organise a referendum on Haiti's constitution—a process initiated by Moïse but mired in controversy—and to conduct elections intended to fill long-vacant seats in parliament and to choose a new president. On 1 January, Henry himself became the target of an assassination attempt when gunmen opened fire on the prime minister while he was attending a ceremony to commemorate

Haiti's independence day in the northern city of Gonaïves. A local gang had reportedly warned Henry, who was unharmed in the attack, not to enter their territory.

Henry's tenure is contested. In a tweet posted on 21 January, the prime minister asserted that 7 February, the date Moïse's term would have ended, did not mark the end of his mandate and that he intended to lead the country towards “free and democratic elections”. However, Haiti's political actors continue to disagree over how the electoral process should advance. An accord forged by Henry with several political parties on 11 September 2021 would provide for elections and a constitutional referendum to be held by the end of 2022. This accord is rivalled by parallel initiatives, one of which is the “Montana Accord” reached in August 2021—envisioning a two-year transitional period—backed mostly by civil society representatives and several political figures. Discussions to reach a consensus are ongoing.

Haiti's Senate met on 10 January for the first time in a year. As the delay in holding elections caused most senators' mandates to expire, only ten out of the 30 Senate seats are currently filled.

On 15 October 2021, the Council adopted resolution 2600, renewing the mandate of BINUH for six months and calling for a strategic assessment of the mission. The assessment is to consider “whether and how the mandate [of BINUH] could be adjusted to address the ongoing challenges faced by Haiti”. It is expected to inform BINUH's mandate renewal in April, with a view to increase the mission's effectiveness and its efforts to support engagement with Haitian national authorities, civil society and other stakeholders.

On 7 January, the Secretary-General appointed Mourad Wahba to lead the assessment mission. Wahba previously served as a Deputy Special Representative in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), one of BINUH's predecessor missions. The in-country visit of the assessment team is currently underway.

## Key Issues and Options

How to establish and maintain a stable security environment to allow space to tackle the many challenges in Haiti is one of the key concerns of the Council. In this regard, Haiti has continued to grapple with political instability, a dire humanitarian situation, a fuel shortage affecting some of the country's most crucial infrastructure, escalating gang activity, and increasing humanitarian needs. The Council may consider a briefer familiar with Haiti's security sector to speak

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2547](#) (15 October 2020) renewed BINUH's mandate for one year. [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/559](#) (11 June 2021) was the latest 120-day report on Haiti and the special political mission. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8871](#) (4 October 2021) was on the situation in Haiti. [Security Council Press Statements SC/14574](#) (7 July 2021) condemned the assassination of the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse. [SC/14571](#) (1 July 2021) reiterated the deep concern of Council members regarding the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian conditions in Haiti and stressed the primary responsibility of the government of Haiti to address the situation.

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## Haiti

about the country's security needs.

A related concern is mitigating Haiti's constitutional crisis and ensuring the country remains on track to create an environment conducive to elections. To that end, the Council may consider issuing a statement urging broad political dialogue and compromise.

### Council Dynamics

Council dynamics regarding Haiti have become difficult. The last BINUH mandate renewal exposed divergent views on the future of the mission. Co-penholders Mexico and the US suggested a renewal without substantive changes to BINUH's mandate—which was adopted in its current form only in 2020—while China advocated a strategic review with a view to identifying a strategy for the mission's drawdown. Then-Council member Saint-Vincent and the

Grenadines and African Council members requested a six-month mandate renewal and the strategic assessment currently underway, but with the intent of identifying ways to strengthen the mission.

Against this backdrop, international and bilateral efforts to assist Haiti in addressing its current insecurity are underway. The US, for example, has increased its bilateral security support to Haiti in the form of \$15 million in additional funding to its ongoing programmes to strengthen the Haitian National Police, especially its efforts to counter the rampant influence of violent gangs. It is also funding nine advisors for the Haitian National Police and intends to increase the number of seconded police advisors to BINUH, among other personnel and material support. Mexico reportedly pledged to increase its assistance to Haiti's provisional electoral council to sustain efforts to conclude the electoral process by the end of 2022.

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## Central African Republic

### Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will discuss the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The Council will be briefed by Mankeur Ndiaye, the Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and head of MINUSCA.

The mandate of MINUSCA expires on 15 November 2022. The CAR sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2022, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2022.

### Key Recent Developments

On 12 November 2021, the Security Council adopted resolution 2605, renewing MINUSCA's mandate for another 12 months. Thirteen Council members voted in favour while China and Russia abstained. Negotiations on the text, though tense, were tempered by what appeared to be an improving situation in the country at the time. On 15 October, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra announced that his government would begin implementing a unilateral ceasefire. The announcement followed intense diplomatic efforts, including the adoption of a roadmap for the CAR by the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) on 16 September. The roadmap, among other things, called on all armed actors present in the CAR to commit to a ceasefire.

Since the mandate renewal, however, the security situation in the CAR has deteriorated, with frequent reports of ceasefire violations by armed opposition groups, government forces and Russian-backed forces. According to MINUSCA, on 6-7 December 2021, members of pro-government militias attacked the southern town of Boyo, targeting the town's Muslim Fulani community and killing 15 civilians. A series of reprisals by the opposition group Unity for Peace in Central Africa (UPC) followed. On 27 December, MINUSCA peacekeepers reportedly drove out over 200 UPC members from the town. International media reported on 22 January that

pro-government militias and CAR armed forces (FACA) backed by Russian forces had undertaken subsequent revenge attacks on the UPC in the area, including reports of a 16-17 January attack on the town of Bria, which resulted in at least 30 civilian deaths. At the time of writing, the CAR government denied any knowledge of the attack; MINUSCA is reportedly investigating it.

According to MINUSCA, 47 incidents of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law were committed against approximately 200 victims from mid-December 2021 to early January. As at 28 December, MINUSCA had determined that armed opposition groups had committed nearly 60 percent of the incidents, while "state agents and other security personnel" were deemed responsible for the other incidents. Three MINUSCA peacekeepers from Tanzania were wounded on 30 December, and two Bangladeshi MINUSCA peacekeepers were injured on 31 December when their vehicles hit improvised explosive devices (IEDs). On 12 January, the mission announced that there had been a significant uptick in the use of IEDs in the first two weeks of 2022.

On 13 December 2021, the EU imposed a series of sanctions on the Russian private military entity Wagner Group and several individuals connected to it, claiming that the group had "recruited, trained and sent private military operatives to conflict zones around the world", including the CAR, to "fuel violence, loot natural resources and intimidate civilians in violation of international law, including international human rights law". Two days later, the EU's Training Mission in CAR (EUTM RCA) announced that it was suspending its programmes out of concern that soldiers trained by EUTM could be employed by the Wagner Group.

On 19 November 2021, the CAR government arrested Hassan Bouba Ali, CAR's minister of livestock and a former UPC member. He was charged by the CAR's Special Criminal Court (SCC) with war crimes stemming from a 2018 massacre of 112 civilians. Bouba Ali is understood to have acted as an intermediary between the government and the UPC. The government released him on 26

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2605 (12 November 2021) extended the mandate of MINUSCA for one year until 15 November 2022. Thirteen Council members voted in favour, with China and Russia abstaining. S/RES/2588 (29 July 2021) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2022 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2022. **Secretary-General's Report S/2021/867** (12 October 2021) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the situation in the CAR.

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## Central African Republic

November, stirring controversy and prompting the SCC to accuse the government of creating “an obstacle to the proper functioning of justice”.

The ongoing violence has severely affected the humanitarian situation in the country. On 7 January, OCHA warned that the CAR’s humanitarian emergency is now at a level “not seen since 2015 due to the new conflict dynamics” that have developed over the past 12 months. “Recurring violence, persistent shocks and the degradation of basic services”, OCHA noted, “have significantly worsened the living conditions of Central Africans in 2021”. By OCHA’s estimate, 3.1 million Central Africans—some 63 percent of the country’s population—will need humanitarian assistance in 2022.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

On 21 December 2021, the 2127 Sanctions Committee added UPC founder Ali Darassa to its sanctions list. The UPC is accused of killing, torturing and raping displaced civilians, and committing human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. The UPC has also allegedly engaged in arms trafficking, illegal taxation activities and warfare against CAR defence and security forces.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

In a statement on 9 December 2021, the UN independent expert on the human rights situation in the CAR, Yao Agbetse, called on the authorities to immediately arrest Hassan Boubou Ali. “The release of Mr. Boubou Ali obstructs the fight against impunity and the ongoing national peace and reconciliation process,” the statement said. “It sends the wrong signal to the victims who are waiting for justice to be administered”. On 10 December, the G5+ (the AU, the Economic Community of Central African States, the EU, France, MINUSCA, the US, and the World Bank) released a joint statement in Bangui that deplored Boubou Ali’s release and called on all political actors to take steps against CAR’s “culture of impunity”.

### Women, Peace and Security

On 16 November 2021, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security held a meeting with Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, the Senior Women Protection Advisers from four UN peacekeeping and special political missions, including MINUSCA, and the Chief of Human Rights and Rule of Law of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The Senior Women Protection Adviser from MINUSCA welcomed the robust references to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in resolution 2605, which was adopted on 12 November 2021, renewing

MINUSCA’s mandate for 12 months, and provided an update on the mission’s work on CRSV in the country. The MINUSCA Senior Women Protection Adviser also said that investigation missions documented a spike in cases of CRSV between December 2020 and February 2021 in the areas affected by clashes during that period, adding that MINUSCA had recorded 451 cases of CRSV in the previous 12 months, with the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement and the 3R armed group committing the majority of these violations (29 and 27 percent respectively).

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue in February will be ongoing insecurity in the CAR, resulting from the faltering ceasefire and violence against civilians by the government, its supporters and armed opposition groups. The Council could build on its 18 October 2021 “press elements” on the CAR by issuing a presidential statement that would reiterate the need for all actors to abide by the ceasefire, call on all parties to the conflict to begin implementing the ICGLR roadmap for the CAR, and encourage the government to hold accountable those responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It could also underline the Council’s strong support for the work of MINUSCA.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

While the Council successfully renewed MINUSCA’s mandate on 12 November 2021, both Russia and China abstained, arguing that the views of the government in Bangui had not been reflected in the resolution. Moreover, negotiations on the mandate renewal revealed several areas of contention amongst Council members, including how much the mission should prioritise the human rights situation and how to reference various armed elements operating in the CAR.

In their explanation of votes following the adoption, the US and Russia sparred over another key area of contention that has bedevilled the file over the past year, namely the role of the Russian instructors and reports of Russian mercenaries in the CAR. The US contended that Russian-supported actors have committed human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Russia maintained that such views are “unfounded, egregious accusations”.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Harold Agyeman (Ghana) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

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## Iraq

### Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on recent developments in Iraq and the Secretary-General’s upcoming reports on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. Both reports are due in February. The briefing will be followed by closed consultations.

The Security Council is also expected to receive a briefing from Ambassador Michael Gaffey (Ireland), the UN Compensation Commission (UNCC) Governing Council President. The UNCC was

created by the Security Council to process claims and pay compensation for losses and damage suffered as a direct result of Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The UNCC has recently finished its work, and it appears that the Council may adopt a resolution regarding this development.

### Key Recent Developments

Tensions have continued to rise in Iraq in the aftermath of its parliamentary election, which was held on 10 October 2021. Following the resolution of a series of challenges to the initial election results, Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced

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## Iraq

the final results on 30 November 2021.

In the final tally, Muqtada al-Sadr's movement, which already controlled the largest bloc in the Iraqi parliament prior to the election, won an additional 19 seats, bringing its total to 73. The Taqqadum party—which is led by the Sunni speaker of parliament, Mohamed al-Halbousi—won 37 seats, followed by the State of Law bloc headed by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki with 33 seats; the Kurdistan Democratic Party with 31 seats; and the Iran-aligned Fatah Alliance, which secured 17 seats after winning 48 in the 2018 election. Emtidad, a political party with ties to the Tishreen movement, won nine seats. The remaining seats in the 329-member parliament were divided among the Kurdistan Alliance (17); the Azm Alliance of Sunni businessman Khamis al-Khanjar (14); the New Generation Movement, a Kurdish party (9); independent candidates; and smaller political parties.

The Iraqi Supreme Court ratified these results on 27 December 2021. Under Iraq's constitution, ratification initiated a series of steps in the electoral process that must be completed within particular timeframes in order for a government to be formed. To begin with, the new parliament is required to convene within 15 days of the ratification of results to elect a new parliamentary speaker and two deputy speakers. The parliament must then elect a president within 30 days of this meeting, and the new president is required to appoint a prime minister within 15 days of being elected. The president has no discretion in choosing a prime minister and is required to appoint the person nominated by the largest bloc in parliament. By political convention, these offices are divided among different ethnic groups, with the speaker traditionally being Sunni, the president Kurdish and the prime minister Shiite. Once appointed, the prime minister has 30 days to appoint a cabinet. A new government is formed when the cabinet is approved by a majority vote of the Iraqi parliament.

Negotiations regarding this process have been ongoing since the election. As the negotiations have progressed, a sharp divide has emerged among the Shiite political parties. Shiite cleric al-Sadr, who controls the largest parliamentary bloc, is reportedly pushing to form a majority government headed by his party. On the other hand, the Shiite Coordination Framework (SCF), a group that comprises several pro-Iranian Shiite parties, is in favour of a consensus government in which power is shared among various political parties. Members of the SCF have also challenged the election results by, among other things, filing lawsuits seeking to have them annulled and making public allegations of electoral fraud. SCF supporters have also staged demonstrations, some of which turned violent, in various cities throughout Iraq.

On 9 January, the Iraqi parliament convened and elected Mohamed al-Halbousi, the leader of the Taqaddum party, as speaker. At this meeting, the SCF apparently claimed that it controlled the largest parliamentary bloc and tabled a list of 88 parliamentarians to support its claim. According to media reports, this issue was not resolved, and several physical altercations took place between members of parliament during the meeting.

In recent weeks, political violence has begun to escalate in Iraq. On 16 January, the headquarters of the Taqaddum party was

reportedly targeted in a grenade attack. A similar attack apparently struck the office of Khamis al-Khanjar, the head of the Azm Alliance, on the same day. Two days later, two banks in Baghdad associated with Kurdish politicians were attacked using explosives.

US-led forces in Iraq, which remain in the country in an advisory role after formally ending their combat mission in December 2021, have also been the focus of a recent spate of attacks. During the first week of January, several drone attacks targeted bases hosting troops from the US-led coalition. These attacks coincided with the second anniversary of the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, the former commander of Iran's Quds Force. On 13 January, two people were wounded after a rocket attack struck inside the perimeter of the US embassy in Baghdad.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) continues to pose a threat in Iraq. On 20 January, ISIL gunmen reportedly killed 11 soldiers after storming Iraqi military barracks north of Baghdad shortly before dawn. This follows several attacks by ISIL against Iraqi Kurds in December 2021.

Approximately 400 Iraqis who had been detained in the al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria, which houses many former ISIL fighters and their families, were repatriated on 8 January. According to media reports, around 2,150 Iraqis have been repatriated from this camp to date, and almost a third of the people remaining in the camp are from Iraq.

On 13 January, the UNCC announced that it had paid \$629,324,488 to Kuwait and that all claimants awarded compensation by the UNCC have received the full amount of their respective awards. A special session of the UNCC Governing Council will be held on 9 February to mark the payment of all compensation awarded by the UNCC and the conclusion of its mandate. In total, the UNCC paid \$52.4 billion to more than 1.5 million claimants.

### Key Issues and Options

Council members are following recent developments in Iraq closely, particularly in the aftermath of the 10 October 2021 election. A key issue for the Council is helping Iraq to maintain stability and security following the election. Depending on how the situation evolves before the briefing and consultations take place, Council members may wish to consider issuing a product that addresses issues of concern to them, such as the threat posed by ISIL or the need to resolve political disputes through dialogue and within the applicable legal framework without resorting to violence.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally unanimous in their support for UNAMI and positive developments in Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq, as demonstrated by the recent attacks on US-led coalition forces in the country. The Iraqi government routinely states that it does not wish to become a theatre for Iran-US tensions. Turkey continues to conduct military operations in different parts of Iraq, despite Iraq's objections.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general, and the UK is the penholder on Iraqi-Kuwaiti issues.

# DPRK (North Korea)

## Expected Council Action

In February, the Chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway), is expected to brief Council members in closed consultations on the 90-day report regarding the Committee's work. The Committee is expected to discuss the final report of the Panel of Experts in February, following which the Panel is due to submit its final report to the Council by 25 February.

## Key Recent Developments

Since the beginning of 2022, the DPRK has carried out a series of missile tests. These tests followed the fourth plenary meeting of the eighth central committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), the DPRK's ruling party, which took place from 27 to 31 December 2021. During the meeting, DPRK leader Kim Jong-un apparently vowed to bolster the DPRK's military capability, according to media reports. A report on the meeting by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the DPRK's state news agency, noted that "the military environment of the Korean peninsula and the trend of the international situation getting instable day after day demand that bolstering the state defence capability be further powerfully propelled without a moment's delay".

On 5 January, the Republic of Korea (ROK) military announced that the DPRK had launched a ballistic missile that landed in the Sea of Japan. The following day, the KCNA said that the missile was hypersonic and that it had struck a target approximately 700 kilometres away. ROK and Japanese officials disputed these claims, suggesting that the missile was not hypersonic and had travelled less than 700 kilometres. This test was the DPRK's first missile launch since 19 October 2021, when it trialled a submarine-launched ballistic missile in waters off its east coast. Council resolutions prohibit the DPRK from conducting ballistic missile tests.

The 5 January test prompted Albania, France, Ireland, the UK, and the US to request a meeting regarding the DPRK. Closed consultations were subsequently held on 10 January. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. It seems that Khiari provided an overview of the missile launch, conveyed the Secretary-General's concerns regarding this development, and called on the Council to present a united front in responding to the test. Most Council members apparently condemned the missile launch or expressed concern regarding the DPRK's actions. It appears that Brazil, for example, condemned the launch and contended that it was incompatible with international humanitarian law. On the other hand, it seems that China and Russia neither expressed concern regarding the launch nor condemned it, focusing instead on the humanitarian effects of UN sanctions on the DPRK. In doing so, both countries voiced their support for a draft resolution easing sanctions on the DPRK that was circulated by China in late October 2021. It appears that negotiations on this draft resolution involving all Council members have not yet been scheduled.

Immediately before the 10 January meeting, Albania, France, Ireland, the UK, and the US, together with non-Council member Japan, issued a joint statement in which they condemned the

DPRK's actions and called on member states to fulfil their sanctions obligations under Council resolutions. The statement also called on the DPRK to abandon its prohibited weapons programmes and engage in meaningful dialogue regarding the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The DPRK conducted another ballistic missile test on 11 January. The ROK military reported that this missile travelled more than 700 kilometres at a top speed of Mach 10, saying that it appeared to be more advanced than the missile that was tested on 5 January. The missile was fired to the east of the DPRK and landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone. The KCNA claimed that the missile made a 600-kilometre "glide jump flight" and engaged in 240 kilometres of "corkscrew manoeuvring" before hitting its target. Kim reportedly attended the test and subsequently stressed "the need to further accelerate efforts to steadily build up the country's strategic military muscle both in quality and quantity and further modernise the army", according to the KCNA.

On 12 January, the US imposed unilateral sanctions on six DPRK nationals, one Russian national, and a Russian firm, citing their involvement with the DPRK's weapons programmes. Four of the DPRK nationals are based in China and two are based in Russia, according to media reports. In a 12 January tweet, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (US) announced that the US was "proposing UN sanctions following North Korea's six ballistic missile launches since September 2021". In line with this announcement, it appears that the US has written to the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee proposing new designations under existing Council resolutions. These designations apparently align with the unilateral sanctions imposed by the US on 12 January.

In a 14 January statement, the DPRK's Foreign Ministry accused the US of "intentionally escalating the situation...with the activation of independent sanctions, not content with referring the DPRK's just activity to the UN Security Council" and said that "if the US adopts such a confrontational stance, the DPRK will be forced to take stronger and certain reaction to it". On the same day, the DPRK launched two short-range ballistic missiles from the north-western part of the country. According to the ROK military, the missiles travelled approximately 430 kilometres to the east before crashing. The KCNA subsequently claimed that the missiles were launched from train cars and struck targets on an island off the DPRK's east coast.

On 17 January, the DPRK tested another two short-range ballistic missiles. The ROK military reported that the missiles were launched from the Suan Airport near Pyongyang and flew approximately 380 kilometres to the east before landing. The KCNA described the weapons as "tactical guided missiles" and contended that they hit targets on an island on the DPRK's eastern seaboard.

The Politburo of the WPK met on 19 January. According to the KCNA, the Politburo instructed DPRK officials "to promptly examine the issue of restarting all temporarily-suspended activities", an apparent reference to the possible resumption of long-range and nuclear weapons tests.

On 20 January, Council members convened for closed consultations on the DPRK following a request from Albania, France, Ireland, the UK, and the US. Under-Secretary-General for Political

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## DPRK (North Korea)

and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed. Prior to the meeting, Albania, Brazil, France, Ireland, Japan, the UAE, the UK, and the US issued a statement which said the DPRK's behaviour "is a threat to international peace and security" and urged the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee to proactively support the implementation of Council resolutions concerning the DPRK. The statement also called on member states to take the necessary steps to implement UN sanctions in their jurisdictions. It appears that the US proposed press elements which, among other matters, would have urged the DPRK to comply with its obligations under Council resolutions and engage in dialogue on denuclearisation. China and Russia apparently opposed this proposal, and the elements were not agreed. It seems that China and Russia also blocked the new sanctions designations proposed by the US on 12 January.

The DPRK conducted an additional ballistic missile test on 27 January. According to the ROK military, the DPRK fired two short-range ballistic missiles from Hamhung, a city on its east coast, and the missiles travelled approximately 190 kilometres. Two days earlier, the DPRK reportedly launched two cruise missiles into the sea off its east coast. Cruise missile launches are not prohibited by Council resolutions concerning the DPRK.

### Key Issues and Options

The ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK in 2022, which appear to contravene Council resolutions, are a major issue for the Council. Sanctions evasion and the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime are also important issues, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have increased the number of nuclear

weapons in its arsenal since the sanctions regime was introduced. The DPRK's ongoing refusal to engage in denuclearisation dialogue is another area of concern. Some Council members also contend that UN sanctions are having a negative humanitarian impact on the country.

In light of these issues, the Council may wish to consider adopting a formal outcome that condemns the missile tests, urges member states to comply with UN sanctions, and calls for the resumption of diplomatic talks. The Council could also request a briefing from OCHA regarding the humanitarian implications of UN sanctions on the DPRK. Council members could also convene an informal interactive dialogue with key regional stakeholders to discuss new ways of addressing the security threat posed by the DPRK.

### Council Dynamics

Council members remain divided regarding the DPRK. The P3 and other like-minded states regularly condemn its missile tests, arguing that they violate Council resolutions and destabilise the Korean Peninsula. These states also emphasise the importance of dialogue, maintaining the sanctions regime, and addressing sanctions evasion. China and Russia, on the other hand, often argue that more information is needed to determine whether particular missile tests violate Council resolutions and also contend that sanctions should be eased because of their humanitarian impact. China and Russia have also suggested that easing sanctions may entice the DPRK to engage in denuclearisation dialogue.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK, and Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) chairs the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

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## Non-Proliferation (1540 Committee)

### Expected Council Action

In February, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

Adopted in 2004, resolution 1540 aims to address concerns related to the use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors for terrorist purposes (individuals and sub-state groups are not covered under existing treaties dealing with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons). It requires all states to prevent non-state actors from acquiring access to nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their delivery systems. Furthermore, the resolution requires states to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of such weapons.

In April 2011, with the adoption of resolution 1977, the Council renewed the mandate of the 1540 Committee for ten years. The resolution called for the Committee to conduct two comprehensive reviews on the implementation of resolution 1540: one after five years and the other before the renewal of the Committee's mandate

in 2021.

Following the completion of the first review of resolution 1540's implementation, the Council adopted resolution 2325 in December 2016, which encouraged the submission of voluntary national implementation action plans and the designation of national focal points.

In 2020, the Committee was supposed to focus on activities related to the second comprehensive review; open consultations, which are a major part of the review, were planned for June 2020. Open consultations provide a forum for representatives of UN member states, international and regional organisations, and civil society to provide their views on and practical ideas for improving implementation of resolution 1540. Due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee decided in August 2020 "that all activities related to the review, including the open consultations, should be postponed until 2021, with the exception of the process currently under way of revising the Committee matrices and any other activities that can be undertaken in an online format". (The matrices include information on activities undertaken by member state to

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2572](#) (22 April 2021) extended the mandate of the 1540 Committee and its group of experts until 28 February 2022. [S/RES/1540](#) (28 April 2004) established the 1540 Committee and its mandate, and affirmed that proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitute a threat to international peace and security. [Security Council Meeting S/PV.8915](#) (2 December 2021) was the annual briefing of the chairs of the Council's committees focused on countering terrorism. [Security Council Letter S/2020/847](#) (27 August 2020) was a letter from the chair of the 1540 Committee, Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, informing the Council that the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 would be postponed.

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## Non-Proliferation (1540 Committee)

implement resolution 1540).

On 22 April 2021, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2572, which extended, until 28 February 2022, the mandate of the 1540 Committee and its group of experts. At the time, the Council opted for a straightforward renewal of the mandate to allow the Committee to complete the comprehensive review of the implementation of 1540. However, the review has yet to be finalised because the open consultations have not been held.

On 2 December 2021, the chairs of the Council's three counterterrorism committees—the 1540 Committee, the 1373 Counterterrorism Committee, and the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee—gave their annual briefing to the Council. Ambassador Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez of Mexico, the chair of the 1540 Committee and the penholder on the file, said that 184 countries had “submitted initial reports to the Committee with information on the measures they have taken, or plan to take, to comply with obligations under resolution 1540”. He noted that since 2007, 35 states had submitted national implementation action plans to the Committee. Ambassador Ramírez lamented that the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 continued to be delayed as a result of the “ongoing pandemic-related restrictions in the UN headquarters”.

The 1540 Committee held a meeting on 3 September 2021, during which members discussed interactions between the Committee and international, regional, and subregional organisations. At the time of writing, the 1540 Committee was scheduled to meet on 31 January to consider two internal working papers produced by the Committee's Working Group on transparency and outreach: one on the Committee's outreach to member states and civil society, and

another on ways to enhance the Committee's transparency.

### Key Issues and Options

The fundamental issue for the Council is how to negotiate a renewal of the 1540 Committee mandate when the comprehensive review—whose results are intended to inform the negotiations on the mandate—has yet to be completed.

One option is for the Council to roll over the current mandate for a matter of months in the expectation that COVID restrictions will be lifted, permitting the review and informed discussion on a longer-term mandate.

Another option for the Council is to undertake negotiations on a mandate of several years prior to the completion of the review—recalling that resolution 1977 in 2011 authorised a ten-year mandate. However, this approach would entail a lengthy mandate extension without hearing the views of member states, international and regional organisations, and civil society in the open consultations that form an important part of the review.

### Council Dynamics

Most Council members support an active role for the Committee and its group of experts in engaging with member states to provide them with technical assistance and capacity development in implementing resolution 1540. These members also tend to encourage interactions between the group of experts, civil society actors and academia to help inform the group's work. However, Russia believes that the group of Experts should have a more limited role, arguing that the group alleges exceeds its mandate. Russia has also reportedly resisted the idea of holding the open consultations in a virtual format.

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## Syria

### Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council expects to meet on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks in Syria.

### Key Recent Developments

Resolution 2585, adopted on 9 July 2021, authorised the cross-border mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian assistance from Turkey into Syria until 10 January with an additional six months' extension until 10 July subject to the issuance of the Secretary-General's substantive report focusing on “transparency in operations, and progress on cross-line access in meeting humanitarian needs”. That report was issued on 15 December 2021, appearing to meet the requirements for the mandate to continue for the additional six months.

Despite the timely release of the report, however, there had been indications that some Council members, most notably Russia, might request a separate discussion of the issue or might even argue that a vote would be needed to extend the mandate beyond 10 January. On numerous occasions, Russia had argued in the Council that the

mandate's extension was not automatic. In an interview with Russian media on 23 December 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative on Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, said that Russia would “most likely” agree to extend the mandate to 10 July as “there [had been] advances in the implementation of the resolution, but they are very few”. When asked about the mandate's renewal on 28 December, Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Dmitry Polyanskiy, told the media to “not rush things. It's only December 28 and the issue is to be decided”. Russia, he noted, was “still considering [its] position in this regard”, adding that the Secretary-General's 15 December report “in general...answers the requirements that we set forth in resolution 2585”.

Despite the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance stemming from 2585's automatic extension, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. The country continues to contend with an ever-worsening economic situation, rising food and fuel prices, increased unemployment, and a growing COVID-19 caseload. In addition, the recent arrival of harsh winter conditions, with heavy snowfall and unusually cold temperatures in Syria's northwest, is

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2585 (9 July 2021) renewed the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/1030 (15 December 2021) was the “substantive report, with particular focus on transparency in operations, and progress on cross-line access in meeting humanitarian needs” requested in resolution 2585. S/2021/1029 (15 December 2021) was the latest report on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

endangering vulnerable communities, especially the internally displaced persons living in camps in the area.

On 11 January, a Syrian aid worker in the Al Hol camp—a refugee and internally displaced persons’ camp in Syria’s northeast housing both victims and relatives of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—was killed in an armed attack. Media reports indicate that two ISIL members carried out the attack. Violence in the camp remains widespread; according to reports received by the UN, in the last 12 months alone, 90 camp residents have been murdered. Nearly 94 percent of the camp’s approximately 56,000 residents are women and children, and more than half are under 18.

On 22 December 2021, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the conflict in Syria had killed 3,746 people during the year, the lowest annual death toll in over a decade of violence. The number was less than half of the fatalities in 2020 and a third of 2019’s total.

Despite this downward trend, the security situation remains tenuous in several parts of the country. On 1 January, international media reported that Russian fighter jets had bombed several towns in Syria’s northwest, near the opposition-held city of Idlib, as well as a water treatment plant that serves the city. At the time of writing, it appeared that two children and a woman had been killed and ten civilians wounded in the attacks. In response, the UN’s Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, Mark Cutts, said that Syria is “facing a water crisis and continued destruction of civilian infrastructure will only cause more suffering of civilians”. On 28 December 2021, Syrian state media announced that Israel had conducted missile strikes on Latakia, Syria’s main commercial port. Similar airstrikes also took place on 7 December. The motivation for the airstrikes remains unclear, although some media speculated that the missiles were intended to destroy Iranian arms shipments arriving in Latakia.

On 5 January, the Council held its regular meeting on chemical weapons in Syria. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu told the Council that Syria’s chemical weapons declaration to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) contained unresolved “gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies”. She outlined a number of areas where Syria had not fully complied with the OPCW, including its failure to provide information and documentation about damage sustained on 8 June 2021 during an attack—reportedly by Israel—on a Syrian military facility housing a previously declared former chemical weapons production facility. She added that the OPCW had also yet to receive information about “the unauthorized movement and remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical-weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018”. The OPCW had been mandated to transport the cylinders to its headquarters for further inspection but was prevented from doing so by the Syrian authorities. At the meeting, Russia announced that it intended to invite OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias to meet with the Council in February.

On 13 January, the Koblenz Higher Regional Court in Germany found former Syrian intelligence official Anwar Raslan guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

The court determined that Raslan oversaw the torture of prisoners at the Al-Khatib detention centre in Damascus, resulting in the deaths of at least 27 people. The court’s decision was welcomed by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

### Human-Rights Related Developments

In a briefing on 25 January, the spokesperson of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said, “the situation of civilians in the northeastern Syrian city of Al-Hasakeh is deeply troubling” following ISIL attacks on the Ghweiran prison on 20 January, which allowed “dozens of inmates, many of them suspected ISIL members, to escape”. (The prison is one of the largest in northeast Syria.) The attack led to fighting between ISIL and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), including in residential areas. According to the spokesperson, “detainees, many of whom are suspected to have been ISIL fighters, are said to be in control of the prison’s main building and have taken some prison staff hostage”. In response to the attacks, which the spokesperson said were “the biggest since ISIL was declared defeated in Syria in 2019”, international forces carried out airstrikes near the prison and thousands of people have reportedly fled the area. The special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, released a statement on 25 January, conveying serious concern “for the welfare of close to 700 children” held at the prison. According to reports, almost 300 people—mostly detainees—have been killed in and around the prison, the statement said.

### Key Issues and Options

Syria’s security situation remains a key issue for the Council. Most Council members are concerned about the ongoing violence and the apparent increase in attacks in the country’s northwest. Council members will be listening closely to the political briefing to gain a better understanding of how the worsening security situation is inhibiting the political process. They may wish to adopt a press statement, echoing the Special Envoy’s many calls for a nationwide ceasefire and the need for discernible progress on the political file.

The humanitarian situation in Syria will be another key issue for the Council in February. The continuation of the mandate of the cross-border mechanism for another six months allows for the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance from Turkey across the border into Syria. Council members may wish to pursue a discussion on early recovery projects, a controversial issue that was a key element of last year’s negotiations on resolution 2585, in order to gain a better understanding of how these projects function and how they can contribute to ameliorating the dire humanitarian situation in Syria.

### Council Dynamics

The mostly positive atmosphere on the Council that immediately followed the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 in July 2021 has largely dissipated over the last months. The arrival in January of five new Council members does not appear to have fundamentally altered the overall dynamics on the Syria file. Despite the passage of the 10 January deadline with little fanfare and the continuation of the cross-border mechanism’s mandate for the delivery of humanitarian assistance for another six months, Council members continue to express divergent views on a number of issues related to the humanitarian file, including crossline deliveries and the effects of sanctions. These differences are likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

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