

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In February, the UK will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

The UK is planning to focus on two specific mandated meetings, which UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Yvette Cooper is likely to chair. The two meetings are: the 120-day briefing on the situation in [Sudan](#) and the monthly meeting on “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”.

In February, the Council is scheduled to hold a briefing on the Secretary-General's biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL/Da'esh\)](#).

The annual briefing by [UN Police](#) Commissioners is also expected to take place during the month.

In addition to the meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, other Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meeting on the political and humanitarian situations; and
- [Yemen](#), the monthly briefing and consultations on the situation in the country.

In addition to the meeting on Sudan, other African issues that will be discussed in February are:

- [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL);
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), meeting on the UN Multidimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and

- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Regarding Asian issues, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the Monitoring Team supporting the 1988 [Afghanistan](#) Sanctions Committee. The Council is also scheduled to receive a briefing on the work of the 1718 [Democratic People's Republic of Korea \(DPRK\)](#) Sanctions Committee. (At the time of writing, the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee had not been appointed as Council members continue to negotiate this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies. If the Chair is not appointed by the time the meeting is scheduled to take place, the UK is likely to brief members on the report in its capacity as Council president.)

February marks the fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#). The Council is likely to have one or more meetings on the file during the month.

Other issues—including [Iran](#) and [Tigray](#)—could be raised in February depending on developments. Members may also begin discussing the modalities for the Council's involvement in the selection process for the next Secretary-General following the announcement by the President of the General Assembly Annalena Baerbock on 14 January that she has scheduled interactive dialogues with the candidates for the post of Secretary-General for the week of 20 April.

2 February 2026

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In Hindsight: The Security Council's Muted Response to the Venezuela Crisis

On 3 January, the US conducted a military operation in Venezuela that removed President Nicolás Maduro Moros and his wife, Cilia Flores, from the country. These actions are widely regarded by analysts as a violation of international law, including the UN Charter. Many observers have noted that the action undermines the rules-based global order and sets a dangerous precedent, arguing that international law is clearly violated if countries unilaterally take military action to remove leaders of other countries that they deem illegitimate. It also served as another stark example of the Security Council's inability to respond to threats to international peace and security when one of its permanent members is directly involved.

Maduro's ouster was the culmination of months of rising tensions surrounding Venezuela. Since mid-August 2025, the US has increased its military presence in the southern Caribbean, off the coast of Venezuela, citing the need to curtail the flow of drugs into its territory. As part of this campaign, the US has been attacking boats in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean that Washington alleges are smuggling drugs.

The Security Council's response to events surrounding Venezuela has so far been limited to the holding of three open briefings. At Venezuela's request, the Council met twice to discuss the escalation around the country, on 10 October 2025 and 23 December 2025. It also held an emergency meeting to discuss Maduro's ouster on 5 January, its first official meeting of the year, at the request of new Council member, Colombia. After Colombia requested the meeting, Venezuela also sent a letter requesting an emergency Council meeting, and China and Russia supported the meeting request. (For background, see our 23 December 2025 and 5 January *What's in Blue* stories.)

About a month has passed since the US operation, which many describe as a seismic event, yet there have been no proposals for a Council product or a meeting to follow up on developments in the country. There have also been no initiatives to discuss the matter at the General Assembly. This contrasts with past occasions, where attempts were made to respond to violations of the UN Charter through a Council product, even if the scope for action was limited due to the involvement of a veto-wielding permanent Council member.

Reactions to Recent Developments in Venezuela

As the US was massing forces in the southern Caribbean and carrying out strikes on boats allegedly involved in drug trafficking—which UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said violates international human rights law and described as “extrajudicial killing”—Council members' statements revealed divergent positions on the matter. In both the 10 October 2025 and 23 December 2025 meetings, the US alleged that Maduro was involved in “narco-terrorist” activities that pose a threat to US security. The US also reiterated that it does not view Maduro as the legitimate leader of Venezuela, as Washington does not recognise him as the winner of the country's 28 July 2024 presidential election. (The results of these elections have been strongly disputed by several national and international actors.) The US repeated these accusations after the 3 January operation as reasons for Maduro's removal.

All other Council members couched their interventions in the language of the UN Charter, but with significant variations. China and Russia—which have close ties with Venezuela, with China being the biggest buyer of Venezuelan oil—strongly criticised the US, accusing it of violating the UN Charter and of heightening tensions and threatening regional and international peace and security. At the 23 December 2025 meeting, Russia said that the US actions “violate all key norms of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS], Security Council resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations itself”.

The remaining Council members—including the African and European members—were reluctant to directly criticise the US. Instead, they made general statements on the need to de-escalate the situation in the Caribbean region through dialogue and to uphold international law, including the principles of the UN Charter. Among other things, these members emphasised the importance of combatting transnational organised crime and illicit drug trafficking, while stressing that this should be done in compliance with international law and relevant international frameworks such as UNCLOS.

In the lead-up to the 3 January operation, there was one attempt to have the Council pronounce itself on developments relating to Venezuela. In late October 2025, Russia circulated a draft presidential statement that expressed concern about the escalation in the Caribbean region. The draft text apparently did not explicitly mention Venezuela or the US and incorporated general messages that were conveyed by most Council members at the 10 October 2025 Council meeting, including the need for states to exercise maximum restraint and resort to dialogue, diplomacy, and multilateral mechanisms. The draft text also underscored the inadmissibility of the use of the Caribbean Sea for illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, while emphasising that actions to address this issue should conform with international law and the UN Charter. It seems that while many members could agree with the messages contained in the text, the US opposed having a product on the issue, leading Russia to withdraw the draft from consideration.

After the 3 January operation, Secretary-General António Guterres issued a statement expressing deep concern “that the rules of international law have not been respected”. China and Russia, as well as outside observers, were more equivocal in calling the US military incursion an act that breaches international law.

While messaging from the US on the one hand, and China and Russia on the other, remained similar to those made in the run-up to the operation, there was a change in tone from some members.

Among the US' traditional allies on the Council, France was perhaps the most critical at the 5 January meeting, underscoring that “[t]he military operation that led to the capture of Nicolás Maduro contravenes the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes and non-use of force”. It added that “[t]he proliferation of violations of the United Nations Charter and international law by States vested with the responsibility of permanent members of this Council undermines the very foundations of the international order”.

Denmark, for instance, also made a stronger statement compared with its previous interventions on developments in Venezuela.

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Among other things, it echoed Guterres' 3 January statement, which noted that "[i]ndependently of the situation in Venezuela, these developments constitute a dangerous precedent". However, as did other European and African members, it conveyed general messages on the need to uphold international law, without directly stating that the US military action violated these principles.

How to respond to the developments in Venezuela was a first major test for Colombia, which had just started its 2026-2027 Security Council term representing the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC). Colombia was the first Council member to request the 5 January meeting (later supported by China and Russia). Its statement at the meeting took a strong and principled position, calling the events that occurred on 3 January "grave violations of Venezuela's sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity, as well as of international law and the Charter of the United Nations". It also warned of the serious implications of a situation where a permanent Council member uses force with the aim of taking another country's natural resources, adding that if such a Council member "disregards international law, what is the role of this Council and what are the foundations for international peace and security".

Reactions to the 3 January operation need to be viewed in the light of some of the US' threats to other countries in the region, such as Colombia, and concerns that the US could continue pursuing a strategy whereby it uses its military strength to seize territory and resources. Trump has referenced such aspirations in the past, promising to annex Greenland and take back the Panama Canal. Although these are issues that directly concern three current Council members, they were not directly raised at the 5 January Council meeting.

Historical Precedent

Historical analysis offers some examples of possible avenues for action in the face of violations of international law involving a permanent member of the Security Council. The recent development in Venezuela bears some parallels to the US' 1989 incursion into Panama, during which it removed General Manuel Noriega, the de facto ruler of the country at the time. Following that operation, seven Council members who belonged to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)—Algeria, Colombia, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Nepal, Senegal, and Yugoslavia—put forward a draft resolution condemning the American invasion of Panama. The draft text called the US intervention in the country a "flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States" and requested the Secretary-General to monitor developments in Panama and to report to the Council within 24 hours. The draft resolution was vetoed by France, the UK, and the US, marking the last instance in which France and the UK used their veto.

The UN General Assembly subsequently adopted a text similar to that proposed at the Security Council by a vote of 75 in favour and 20 against, with 40 abstentions. The General Assembly meeting to adopt a resolution provided a platform for the wider UN membership to express their position on the US action, with many criticising it as a violation of the principle of non-interference in

other countries' internal affairs.

Before the US invasion of Panama, which started on 20 December 1989, the Security Council held two meetings at Panama's request to discuss the heightened tensions in the country, in April and August of that year. At the last meeting before the invasion, held on 11 August 1989, then-Panamanian Foreign Minister Jorge Eduardo Ritter urged the Council to take action to avert armed conflict, stressing that if Panama became a precedent, "it would trample underfoot all the guarantees in the Charter for countries lacking military power, because the interpretation, scope and applicability of the principles and provisions of the text establishing the Organization would be subject to the unilateral whims of a nation having the force to impose its will". Among other things, Ritter urged the Council to deploy military observers and asked the Secretary-General to dispatch a good offices mission to observe the situation on the ground and promote de-escalation. These requests were not taken up by the Council or the Secretary-General.

A similar case study can be found in the response to the October 1983 invasion of the island of Grenada by the US and a coalition of Caribbean countries. Council members Guyana, Nicaragua, and Zimbabwe—also NAM members—proposed a draft resolution that deplored the armed intervention in Grenada, describing it as "a flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that State", and calling for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from the country. The resolution was not adopted owing to a veto cast by the US. The General Assembly subsequently adopted a similar resolution by a vote of 108 in favour and nine against, with 27 abstentions.

Although significantly different in terms of scope and effects, the case of Ukraine can serve as a more recent example of a response to a violation of the UN Charter by a permanent Council member. Russia's invasion of the country in February 2022 galvanised the Security Council's attention, prompting the holding of 50 Council meetings in that year alone. In 2022, the Council voted on four draft resolutions on Ukraine: two proposed by Albania and the US, which were vetoed by Russia, and two proposed by Russia that failed to be adopted due to insufficient votes.

The gridlock over Ukraine at the Council brought a renewed focus on possible avenues for greater cooperation and accountability through the General Assembly. In February 2022, following its own failure to adopt a draft resolution deploring Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Council adopted a "Uniting for Peace" resolution, referring to the General Assembly a situation on which its permanent members are deadlocked for the first time in 40 years. This initiative established the ongoing 11th emergency special session (ESS), during which the General Assembly adopted eight resolutions on Ukraine since 2022. (For more information, see our 31 January 2023 *In Hindsight*: "The Security Council, One Year after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine".)

More broadly, analysts have suggested that a more proactive stance by the broader UN membership can help address situations where the Council is gridlocked, noting that the General Assembly mandated the first armed peacekeeping mission and that the body

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has the ability to dispatch fact-finding missions.

Future Outlook

As some Council members stated after the US military incursion into Venezuela, inaction by the Council following acts that clearly violate the UN Charter undermines its credibility as the organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Despite this, it does not appear that any action on Venezuela is expected either at the Security Council or the General Assembly in the near future, unless another major escalation occurs in the country.

It may be difficult in the current climate to find a member state or a group that would champion a response to the developments in Venezuela. Although NAM countries were active in the Cold War era in joining together to propose products at the Security Council to denounce violations of international law, they have been less active in doing so since. The bloc has pronounced itself on the matter, however, with the NAM Coordinating Bureau issuing a communiqué on 5 January that categorically condemned the US military action in Venezuela as an “act of aggression”. Uganda, as chair of the NAM, delivered a statement on behalf of the bloc at the 5 January Council meeting, which demanded full respect for Venezuela’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and right to self-determination. Other member states participated in that Council meeting, many of which condemned the US’ actions. For instance, the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations—which includes Venezuela among its members—stressed at the meeting that the US action constitutes a violation of the Charter and a threat to multilateralism.¹

In the case of Venezuela, the need to strike a balance between

principles and geopolitical considerations appears to be a decisive factor that tempers members’ appetite for action. The restraint shown by some members, including the Europeans—who have been vocal on violations of international law in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, has led to accusations of double standards. Analysts have noted that some European member states are worried that a stronger stance could alienate the US, risking the loss of its support for Ukraine.

Colombia is in a similarly sensitive position, as it is currently working on diffusing its bilateral tensions with Washington. In an unexpected about-face after a year of heated rhetoric between Trump and Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego, the two leaders held a telephone call on 8 January that resulted in an invitation for Petro to meet Trump at the White House on 3 February.

Both China and Russia are not likely to propose any Council action without a request from Venezuela, which may be more cautious as it navigates its relationship with the US under the new circumstances. While Russia has condemned US actions in Venezuela as a violation of international law, its own conduct, especially with respect to Ukraine, leaves it vulnerable to criticism for hypocrisy and double standards.

The crisis in Venezuela has underscored a fundamental tension in an increasingly divided world between strategic interests and multilateral principles. The interplay between these two factors has led to a reluctance among member states to take strong action in response to US actions in Venezuela. It is worth considering at what point a failure to defend the norms and values codified in international law, including the UN Charter, threatens the long-term peace and security of UN member states that have long benefited from them.

Status Update since our January Forecast

Venezuela

On 5 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on Venezuela under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.10085). Council member Colombia requested the emergency meeting following the US military operation in Venezuela on 3 January, during which it removed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro Moros and his wife, Cilia Flores, from the country. Venezuela also sent a letter on 3 January requesting an emergency Council meeting (S/2026/5), and China and Russia supported the meeting request. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo delivered a statement by Secretary-General António Guterres. The Council was also briefed by two civil society members, invited by China and Russia, and the US, respectively: Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and Mercedes De Freitas, Founder and

Executive Director of *Transparencia Venezuela*.

Arria-formula Meeting on Peacebuilding

On 12 January, Somalia convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “Advancing New Paradigms for Peacebuilding: Fortifying Inclusive and Sustainable Approaches to Peacemaking”. Ambassador Abukar Dahir Osman (Somalia) and Ambassador Ricklef Johannes Beutin (Germany), the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), provided opening remarks. Bert Koenders, Advisory Group Chair of the Principles for Peace Foundation, and Hiba Qasas, Founding Executive Director of the Principles for Peace Foundation, briefed the Security Council on ways of strengthening political settlements for longer-term, sustainable peacebuilding.

Ukraine

On 12 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on

¹ The other members of the Group, which was formed in 2021, are: Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, China, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Nicaragua, the State of Palestine, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Syria, and Zimbabwe.

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Ukraine (S/PV.10087). Council members Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, and the UK requested the meeting. The briefers at the meeting were Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the Coordination Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Cyprus

On 15 January, the Council held closed consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Khassim Diagne briefed the Council on the recent developments and key findings from two Secretary-General's reports on UNFICYP: the semi-annual report on UNFICYP (S/2026/8), and the report on his good offices in Cyprus (S/2026/9). On 30 January, the Council adopted resolution 2815, renewing UNFICYP's mandate until 31 January 2027. While 13 members voted in favour of the resolution, Pakistan and Somalia cast abstentions.

Iran Protests

On 15 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on the recent protests in Iran (S/PV.10091). The US requested the meeting, which was held under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East". Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, briefed the Council, as did the Iranian-American journalists and political activists Masih Alinejad and Ahmad Batebi. Iran participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Afghanistan

On 21 January, Council members issued a press statement condemning the 19 January terrorist attack that killed six Afghans and one Chinese national in Kabul (SC/16278). The press statement was penned by China.

Haiti

On 21 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on Haiti (S/PV.10093). Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), Carlos Ruiz Massieu, briefed on recent developments in the country and the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH (S/2026/31). Acting Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), John Brandolino, briefed on the latest UNODC quarterly report on sources and routes of illicit arms and financial flows in Haiti (S/2026/32).

On 29 January, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2814 renewing the mandate of BINUH until 31 January 2027.

Colombia

On 23 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on Colombia (S/PV.10095). Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, Miroslav Jenča, briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2025/849).

Rule of Law

On 26-27 January, the Council convened for a high-level open debate on "Reaffirming international rule of law: Pathways to reinvigorating peace, justice, and multilateralism" (S/PV.10096, Resumption I and II). The meeting was held under the agenda item "The promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security". Secretary-General António Guterres, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, and former judge of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Abdulqawi Yusuf briefed. More than 80 delegations participated in the open debate.

Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 28 January, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.10098, Resumption I and II). The briefer was Ramiz Alakbarov, the Deputy Special Coordinator and Resident Coordinator at the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO). Over 60 speakers among the wider UN membership and regional organisations took the floor.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

On 29 January, Kaha Imnadze, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), briefed Council members on the UNRCCA's work in closed consultations.

Arria-formula Meeting on "Upholding the Sanctity of Treaties"

On 30 January, an Arria-formula meeting titled "Upholding the Sanctity of Treaties for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security" was convened at Pakistan's initiative. Briefers included: David Nanopoulos, the Chief of the Treaty Section at the UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA); Ahmer Bilal Soofi, the President of the Pakistani-based Research Society of International Law and former Federal Law Minister of Pakistan; Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the President of the International Peace Institute (IPI) and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Adil Najam, the Dean Emeritus and Professor of International Relations and of Earth and Environment at the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to receive the regular 120-day briefing on the situation in Sudan. The UK, which holds the Council's rotating presidency for the month of February, intends to elevate the briefing to ministerial level.

The Council was also scheduled to be briefed this month on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. At the time of writing, however, the Committee's Chair had not yet been appointed, as Council members continued negotiations over the allocation of subsidiary bodies for the year. In this context, the UK proposed that the 1591 Committee meet its reporting requirements through a written statement.

Key Recent Developments

Conflict continues to escalate across multiple frontlines in Sudan as both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seek to consolidate territorial control and intensify efforts to seize and defend key strategic locations through ground operations, artillery shelling, heavy drone strikes and other aerial bombardments. The Kordofan region has emerged as a key epicentre of hostilities, while fighting persists in other parts of the country, including North Darfur and Sennar states. In South Kordofan state, the humanitarian situation in the towns of Dilling and Kadugli has continued to deteriorate.

Media reports indicate that on 26 January, SAF and allied forces entered Dilling, which had been under siege by the RSF for nearly two years, re-establishing access along the eastern road linking Dilling to North Kordofan state. The advance reopened supply routes into Dilling, allowing the SAF to resupply its garrison.

The security situation in Blue Nile State has also worsened as recent reports indicate renewed clashes and the risk of escalation as armed groups mobilise in southern and western parts of the state, heightening fears of broader instability in the border region with Ethiopia and South Sudan.

At the Council's 22 December 2025 meeting, Sudan's Transitional Prime Minister, Kamil El-Tayeb Idris, presented a proposal calling for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan, to be monitored by the UN, the African Union (AU) and the League of Arab States (LAS). The proposal included the RSF's complete withdrawal from areas under its control and the reintegration into society of RSF fighters not accused of war crimes. Idris also committed to holding free elections following a transitional period. The RSF, which controls much of Darfur and parts of Kordofan, rejected the plan. While UN Secretary-General António Guterres took note of the initiative, the AU Commission Chairperson (AUCC) Mahmoud Ali Youssouf welcomed it, describing the proposal as a "comprehensive" and "forward-looking" framework.

On 11 January, Idris announced the official return of national institutions to the capital, Khartoum. The government had relocated to Port Sudan following the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023, when the RSF seized control of large parts of Khartoum. The SAF later recaptured the city in March 2025.

On 14 January, Egypt hosted the fifth consultative meeting on enhancing coordination among various peace initiatives on Sudan.

Several regional and international interlocutors attended the meeting, including Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan Ramtane Lamamra and representatives of the AU, the European Union (EU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the LAS, Angola, China, Djibouti, France, Germany, Iraq, Norway, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the US.

On the margins of the meeting, Lamamra held discussions with representatives of the LAS, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, and the US. He also met with the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Badr Abdelatty, following which they held a joint press conference. According to media reports, Abdelatty said that Egypt would not hesitate to take necessary measures to preserve Sudan's unity and territorial integrity, and that there was no room for recognising parallel entities or equating Sudanese state institutions, including the Sudanese army, with any other militias.

On 26 December 2025, a UN team led by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Denise Brown, conducted an assessment mission to El Fasher. This marked the first UN mission since the city was besieged by the RSF in May 2024 and subsequently came under RSF control in late October. In an interview following the visit, Brown described El Fasher as a "crime scene", estimating that thousands of people may have been killed. During the visit, the team spoke with civilians who remain trapped in the city and visited the Saudi Hospital, which was reportedly the site of a massacre when the RSF stormed the city in October 2025.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher announced the delivery of humanitarian aid to El Fasher, marking the first such delivery since the city was besieged in May 2024. According to UNICEF's 22 January flash update, an interagency mission led by the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator visited El Fasher on 13 January, with UNICEF, World Food Programme, UN Refugee Agency, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs participating.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a statement issued on 18 January, following a five-day visit to Sudan, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that the war had plunged the country into an "abyss of unfathomable proportions". During his visit to Port Sudan and Northern State, including Dongola, Ad Dabba, and Merowe, Türk met with national and local authorities, civil society actors, humanitarian organisations, journalists, lawyers, and civilians displaced from El Fasher. He called on the RSF and the SAF to cease attacks against civilian objects indispensable to the population, including markets, health facilities, schools and shelters. He urged all actors with influence, including regional arms suppliers, to act urgently to end the conflict.

Türk expressed grave concern that atrocity crimes committed during and after the takeover of El Fasher risk being repeated in Kordofan, citing reported advances by the RSF and Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North (SPLM-N) forces towards SAF-controlled Kadugli, continued mass displacement, and extreme food insecurity, with famine conditions confirmed in Kadugli and a risk of famine in other areas, including Dilling.

Women, Peace and Security

In an 11 November 2025 statement, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, expressed grave concern at the atrocities perpetrated against civilians in the conflict in Sudan, particularly those fleeing North Darfur and North Kordofan states. The statement said that, following the takeover of El Fasher on 26 October 2025, women and girls escaping the violence

Sudan

reported horrific abuses by the RSF, including gang rape and other forms of sexual violence. Patten called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, condemned the large-scale and systematic use of sexual violence by the RSF, and urged all parties and their allies to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. She called for coordinated international efforts to support investigations, preserve evidence, and ensure that survivors remain central to accountability processes. Patten also encouraged the Security Council to consider additional sanction measures under the 1591 sanctions regime “against those who command and perpetrate sexual violence”, and stressed the importance of comprehensive services for survivors, including medical and psychological support. She also recalled the commitment undertaken by the SAF to engage with her office in preventing and adequately responding to allegations of sexual violence perpetrated by some of its members.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue for the Council is how to bring an end to the ongoing fighting and support efforts towards a sustainable ceasefire across Sudan and a civilian-led political transition. The continued violence, insecurity, and targeted attacks against civilians, as well as civilian and humanitarian infrastructure, remain a major concern for Council members. Given the continuing hostilities, mediation efforts have consistently failed to achieve any meaningful breakthroughs. The conflict has shifted front lines across multiple regions, leaving the country fragmented and governance weakened. This fragmentation has exacerbated with widespread civilian suffering, mass displacement, and acute food insecurity.

An underlying issue for the Council remains how to effectively promote justice and accountability for the ongoing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law being perpetrated by Sudan’s warring parties across the country.

In February, Council members could consider adopting a presidential statement strongly condemning the ongoing violence across Sudan, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and demanding an immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities. If members agree on such a presidential statement, they may wish to have a high-level press stakeout following the meeting to reinforce the points in the presidential statement.

They could also request the Secretary-General to adjust the reporting and briefing cycle on Sudan by providing more frequent updates than the current 120-day schedule, such as every 60 days, given that the existing frequency does not reflect the scale, severity, and urgency of the crisis.

Another important issue is the regional implications of the conflict, including the risk of cross-border spillover of violence. Reports of cross-border alliances and support networks, including the provision of sanctuary to fighters and the use of neighbouring countries as transit routes for weapons and supplies, have raised concerns about wider regional destabilisation.

An option for the Council would be to invite AUCC Youssouf to provide a briefing on the key challenges facing peace efforts in Sudan, the AU’s role in revitalising these efforts, and the broader impact of the conflict on neighbouring countries and regional stability.

During the Council briefing in February, members could also consider inviting a civil society representative to brief on the human rights situation, including violence against women and girls in Sudan.

Another option for Council members would be to consider additional designations under the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime, targeting individuals responsible for sanctions violations.

Another option for Council members could be a visiting mission to Sudan to assess the situation on the ground and engage with relevant stakeholders. This mission could also provide an opportunity for Council members to visit the refugee camps in neighbouring countries, particularly Chad.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the dire political, security, and humanitarian situations in Sudan and have emphasised the need for a ceasefire, unfettered humanitarian access, respect for international humanitarian law, and the importance of protecting civilians in the conflict. However, critical divisions persist within the Council, shaped by differing priorities and approaches to key issues, including the protection of civilians, the implementation of ceasefire mechanisms, and addressing accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. Several Council members, such as China, Pakistan, and Russia, tend to be more sympathetic to the Burhan-led government, underscoring its sovereign authority and its efforts to protect civilians and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Other Council members, particularly the P3 (France, the UK, and the US), however, consider both the RSF and SAF to be responsible for the ongoing atrocities in Sudan and unfit to govern the country.

The US has sought to step up efforts to reinvigorate peace talks on Sudan aimed at delivering tangible outcomes; however, a near-term breakthrough appears unlikely. At the same time, the US and European Council members have supported the use of targeted restrictive measures against individuals and entities responsible for perpetrating insecurity and violence across Sudan. Most recently, the US imposed sanctions on a transnational network primarily composed of Colombian nationals and companies involved in recruiting former Colombian military personnel and training fighters, including children, to fight for the RSF. The EU imposed restrictive measures on Abdelrahim Hamdan Dagalo, the RSF’s second-in-command, over his role in serious violations linked to the fighting. He has also been subject to US sanctions since September 2023.

Next month’s meeting will mark the first time that newly elected Council members Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Latvia, and Liberia deliver statements on the situation in Sudan since joining the Council in January. Latvia is expected to align closely with European members in emphasising international humanitarian law, protection of civilians, accountability, and support for diplomatic efforts. The DRC and Liberia, in line with African positions on Sudan, are likely to underscore the primacy of AU-led mediation and concerns about regional spillover. Bahrain is expected to stress the importance of intensifying efforts toward an immediate ceasefire and an urgent political solution, while expressing deep concern over the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Colombia may draw on its conflict-resolution experience and, amid recent media reports highlighting the recruitment of Colombian nationals as mercenaries to participate in the fighting in Sudan, may highlight the conflict’s transnational dimensions.

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will receive its annual briefing from the heads of police components of UN peace operations. The anticipated briefers are Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; UN Police Adviser Faisal Shahkar; Police Commissioner of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) Mamouna Ouedraogo; and Police Commissioner of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Meinolf Schlotmann.

Key Recent Developments

Annual briefings by the heads of police components of UN peace operations began in 2014. In the past, these briefings were typically held in November during the annual UN Police Week; however, last year the briefing took place in February, and it is scheduled to be held in February again this year.

At last year's meeting, Lacroix, Shahkar, Police Commissioner of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Christophe Bizimungu, and the Senior Police Adviser of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Mingzhu Xu, briefed. Lacroix used the opportunity to brief Council members on how UN Police (UNPOL) can position itself to meet current and future challenges. Shahkar highlighted the accomplishments and challenges of UNPOL and called for the Council's continued support. Bizimungu and Xu shared field perspectives in leading UN police operations in the CAR and Cyprus, respectively.

The meeting last year took place ahead of the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial held in Berlin in May 2025. According to a press release issued at the conclusion of the Berlin Ministerial, 53 member states pledged to contribute to police capabilities in UN peacekeeping operations, including formed police units and individual police officers.

On 8 October 2025, the Department of Peace Operations announced that Olukemi Ibikunle, a Nigerian correctional officer deployed to MONUSCO, had won the third UN Trailblazer Award for Women Justice and Corrections Officers. The award, established in 2022, recognises the outstanding contributions of women justice and corrections officers serving in UN peace operations. This year, five women officers from various UN peace operations were short-listed for the award. Ibikunle was selected in recognition of her role in developing an advanced high-security prison block for high-risk detainees as well as for designing a model prison blueprint for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The fifth UN Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS 2026), a biennial event bringing together Ministers, Chiefs of Police, and senior representatives of regional and professional policing organisations, is scheduled to take place in New York from 1-2 July. According to the Department of UN Peace Operations, the focus of the meeting this year will be to:

- operationalise the UN Police Division's role as a system-wide service provider and focal point for UN policing and other law enforcement matters;
- reinforce ongoing efforts to enhance the performance of UNPOL by strengthening capacities; and

- integrate UN policing priorities in international peace and security processes, discussions and fora.

At the June 2024 summit, member states expressed support for equipping UNPOL with the necessary capacities to strengthen their role in addressing evolving threats and challenges. They also welcomed the establishment of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Policing, aimed at promoting the work of UNPOL and ensuring system-wide policy coherence.

Key Issues and Options

An overarching issue for Council members is the future of UN peace operations. In this context, particular attention is likely to focus on the comprehensive review of peace operations requested by the *Pact for the Future*, the outcome document of the 2024 Summit of the Future. With the first draft of the review report expected soon, Council members may be keen to discuss concrete recommendations for strengthening the role of UNPOL as part of efforts to ensure more agile and adaptable peace operations capable of responding to current realities.

Another issue of concern is the UN's liquidity crisis and its impact on the work of UN Police on the ground. In October 2025, Shahkar briefed troop- and police-contributing countries on the implementation of a contingency plan to mitigate the effects of the liquidity crisis on UN peace operations. At the February briefing, he may highlight the particular challenges the crisis poses for UNPOL across different missions, notably through constraints on their operational capacity. Ouedraogo and Schlotmann could also shed more light on the issue from a field perspective.

With several UN peace operations drawing down and exiting, the role of UNPOL in protecting civilians and building the policing capacity of host countries has become increasingly important. Members may wish to discuss the role of UNPOL in UN peacekeeping transitions in the Security Council Informal Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally in agreement about the importance of UNPOL in helping to maintain public order, protect civilians, and assist host states in building their law enforcement capacities. Council members also recognise the critical role UNPOL plays in countries undergoing transition.

As reflected in statements at last year's briefing, several Council members recognise UNPOL's key role in peace operations in rebuilding trust and solidarity with communities, protecting civilians, strengthening the rule of law and justice, and promoting peace-building, among other things. Several members also emphasised the role of women in policing and reiterated the importance of achieving gender parity at all levels of peacekeeping operations, including within police contingents. This strategy was developed to create an enabling environment for the meaningful participation of uniformed women personnel in peace operations, both at the headquarters and in the field.

Several other positions in last year's meeting on UN policing may

UN DOCUMENTS ON UN POLICING Security Council Resolution S/RES/2185 (20 November 2014) was the first stand-alone resolution on UN policing to make policing an integral part of the mandates of UN peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9870 (27 February 2025) was a briefing on UN policing.

UN Peacekeeping

also be reiterated in this year's meeting. Some members underscored the safety and security of police officers, while others stressed the need to improve UNPOL's performance and strengthen its capacity to adapt to an evolving operating environment. In addition, some

members highlighted the importance of closer integration of police components within UN peacekeeping, whereas others favoured maintaining clear operational distinctions among the various components of UN peace operations.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the situation in South Sudan. Council members are expected to receive the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan and developments in the country by 2 February.

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) expires on 30 April 2026.

Key Recent Developments

South Sudan continues to face a deteriorating security environment, amid ongoing hostilities across the country between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO), alongside other opposition and allied groups. According to the UN, direct military confrontations have been reported in eight of the country's ten states, at a scale that has not been reported since the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018. These developments have significantly undermined R-ARCSS, with persistent ceasefire violations, stalled security sector reform, and entrenched political deadlock rendering the peace framework increasingly untenable.

In Jonglei state, hostilities intensified in late December 2025, with clashes and airstrikes reported in Nyirol, Uror, Ayod, and Duk counties as the SSPDF and the SPLA-IO, and allied forces mobilised for major confrontation. The SPLA-IO seized Pajut in northern Jonglei, placing the state capital, Bor, within closer reach of opposition forces. On 19 January, the SPLA-IO called on its forces to mobilise and advance toward Juba. In parallel, SSPDF Assistant Chief of Defence Forces and Agwelek militia commander General Johnson Olony instructed forces deployed in northern Jonglei not to "spare any lives, including the elderly," as they prepared to confront opposition forces, heightening concerns about risks to civilians. The government had earlier declared a no-fly zone, and on 26 January ordered the evacuation of civilians, as well as UNMISS and humanitarian personnel, from Nyirol, Uror, and Akobo counties.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the renewed fighting and airstrikes have triggered mass displacement and a worsening humanitarian crisis across Jonglei. More than 180,000 people have been displaced, with further displacement anticipated as insecurity persists. Civilians and aid workers face increasing risks amid severe disruptions to humanitarian operations, including reports of widespread looting of health facilities, the confiscation of humanitarian assets, and the relocation of aid personnel due to insecurity.

The political landscape in South Sudan has remained highly

volatile, marked by President Salva Kiir Mayardit's ongoing unilateral actions. Kiir has continued to reshuffle senior positions within his own party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and replaced opposition officials in the government with political loyalists. On 17 December 2025, he approved a series of amendments to the revitalised agreement that removed provisions linking elections to the completion of a permanent constitution. Kiir also dismissed 11 members of the Transitional National Legislature, all affiliated with the SPLM-IO and close to its leader, First Vice-President Riek Machar, and subsequently appointed new legislators aligned with a splinter faction of the SPLM-IO led by Peacebuilding Minister Stephen Par Kuol.

On 20 January, Kiir dismissed interior minister Angelina Teny, a senior opposition figure and Machar's wife, and appointed Aleu Ayieny Aleu, a veteran loyalist and former interior minister, as her successor.

As political and security conditions continue to deteriorate, UNMISS is operating under increasing strain while implementing a contingency plan in response to the UN-wide financial crisis and the Secretary-General's contingency measures requiring a 15 percent reduction in peacekeeping expenditures. In early December 2025, the UN Department of Peace Operations circulated a white note indicating that internal adjustments, including the downsizing of civilian staff, were proceeding as planned; however, measures requiring host-government facilitation, particularly troop rotations, repatriation, and the movement of heavy equipment, were facing significant blockages.

These challenges followed a November 2025 note verbale from the government calling for the closure of the Wau and Bentiu UNMISS bases. In December, the transitional government further indicated that future flight clearances would be contingent on UNMISS' withdrawal from Tambura in Western Equatoria. These delays, the white note said, have contributed to rising monthly operational costs for the mission. Media reports indicate that UNMISS began closing its base in Tambura in early January.

On 20 January, Council members held closed consultations on the situation in South Sudan, with a briefing by UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. The meeting was requested by the US to discuss recent political developments in the country and the government's current posture toward UNMISS. During the consultations, Lacroix apparently indicated that implementation of the contingency plan was progressing and conveyed that the government had provided reassurances regarding the mission's continued presence and cooperation. (For more information, see our 18 January *What's in Blue* story.)

South Sudan

Human Rights-Related Developments

In an 18 January press release, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan expressed grave concern over South Sudan's deteriorating political and security situation following reports of repeated airstrikes and intensified hostilities in multiple parts of Jonglei. The Commission warned that the deliberate undermining and continued erosion of the R-ARCSS are directly fuelling renewed conflict, with catastrophic consequences for civilians and for stability in South Sudan and the wider region. It urged all parties to immediately cease hostilities and halt military operations in civilian-populated areas.

On 9 January, the UNMISS Human Rights Division released its quarterly brief on violence affecting civilians, covering the period from July to September 2025. The report documented 295 incidents of conflict-related violence affecting 1,153 civilians, including 519 killed, 396 injured, 159 abducted, and 79 subjected to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Compared with the previous quarter (April-June 2025), abductions increased by 20 percent and CRSV cases rose by seven percent, underscoring a significant deterioration in the protection of civilians across multiple regions of the country.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to prevent South Sudan from sliding into a renewed cycle of large-scale conflict, while addressing the structural drivers of recurring violence and political instability. The current trajectory represents the most serious risk of relapse into civil war since the signing of the 2018 revitalised agreement.

A related issue is the fate of the peace agreement, which has been hollowed out by profound mistrust among political leaders, unilateral actions by the government (including the consolidation of power over state institutions, amendments to the peace agreement, and the weakening of opposition and allied groups), and recurring clashes between parties to the agreement.

Another matter of concern is the deteriorating protection and humanitarian situation, marked by mass displacement, restricted humanitarian access, and heightened risks to civilians and aid workers. As well, ensuring accountability for human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, and breaking entrenched patterns of impunity, remains central to the Council's consideration.

Council members may wish to consider adopting a resolution that expresses concern over the recent escalation, urges the parties to refrain from further military action, return to the permanent ceasefire, restore trust and resume dialogue in an inclusive manner involving all South Sudanese stakeholders to resolve differences by peaceful means.

Another important issue for the Council is how to preserve space for UNMISS to implement its mandate in an increasingly constrained operating environment, including amid host-government restrictions and significant financial pressures affecting peacekeeping operations. The mission's continued presence remains critical to maintaining a degree of stability, protecting civilians, and mitigating violence across the country.

In this context, members may seek more regular briefings from OCHA and UNMISS on protection trends and humanitarian constraints. The Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians could also consider convening a meeting to receive briefings from relevant UN entities on the impact of hostilities on civilian populations.

During the Council briefing in February, members could consider inviting a civil society representative to highlight ongoing challenges on the ground and the dire security and humanitarian situations.

Additionally, Council members could explore the possibility of

undertaking a visiting mission to South Sudan to assess conditions first-hand and engage directly with parties to the R-ARCSS. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan took place in 2019.)

Council Dynamics

Council members share similar concerns regarding the significant challenges facing the revitalised agreement, the deteriorating security situation resulting from fighting among armed factions, ongoing sub-national and intercommunal violence, and the deepening economic and humanitarian crises.

However, Council members hold differing views on the overall assessment of the situation and the extent to which the Council should exert pressure on the parties to recommit to implementation of the revitalised agreement. The US has taken a more critical stance, characterising the crisis as “man-made” and pointing to what they view as a lack of political will by the South Sudanese authorities to advance the peace process. The US has also emphasised that the transitional government should prioritise the use of public revenues to fund essential services such as health and education, rather than “personal enrichment”, and has called for greater accountability of the host government. By contrast, members such as China and Russia have argued that the international community should exercise patience, prioritise support for regional mediation efforts, and avoid exerting excessive pressure, while backing the government's efforts to strengthen state institutions.

In December 2025, the US, the penholder on South Sudan, apparently circulated a draft press statement in response to the South Sudanese government's posture toward UNMISS amid the implementation of the contingency plan. While like-minded members were supportive of the initiative, China, Russia, and members of the A3 Plus grouping (Somalia and then-Council members Algeria, Guyana, and Sierra Leone) expressed reservations, pointing to the need to allow ongoing engagement between UN officials and the authorities in Juba to run its course. Following the 20 January closed consultations, the US reintroduced a new draft press statement, which, at the time of writing, remains under discussion among Council members.

The African members on the Council have generally shown understanding toward the concerns of the South Sudanese authorities and have highlighted what they view as positive steps taken by the government, while calling for continued and adequate support. While this approach is likely to continue with the current composition of the A3 members (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Somalia), these members may be more receptive to concerns raised by some like-minded Council members regarding the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation, including the need for Council products in response to such developments. The A3 could be guided by a 27 January statement issued by the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, expressing serious concerns over the violations of the permanent ceasefire, and calling on the parties to de-escalate tensions and fully comply with their obligations under the peace agreement. The statement also urged strict adherence to the ceasefire and the power-sharing arrangement, calling for a return to inclusive, consensus-based decision-making. The A3 members may also await the outcome of the 23 January meeting of

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the AU Peace and Security Council, which discussed the situation in South Sudan. At the time of writing, the communiqué had not

yet been published.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In February, the Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution extending the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. The Monitoring Team's mandate expires on 17 February.

Background

The 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime imposes an assets freeze, a travel ban, and an arms embargo on individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with the Taliban. The listing criteria for these sanctions include participating in the acts of, supplying arms to, recruiting for, or otherwise supporting the activities of those associated with the Taliban in constituting a threat to the peace, security, and stability of Afghanistan. Apart from the humanitarian exception established by resolution 2615 in December 2021, the regime has not been substantively updated since the Taliban seized power in August 2021.

The 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee is a subsidiary organ of the Council created to oversee the regime. Its tasks include designating individuals and entities who meet the listing criteria, deciding upon requests for exemptions from the measures, and reporting periodically to the Council. The Monitoring Team supports the Committee by, among other things, submitting periodic reports on the implementation of the sanctions measures, making recommendations intended to assist member states with implementation, and reviewing the sanctions list.

The same monitoring team also supports the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. Resolution 2734 of 10 June 2024 extended the team's mandate to support that Committee until June 2027. (For more information, see our 10 June *What's in Blue* story.)

Council members received the Monitoring Team's latest report on 17 November 2025. The report says that while the Taliban have brought a measure of peace and security to Afghanistan since seizing power, some groups have not benefited from the increase in stability, including women, girls, and minority groups. It says that the situation is particularly dire for women and girls, noting that Afghan women face barriers in access to healthcare, high levels of unemployment, and the second-widest gender gap in the world.

The report also analyses internal dynamics within the Taliban. It describes rifts between Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada's Kandahar base and the Haqqani Network, including in relation to girls' education, while noting that the Taliban leadership has been able to manage these disagreements and remain unified and obedient to Akhundzada.

The governance challenges faced by the Taliban are another focus of the report. It notes that Afghanistan's economy is recovering at a slow pace but remains weak, with an uncertain outlook overall due to fiscal pressures, a widening trade deficit, and persistent poverty and food insecurity. It also refers to several "exogenous shocks" that have affected the economy, including a reduction in foreign aid, natural disasters, and geopolitical tensions that have disrupted trade and deterred investment, and says that the situation has been exacerbated by the forced return of more than 4.5 million Afghan citizens from neighbouring states since October 2023.

According to the report, terrorism is the most serious challenge for the Taliban. It says that the Taliban's assertions that terrorist groups have no footprint in Afghanistan and do not operate from the country are not credible, and notes that a wide range of member states have consistently reported that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K), Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Al-Qaida, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, and other groups are present in the country. It also says that attacks conducted by the TTP against Pakistan from Afghan soil are a particularly significant challenge that have led to cross-border military confrontation, loss of life, and economic consequences arising from the closure of border crossings between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and says that this issue is "the greatest short-term threat" to the Taliban's stability.

The report outlines several recommendations for the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. It recommends that the Committee revisit its guidelines for the conduct of its work in order to clarify and facilitate member states' compliance with the travel ban and asset freeze measures. It also says that the Monitoring Team would welcome the Committee's support in requesting assistance from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Central Asia and strengthening engagement with the countering terrorist travel programme of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). The report further highlights the increased use of cryptocurrencies by terrorist groups, particularly ISIL-K, and recommends that the Committee write to member states asking them to share relevant information and analysis.

In other developments, it appears that the US blocked the majority of requests submitted to the Committee for exemptions to the travel ban in 2025. In correspondence sent to Committee members in August, the US indicated that it would scrutinise travel ban exemption requests more closely, on a case-by-case basis. The letter apparently also noted that the Taliban continues to use hostage diplomacy and accused the Taliban of failing to deliver on its counter-terrorism commitments. In response, it seems that some member states have resorted to notifying the Committee of travel by

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE 1988 AFGHANISTAN SANCTIONS REGIME [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2763](#) (13 December 2024) extended the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee until 17 February 2026. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2025/796](#) (8 December 2025) was a letter transmitting the sixteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee.

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designated individuals rather than submitting exemption requests.

Key Issues and Options

The renewal of the Monitoring Team's mandate is a key issue for the Council in February. The Council could choose to extend the mandate for another year without making any substantive changes, as it has generally done in recent years.

Council members may also wish to consider reviewing the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime more broadly. Such a review could analyse whether the regime is fit for purpose and how it could be updated following the Taliban's seizure of power in August 2021. To assist with this review, members could choose to request a report from the Monitoring Team outlining possible options for updating the regime in light of the changed situation on the ground.

Council Dynamics

In general, the Monitoring Team appears to enjoy broad support among Council members. During the last round of negotiations regarding its mandate in December 2024, Council members agreed from the outset that it should be extended without making any substantive changes. The negotiations instead focused on preambular language, including text relating to the ratification of the "Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice", the Taliban's directive banning women and girls from attending classes at private medical institutions, the adverse effects of climate change, the

indispensable role of women in Afghan society, and access to humanitarian assistance and basic services for women and girls. (For more information, see our 12 December 2024 *What's in Blue* story.)

China and Russia have previously pushed for the reinstatement of the standing exemption to the travel ban that expired in August 2022 after the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee failed to reach consensus regarding its renewal. (First introduced by the Committee in April 2019, the exemption authorised specified Taliban officials to travel abroad to attend peace and stability discussions in a range of countries. The exemption was renewed by the Committee at regular intervals until August 2022.) During negotiations regarding the Monitoring Team's mandate in December 2023, China proposed adding operative language reintroducing the standing exemption to the travel ban and a related exemption to the assets freeze. While this was supported by Russia, it was opposed by a majority of other members, some of whom apparently argued that the resolution renewing the Monitoring Team's mandate was not an appropriate instrument for reintroducing the travel ban exemption, and the proposal was not incorporated into the final resolution. (For more information, see our 13 December 2023 *What's in Blue* story.)

The US is the penholder on Afghanistan sanctions issues. At the time of writing, the appointment of the chair of the Committee for 2026 had not been finalised. Pakistan was appointed as chair of the Committee in 2025.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Yemen. UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and an official from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief on political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country.

Key Recent Developments

Yemen has seen significant shifts in its political and security landscape in recent weeks. The efforts of the Southern Transitional Council's (STC) —a separatist faction from south Yemen, which is reportedly backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—to expand their control over southeastern governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahra in early December were met with military pushback from Yemen's government-aligned forces and Saudi Arabia.

Yemen's internationally recognised government is run by the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), an eight-member executive body formed in 2022 with the support of a Saudi Arabia-led Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen (the Coalition), which includes the UAE, with the aim of uniting several Yemeni political factions and steering the country's transition out of civil war. The STC is part of the PLC; its president and the leader of the December 2025

offensive, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, was one of the PLC's vice presidents. Since its formation, the PLC has been mired by internal divisions, the most prominent being between those factions in favour of a united Republic of Yemen and those with secessionist aspirations, such as the STC, whose goal has been to re-establish an independent state in south Yemen. (South Yemen was an independent state prior to unification with the north in 1990.)

On 7 January, the PLC announced Zubaidi's removal from the government for "committing high treason". Members of the STC attending de-escalation talks in Riyadh reportedly announced the dissolution of the group on 9 January; however, other STC members rejected the announcement, indicating a split within the group.

In a 10 January speech, Rashad al-Alimi, the President of the PLC, said that the Yemeni government had regained full control of the governorates of Hadramout and Al-Mahra, as well as the interim capital Aden, which had been under STC control since at least 2019. He further stated that the "southern cause" will remain a priority for the PLC and called for the convening of a "comprehensive Southern Dialogue Conference", which would be hosted by Saudi Arabia. The date for the conference is yet to be announced. Additionally, al-Alimi announced the formation of the Supreme Military Committee, which will function under the leadership of the Coalition and

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2813 (27 January 2026) renewed the mandate of UNMHA for a final two-month period, until 31 March. S/RES/2812 (14 January 2026) extended the Secretary-General's monthly reporting requirement on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea until 15 July 2026. **Security Council Press Statement SC/16265** (23 December 2025) called for de-escalation and underlined strong support towards a political settlement in Yemen and for the Presidential Leadership Council, while also reiterating condemnation of detentions by the Houthis and the demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained.

Yemen

is tasked with unifying security forces and enhancing readiness for any future challenges.

Amid these developments, Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg has been engaging Yemeni and regional stakeholders to de-escalate tensions and promote political solutions. During his 8 January visit to Riyadh, he met with al-Alimi and other senior Yemeni government officials and emphasised that the southern dialogue conference will provide an opportunity for parties to address grievances through dialogue and move towards stabilisation. Grundberg also met with Yemen's Prime Minister Salem Saleh bin Braik in Riyadh on 14 January, where they discussed the economic challenges faced by Yemenis, placing emphasis on the linkage between economic stability and the advancement of a political track and peace in Yemen.

Braik resigned from his role on 16 January and was replaced by the PLC's foreign minister, Shaya Mohsen Zindani, who was tasked with forming a new government.

Briefing the Council on 14 January, the Special Envoy warned that without a "comprehensive approach", destabilising developments will persist in undermining a lasting resolution to Yemen's conflict. He stressed that the future of south Yemen "cannot be determined by any single actor or through force", underlining the need for a "comprehensive, inclusive, nationwide political process", which addresses questions regarding the nexus between the country's political, economic and security challenges.

On 21 January, a convoy transporting Hamdi Shukri—commander of the pro-government Southern Giants Brigades—was reportedly targeted by a car bomb in Aden, killing five people and wounding Shukri and two others. The PLC characterised the attack as a "terrorist attack" and as an attempt to destabilise the security situation in Yemen, but did not attribute the attack to a particular group.

On 14 January, the Council adopted resolution 2812, extending until 15 July the monthly reporting requirement for the Secretary-General on attacks by the Houthis on vessels in the Red Sea, which was established by resolution 2722 of 10 January 2024. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). Since the 8 October 2025 announcement of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis have ceased their attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and against Israeli territory—a campaign they had initiated ostensibly to support Palestinians in Gaza.

On 15 January, following Israel's 26 December 2025 recognition of Somaliland—a breakaway region in northern Somalia, which neighbours Yemen—as an independent state, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthis, escalated the group's rhetoric when he said that the group is "serious about targeting any Israeli presence in Somaliland".

The Houthis also continue to arbitrarily detain personnel from the UN, non-governmental and civil society organisations, and diplomatic missions. According to OCHA, 73 UN personnel are detained, three of whom have been referred to a special criminal court on charges related to their duties. Grundberg and Muin Shreim, the UN official leading on the issue of detentions, have continued efforts to negotiate their release, and on 13 January, they met with Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdulsalam to discuss the issue. They also discussed "pathways to advance political dialogue".

Houthi actions are restricting the UN's ability to provide critical humanitarian support in territory under their control, which are the most populous regions of Yemen and require the most aid. In his 14 December briefing to the Council, the OCHA Director of the Humanitarian Sector Division, Ramesh Rajasingham, warned that Yemen's dire humanitarian situation is worsening owing to obstruction of access and severe funding cuts. He highlighted food insecurity and the health system as sectors facing severe deterioration, with half the population (18 million people) projected to face food insecurity in February. More than 450 health facilities have been forced to close due to funding cuts, and 2,300 clinics are facing similar risks. Last year, the Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan was funded at only 27.8 percent, amounting to less than half the funding provided for 2024, which was also critically underfunded. Projections for 2026 estimate 23.1 million Yemenis in need of aid, an increase from 19.5 million in 2025.

On 27 January, the Council adopted resolution 2813, renewing the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) for a final two-month period, until 31 March. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia).

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to help mitigate the risk of an escalation of hostilities in Yemen, which could see a resumption of full-scale conflict. Volatile dynamics in southern Yemen, the potential resurgence of conflict between the Houthis and Yemen's internationally recognised government, and the Houthis' involvement in regional dynamics, all pose a risk to the security and stability of the country.

Amid shifting domestic and regional dynamics, Council members could consider convening an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with regional stakeholders, countries supporting the Yemen political process, and the Special Envoy, to discuss the implications of the latest developments on the UN's efforts to facilitate an inclusive negotiated political settlement to end the Yemeni conflict. Commitments to a set of confidence-building measures were made by the parties in December 2023; however, discussions aimed at establishing a roadmap to peace, which would have seen the implementation of these commitments, stalled following the Houthis' response to the Gaza war in October 2023.

As the Houthis continue to arbitrarily detain UN personnel and refer them to their special criminal court, Council members could consider adopting a resolution with a humanitarian focus that demands that the Houthis rescind the referrals to the court, immediately and unconditionally release all personnel detained, and cease further obstruction to the delivery of UN humanitarian assistance in Yemen.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Despite being critical of the Houthis, most Council members have maintained their support for an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process and continue to call for advancing mediation efforts between the conflict parties, including a resumption of dialogue and a peace process under UN auspices. In the wake of political developments in south Yemen between December 2025 and January, Council

Yemen

members have shown agreement in their support of the unity and legitimacy of the PLC and rejection of unilateral measures.

The developments in the south have sparked tensions among regional stakeholders, however. The apparent backing of Saudi Arabia and the UAE for opposing factions in the struggle for control over south Yemen seems to have put their partnership within the Coalition under strain. Saudi Arabia said in a 30 December 2025 statement that it views the STC's offensive (and the UAE's support for it) as a threat to its national security as well as Yemen's. That same day, Saudi-led coalition forces struck what they said was a UAE-linked shipment of vehicles, weapons, and ammunition intended for the STC, and the PLC issued a decree calling on the UAE to withdraw all its forces from Yemen, with which the UAE complied. The UAE has strongly rejected claims that it is backing any individual Yemeni party, and during the 14 January Council meeting, it highlighted its contributions to Yemeni security and stability.

The Council's five permanent members disagree on the Council's approach towards the Houthis. France, the UK, and the US have argued that the Council needs to increase pressure on the group—which they believe is obstructing a political process and fostering instability in Yemen—including by strengthening the Yemen sanctions regime. The US has adopted a particularly hawkish position on the Houthis, unilaterally sanctioning the group and accusing Iran of supporting it. Conversely, China and Russia have argued that

expanding the Yemen sanctions regime would escalate tensions and push the parties further away from a political settlement.

Similarly, China and Russia have been wary of other Council members' efforts to retain the Red Sea crisis on the Council's agenda. After its abstention on resolution 2812—which extended the Secretary-General's reporting on the Red Sea—China indicated that its vote reflected its concern that, following the adoption of resolution 2722, military action in Yemen undertaken by some countries undermined the peace process and heightened insecurity in the Red Sea. Israel, the UK, and the US have all conducted strikes targeting the Houthis since the beginning of the Red Sea crisis. Russia, which also abstained on resolution 2722, said that the resolution has no added value and that the situation in the Red Sea has stabilised in recent months.

Council members have also diverged over the closure of UNMHA. Following their abstention on the adoption of resolution 2713, China and Russia said that UNMHA continues to play an important, stabilising role and that its closure could have political and security implications in Hodeidah and the surrounding region. Conversely, the US has strongly pushed for sunsetting the mission and said that "Houthi obstructionism" has prevented the mission from fulfilling its mandate.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Greece and the US are the co-penholders on the Red Sea crisis.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Claudio Cordone, a representative from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and a civil society representative are expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

January witnessed major developments in northeastern Syria, as the Syrian interim government expanded control over vast swathes of territory previously controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). On 10 March 2025, interim government authorities in Damascus and the SDF reached an agreement for the militia to integrate into the government's armed forces and institutions by the end of the year. Implementation of the agreement stalled, however, as the SDF maintained demands for varying degrees of autonomy of its forces and decentralised rule of the northeastern governorates, which were sticking points for interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and his government. Since leading the ouster of former president Bashar al-Assad, Sharaa has been steering the political transition towards unifying Syria and consolidating armed groups under government control.

On 6 January, fierce clashes broke out between the SDF and

government forces in the northern city of Aleppo. By 11 January, the Syrian armed forces had assumed control of Ashrafiyeh and Sheikh Maqsood—two SDF-held neighbourhoods in Aleppo—and SDF fighters were reportedly disarmed and withdrew from the city. The clashes resulted in 23 deaths and over 120,000 residents displaced.

Subsequently, Syria's government forces rapidly pushed their offensive eastward into SDF-controlled territory, and by 18 January had made significant advances into Raqqa, Al-Hasakah, and Deir Ezzor governorates, seizing control of critical infrastructure such as oilfields and the Euphrates Dam. Later that day, Sharaa announced that a ceasefire and integration agreement had been reached between the interim government and the SDF, which would see Damascus expand its control over the previously SDF-held governorates, and the full integration of the SDF into government institutions on an "individual basis", rather than as full military units.

By 20 January, the ceasefire had reportedly been strained amid continued disagreements and clashes between the two parties. Later that day, the parties agreed to a truce in Al-Hasakah governorate, which Syria's Permanent Representative to the UN Ibrahim Olabi said would serve as a consultation period to develop a joint plan to integrate the area into government control.

The fighting has raised concerns regarding detention centres and camps housing thousands of Islamic State in Syria and the Levant

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2799](#) (6 November 2025) removed interim Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa and interim Syrian Interior Minister Anas Khattab from the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2025/6](#) (10 August 2025) condemned violence against civilians in Suweida in July 2025, called for unhindered humanitarian access to the region, and called on the Syrian interim authorities to ensure accountability. [S/PRST/2025/4](#) (14 March 2025) condemned sectarian violence perpetrated in Latakia and Tartous and called for accountability and the protection of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion.

Syria

(ISIL/Da'esh) fighters, and the women and children associated with them, in territory previously held by the SDF. The SDF has historically played a pivotal role in combating ISIL, as a key partner in the Global Coalition Against Da'esh's campaign against the terrorist movement, and has overseen the imprisonment of a large number of ISIL fighters across northeastern Syria, with the support of the US. Between 19 and 20 January, the SDF relinquished control of the Shaddadi prison and the Al-Hol camp in the Al-Hasakah governorate to government authorities. The two sides traded blame over the escape of around 200 prisoners from Shaddadi, many of whom were reportedly recaptured. In her briefing to the Council on 22 January, OCHA Director of the Crisis Response Division Edem Wosornu said that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had taken over management of Al-Hol camp and is coordinating with the interim government to resume humanitarian assistance to the detainees.

On 20 January, US Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack said that, following Syria's accession to the anti-ISIL coalition in 2025, and its willingness to take responsibility for security and control of ISIL detention facilities, the SDF's role in that regard "has largely expired". The next day, the US also announced that it would be launching a mission to transfer ISIL detainees from northeast Syria to Iraq, which started with 150 fighters being transported out of Al-Hasakah.

On 30 January, the parties announced a comprehensive agreement which included the phased integration of the SDF's military and administration into the interim government's institutions. If peacefully implemented, the agreement will achieve full integration in the territory east of the Euphrates River and significantly advance Sharaa's aim to unify Syria.

On 16 January, Sharaa issued Presidential Decree No. 13, which—for the first time in Syria's history—officially recognised Syrian Kurdish identity, recognised Kurdish as a national language, and granted citizenship rights for Syrian Kurds. Kurdish political leaders reportedly welcomed the decree, but demanded that such rights be enshrined in the constitution. In his briefing to the Council on 22 January, UN Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari said the decree is an "encouraging initiative" which can be built on to advance an inclusive political process in Syria.

Khiari also said that the UN Secretariat is seeking to establish the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria "on the ground" to engage with the interim government in Damascus more effectively and efficiently over matters pertaining to the political transition.

Syria continues to pursue negotiations with Israel aimed at resolving the issue of Israel's military presence in southern Syria, which expanded after the toppling of Assad in December 2024. On 6 January, Israel, Syria, and the US held discussions in Paris, following which they issued a joint statement affirming a commitment to achieving mutual security. The statement said that Israel and Syria agreed to establish a joint communication mechanism, which would be supervised by the US, to facilitate coordination on intelligence, military de-escalation, diplomacy, and commercial opportunities between the two sides.

The humanitarian situation in Syria continues to be challenging, and in recent weeks, Syrians have had to grapple with renewed

hostilities and displacement amid a particularly harsh winter. In her 22 January briefing to the Council, Wosornu said that despite difficulties, Syria continues to experience a surge in displaced persons returning to their homes, and that the UN has observed limited but encouraging improvements in humanitarian indicators. Urging continued progress, she said that the international community needs to increase involvement in recovery and development; provide sufficient and sustained humanitarian funding in the short term; and pursue diplomacy to prevent further violence and instability. In 2025, the Syria Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan was funded at only 33.5 percent. Projections for 2026 estimate 16.5 million Syrians in need and \$3.2 billion in funding requirements.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure that Syria's interim government pursues a credible, transparent, and inclusive political process, while navigating a fraught security context compounded by intercommunal tensions, terrorism, and external interference. Central to this issue are Damascus' efforts in pursuing disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) efforts, and in fostering social cohesion and transitional justice, including accountability and reconciliation.

Council members will continue monitoring the situation in the northeast of Syria, including the implementation of the 30 January SDF-integration agreement, and the threat of ISIL activity in the region. Depending on developments, members could consider adopting a presidential statement demanding that the parties adhere to the ceasefire and fully implement the agreement.

The UN's future role in Syria is another key issue for the Council. Based on an integrated strategic assessment internal report prepared by the UN Secretariat, the Secretary-General has considered what types of UN presence in Syria would be most suitable to meet the country's current needs.

Following up on their recent mission to Damascus and in order to obtain a better idea of the Secretary-General's thinking on this matter, Council members could convene an Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) with the participation of Syria and relevant UN entities to discuss the most viable options for future UN and Council engagement in Syria and appropriate support for Syria's transition.

Another issue is the need to start reducing the country's reliance on humanitarian aid through support and investment in recovery and development. Council members could consider holding a public briefing focused on the country's need for support in reconstruction and economic rehabilitation, featuring briefings from representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are aligned on the need for the Syrian authorities to advance an inclusive, Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process based on the key principles of resolution 2254. They broadly agree that the threat of intercommunal violence cannot be addressed without advancing inclusive accountability measures, DDR and security sector reform (SSR) efforts, together with a credible political process in the country.

The Council's December visit to Damascus represented an

Syria

important signal of unified support to Syria's transition, following years of division on the Syria file. Earlier in 2025, the US and Russia worked together on the 14 March presidential statement following violence perpetrated in Latakia and Tartous, while Denmark authored the 10 August presidential statement in response to violence in Suweida.

Sharaa has made apparent headway in garnering regional and international support. The Council's decision to delist him and his interior minister from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions list was a significant step in this regard. According to SANA—Syria's state-owned news agency—on 19 January, Sharaa had a phone call with US President Donald Trump about the SDF developments, in which both affirmed “a shared aspiration to see a strong and unified Syria”. The US' support for Damascus to integrate the SDF—a longstanding US ally—into a unified Syrian state further signifies their increased backing of Sharaa's government. Similarly, Türkiye—which considers the SDF a threat to its border security due to its ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—has strongly supported a unified Syrian state and has celebrated Syria's advances into SDF territory. Sharaa seems to have also garnered the support of Russian President Vladimir Putin on this issue, and in a 28 January meeting between the two in Moscow, Putin congratulated the interim president on

advances made to restore Syria's full territorial integrity.

Israel's presence and military activities in Syria remain a contentious issue for Council members. Most members believe Israel's actions are fostering instability in Syria and that it must comply with the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between the countries. In contrast, the US has predominantly characterised Israel's actions as defensive in nature or tied to ensuring its national security and has pushed back against attempts by other members to introduce language criticising Israeli actions in Syria in recent Council products. The Permanent Representatives of Israel and Syria to the UN have more than once used the Council's monthly meeting on Syria to air their respective grievances regarding control and security in southern Syria.

Many Council members also agree on the need for the Syrian interim government to take decisive measures to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and ISIL/Da'esh. China has been particularly vocal in calling on Damascus to take a stronger stance on FTFs in the country, some of whom have reportedly been integrated into the Syrian armed forces. Several FTFs constitute part of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, which China considers a terrorist organisation and is also listed under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida sanctions regime.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold its 60-day briefing on the situation in Libya. Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Serwaa Tetteh will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The political impasse in Libya continues between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, with advisory support from the High State Council (HSC), and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and backed by the House of Representatives (HoR) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. The parties remain deadlocked over proposed legislation to hold national elections that would reconcile the country's divided government. A key point of contention is over the formation of a unified interim government to organise the elections—a move favoured by the GNS and HoR but opposed by the GNU and some segments of the HSC. The prolonged stalemate between the rival governments has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the 2021 elections.

During the Security Council's most recent briefing on Libya, held on 19 December 2025, Tetteh noted that there remains a lack of progress in implementing the political roadmap to lead Libya to

national elections and unified institutions. (The roadmap announced by UNSMIL in August 2025 consists of three core pillars: adopting a viable electoral framework for presidential and legislative polls; unifying institutions under a new government; and launching a structured dialogue on governance, economic, security, and reconciliation issues to pave the way for these elections and address long-term conflict drivers.) Tetteh specifically highlighted the lack of progress on an agreement regarding the reconstitution of the High National Election Commission and the passage of a constitutional amendment establishing the legal framework for elections. She emphasised that achieving these two tasks is essential for credible elections in Libya. Tetteh reiterated that, in the absence of an agreement on the first two milestones of the political roadmap, she would be prepared to pursue a different course and present an alternative mechanism to the Council at the February meeting for the Council's support.

On 14-15 December 2025, UNSMIL facilitated the first session of the Structured Dialogue in Tripoli. The Structured Dialogue, which is one of the three core pillars of UNSMIL's political roadmap, aims to create political conditions, consensus, and technical proposals required to advance the other two pillars: an electoral framework and a unified government. It is envisioned as an inclusive, country-wide consultative mechanism to inform decisions on the design of elections, the mandate of the interim executive, and institutional unification. UNSMIL has indicated that the Structured Dialogue is not a decision-making body for selecting a new government; rather, its purpose is to develop concrete recommendations to support an

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2796 (31 October 2025) extended UNSMIL's mandate for twelve months and encouraged the mission to implement the recommendations from the strategic review. **Secretary General's Report S/2025/792** (5 December 2025) was the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Libya.

Libya

enabling environment for elections and address immediate governance, economic, and security challenges.

The Structured Dialogue consists of several tracks, each focused on a specific issue: governance, the economy, security, national reconciliation, and human rights. In January, the Structured Dialogue began its substantive work, with the governance track holding its first session in Tripoli, where it identified key issues related to a pre-election political agreement, the mandate of the government overseeing elections, state and local government structure, and electoral integrity. Other tracks of the dialogue also held substantive discussions on relevant issues. Tetteh noted that, as the dialogue moves into the next phase, the stakeholders have the responsibility to translate this momentum into “focused and substantive discussions with pragmatic and implementable recommendations, that can address the current challenges facing the country”.

In other developments, General Mohammed Ali Ahmed al-Haddad, Chief of the General Staff of the Libyan Army, along with four other Libyan military officials, died in a plane crash near Ankara, Türkiye, on 23 December 2025. The Libyan delegation was in Ankara holding official talks with Turkish counterparts. The plane crashed soon after taking off en route to Tripoli. Dbeibah called the tragedy a great loss for Libya and its military institution. Turkish authorities are currently investigating the causes of the crash. At the time of writing, they indicated that they had not identified any terrorist links.

On 1 December 2025, the German authorities surrendered Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri to the custody of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The authorities in Germany arrested El Hishri on 16 July 2025 pursuant to an arrest warrant issued by the ICC. El Hishri was a senior official in the Special Deterrence Forces (SDF), an armed group in Tripoli, and one of the top officials at Mitiga Prison. The ICC Prosecutor’s Office alleges that he is responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in and around Mitiga Prison in Tripoli between February 2015 and early 2020.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how best to support the roadmap for a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process that Tetteh presented in August 2025.

Council members have been focused on how to help foster common political ground between the country’s rival governments, but given the lack of progress in implementing the roadmap, one option might be to adopt a presidential statement, to signal the Council’s continued strong support for UNSMIL’s efforts and urge the Libyan stakeholders to engage in good faith and make the necessary compromises to advance the implementation of the roadmap.

A core issue is UNSMIL’s ability to implement the various recommendations of the most recent strategic review of the mission in light of the UN’s financial crisis and the UN80 initiative. The review recommended streamlining all the mission’s workstreams to prioritise its core task of supporting a political solution. It also recommended that UNSMIL maintain a consistent presence in eastern and southern Libya, with targeted expansions in Benghazi and Sabha.

Council members could seek a closed briefing specifically on whether UNSMIL has been able to implement the recommendations from the strategic review, as recommended by the latest mandate renewal resolution. Members may be particularly interested in whether the mission has been able to offset the costs through reallocation of resources, realigned staffing, and improved efficiency through cost-saving measures and external support services.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process resulting in elections that will help to restore political, security, and economic stability to the country. They also remain broadly supportive of the UN’s mediation role towards this end. Council members also share concerns about the volatile security situation in the country.

Council members are generally supportive of the political roadmap presented by Tetteh. During the most recent meeting on Libya in December 2025, most members emphasised the importance of the process being Libyan-led and Libyan-owned and fully inclusive of all political actors to ensure success. While many members welcomed the launch of the Structured Dialogue, Russia questioned whether such formats could serve as a “solid foundation for long-term agreements”, while noting the lack of sufficient representation of the eastern and southern parts of Libya.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General’s latest report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and Head of MINUSCA, Valentine Rugwabiza, is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

On 13 November 2025, the Security Council adopted resolution 2800, extending MINUSCA’s mandate for one year, until 15 November. The resolution was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (the US). (For more information, see our 12 November *What’s in Blue* story.)

In late November 2025, following the renewal of the mandate, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited the CAR. During his visit, he reportedly held discussions with

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2800 (13 November 2025 renewed MINUSCA’s mandate for one year until 15 November 2026. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10025** (28 October 2025) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

the country's authorities on MINUSCA's work in support of CAR's stability, despite prevailing financial constraints. Like all other UN peacekeeping missions, MINUSCA is affected by the UN's liquidity crisis, and it has implemented contingency measures to address this challenge. Lacroix also met with political parties ahead of the combined 28 December 2025 presidential, legislative, and local elections, highlighting MINUSCA's role in supporting the electoral processes.

In line with its mandate, MINUSCA provided logistical and technical support for the elections, including the transportation of ballot papers and other electoral materials to polling stations nationwide. The mission also supported civic education and voter awareness campaigns, and reinforced election security in coordination with the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) and the police. According to the National Election Authority (ANE), more than 2.4 million voters were registered to participate in the combined elections, with a reported turnout of 52 percent.

Based on provisional results for the presidential elections announced by the ANE on 5 January, President Faustin Touadéra reportedly won with 76 percent of the vote. He was widely expected to secure a third term following a controversial 2023 constitutional referendum that scrapped presidential term limits. The results were subsequently certified by the country's constitutional court on 19 January, after which the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, congratulated Touadéra on his re-election. His inauguration has been scheduled for 30 March.

However, two former prime ministers who contested the presidential election reportedly rejected the results, alleging electoral fraud. Opposition parties and civil society organisations also raised concerns about the shrinking political space and the lack of inclusivity ahead of the elections. The main opposition coalition, the *Bloc Républicain pour la Défense de la Constitution du 30 mars 2016* (BRDC), reportedly boycotted the electoral processes, citing concerns over their credibility and fairness.

With the support of MINUSCA, the CAR government has expanded its territorial control across much of the country. Nevertheless, insecurity persists in certain areas, particularly in the south-east, where armed group activity remains prevalent. In the northeast, spillover effects from the ongoing conflict in Sudan have also further exacerbated the country's fragile security situation.

According to the AU, the elections were conducted peacefully overall, with the exception of the Haut-Mbomou prefecture in the southeast, where the security situation has remained precarious. This is largely due to the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, a militia group accused of serious human rights violations, which media reports indicate has carried out targeted attacks against local security forces, state officials, soldiers and police, including on election day. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) issued a statement reinforcing the AU's observations but noted some logistical challenges and issues related to inclusion in the electoral processes.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 30 November 2025, the MINUSCA Human Rights Division (HRD) released its monthly report on the human rights situation in the CAR. During the reporting period, the brief observed 232 violations and abuses of international human rights law (IHRL) and breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL). Of this number, 298 victims were

affected, including 188 men, 25 women, 28 girls, 43 boys, and 14 groups of collective victims. Compared to October 2025, there was an increase in the number of violations/abuses (52%) as well as in the number of victims (3%) reported. The HRD also documented 28 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), with some of these cases perpetrated alongside other human rights violations and abuses, involving cruel, inhumane treatment, abduction, and the recruitment and use of children.

In a 29 October 2025 press release, Yao Agbetse, the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the CAR, called for strengthening MINUSCA's human rights mandate to support peacebuilding in the country. The expert warned that peace and development without human rights will most likely result in injustice and instability, ultimately sowing the seeds of future conflict. To that end, Agbetse urged the Security Council to ensure full and effective human rights mainstreaming across the entire UN system in the CAR, as well as to support the country in forging a credible, sustainable path toward peace, democracy, and the realisation of human rights for all, among other recommendations.

Women, Peace and Security

On 1 October 2025, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in the CAR. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for MINUSCA Mohamed Ag Ayoya briefed. According to the summary of the meeting, issued on 25 November 2025 by Denmark and Sierra Leone as the then IEG co-chairs, together with the UK as the penholder on WPS, Council members discussed such issues as women's participation in electoral processes, peacebuilding and the security sector, as well as the high incidence of sexual and gender-based violence including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in the CAR. UN Women, as the IEG secretariat, recommended that Council members urge the CAR authorities to adopt measures to address sexual violence and call on them to promote and protect civic space and women human rights defenders. Among other recommendations, UN Women advised requesting the Panel of Experts monitoring the implementation of the 2745 sanctions regime to strengthen the gender analysis in its reports, including regarding the link between small arms proliferation and sexual violence and through monitoring and reporting on cases and patterns of CRSV.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is the conduct and outcome of the 28 December 2025 elections. A related issue is the post-election situation in the CAR. The Secretary-General's upcoming report is expected to provide updates on the implementation of MINUSCA's mandate in support of the electoral processes. Council members could consider issuing a press statement welcoming the holding of the combined elections, noting Touadéra's re-election and encouraging all parties to address any electoral disputes through dialogue.

Despite improvements in the country's overall peace and security situation, another important issue is insecurity linked to armed group activity that persists in parts of the CAR. In particular, Council members remain concerned about the security situation along the country's borders, including the spillover effects of the conflict in Sudan. In this regard, they may reiterate their call for armed groups that are not signatories to the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR-RCA by its French acronym) to lay down their arms and engage in the political process through dialogue.

Another key issue likely to be a focus following the general elections is the possible handover of certain MINUSCA tasks to the CAR government or the UN country team. Pursuant to resolution 2800, the Secretary-General is requested to submit a report with detailed proposals and recommendations by 15 September. In this context, there is particular interest in sunseting the mission's electoral division, and the Secretary-General is expected to include the mission's plans in this regard in his report.

Central African Republic

The UN's liquidity crisis and its impact on the mission's operational capacity remain an ongoing concern. The situation is likely to persist this year, requiring the mission to continue implementing austerity measures to mitigate its effects.

Some Council members have expressed concerns regarding the implementation of the Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA) and are likely to continue underscoring the need for the CAR government to comply with its provisions. The Secretary-General's forthcoming report is expected to provide updates on this issue.

Council Dynamics

Council members support MINUSCA's work and appreciate its contribution in stabilising the country. Most members are also concerned about the impact of the UN's liquidity crisis on the mission's work. At the Council's 27 October 2025 meeting on the CAR, several

members cautioned that the contingency measures implemented by the mission to mitigate the impact of the liquidity crisis could undermine its ability to fulfil its mandated tasks and risk reversing the security gains achieved in the country. The US, however, argued that in light of continued progress in the CAR, MINUSCA should begin working with the authorities in Bangui to gradually hand over its responsibilities.

The US also abstained on resolution 2800, expressing reservations about the one-year extension of the mission's mandate. It instead favoured a six-month renewal, using the national elections as a key milestone for adjusting the mandate. The US also called for a larger reduction in troop levels, given progress on the ground, and stressed the need for a more realistic budget in the context of ongoing reform efforts and the UN liquidity crisis.

France is the penholder on the CAR.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In February, Council members are scheduled to discuss the 90-day report on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee in closed consultations.

Ordinarily, the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee briefs Council members on the report. At the time of writing, the Chair had not been appointed as Council members continue to negotiate this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies. If the Chair is not appointed by the time the meeting is scheduled to take place, the UK, the president of the Council during February, is likely to brief members on the report in its capacity as president. Greece served as Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee last year after the appointments were finalised in May 2025.

Key Recent Developments

Tensions have continued to simmer on the Korean Peninsula. On 4 January, the DPRK fired several ballistic missiles towards the sea off its coast. On 27 January, the DPRK fired two short-range ballistic missiles into waters off its east coast. Several analysts have suggested that the tests may be linked to the upcoming DPRK Workers' Party Congress, which is held every five years and is expected to begin in February.

The 4 January launches, which were the first ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK since early November 2025, took place hours before the Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung was scheduled to begin a state visit to China. During the visit, Lee asked Chinese President Xi Jinping to act as a mediator between the DPRK and the ROK. The move was part of Lee's push to reopen dialogue with the DPRK, which he has pursued since taking office in June 2025.

Lee's overtures appear to have been rejected by the DPRK. In a 13 January statement, Kim Yo-jong, DPRK leader Kim Jong-un's sister, reportedly described the ROK's push for improved relations as an illusion. The statement was a response to alleged incursions into DPRK airspace by drones flown from the ROK. The ROK

government has denied responsibility for the incursions and has imposed travel bans on three ROK civilians as part of an investigation into the allegations.

On 21 December, officials working on nuclear issues from the ROK and Russia reportedly held closed-door talks in Moscow. The meeting was the first between nuclear officials from the two countries since October 2024, when relations deteriorated after reports of DPRK troops being deployed to fight against Ukraine first emerged.

On 4 November 2025, US Department of the Treasury announced that it had imposed sanctions on eight individuals and two entities for their role in laundering funds derived from a variety of schemes involving the DPRK, including cybercrime and information technology worker fraud. The announcement came shortly after US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth travelled to the ROK for the annual security consultative meeting between the two countries, where he was expected to push for a more flexible posture for US troops stationed in the ROK. Several weeks after the trip, the ROK and the US announced that they had reached an agreement on a deal for the ROK to build nuclear submarines in partnership with the US.

In early December 2025, the US released its 2025 National Security Strategy. For the first time since the DPRK withdrew from the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in 2003, the document did not refer to denuclearising the DPRK, fuelling speculation that the Trump administration may seek a diplomatic breakthrough with the DPRK in 2026. On 23 January, the US Department of War released its National Defence Strategy. Regarding the Korean Peninsula, the strategy document says that the ROK "is capable of taking primary responsibility for deterring the DPRK with critical but more limited US support", describing the apparent change in US policy as a "shift in the balance of responsibility" that "is better aligned with [US] defence priorities". The document also omitted references to the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

On 27 January, US President Donald Trump announced an

DPRK (North Korea)

increase in tariffs on certain ROK exports. In a social media post, Trump accused the ROK of failing to deliver on a trade deal between the two countries.

Against this backdrop, the DPRK has continued to pursue better relations with China and Russia. According to media reports, trade between China and the DPRK reached pre-pandemic levels in 2025 for the first time since 2020. In a New Year's greeting sent to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-un reportedly said that the relationship between the two countries had been strengthened through sharing "blood, life and death" in Ukraine and hailed their "invincible friendship".

On 12 January, the participating states of the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) held an open briefing on the MSMT's second report, which was published on 22 October 2025. (The MSMT was established in October 2024 by Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the ROK, the UK, and the US after the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee expired following a Russian veto. Its aim is to monitor and report on violations and evasion of the measures imposed by the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime.) In a 22 October press release, the MSMT's participating states said that the report "details the deep connections between UN-designated DPRK entities and the DPRK's malicious cyber activities, including cryptocurrency theft, fraudulent IT work, and cyber espionage".

In a 19 November 2025 statement delivered to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors, IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi, in describing the DPRK's ongoing nuclear enrichment activities, noted that the DPRK's nuclear test site at Punggye-ri "remains prepared to support a nuclear test", and labelled "the continuation and further development of the DPRK's nuclear programme" as clear violations of Council resolutions.

On 17 November 2025, International Maritime Organization (IMO) staff visited the DPRK to conduct a technical audit. The visit marked the first occasion that international UN staff entered the DPRK since Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Qu Dongyu visited the DPRK in July 2024.

Human Rights-related Developments

On 18 December 2025, the General Assembly adopted resolution 80/220 on the situation of human rights in the DPRK. Among other matters, the resolution condemned the long-standing and ongoing systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights in and by the DPRK and encouraged the Security Council to take appropriate action to ensure accountability.

Sanctions-related Developments

On 5 December 2025, the US submitted a listing proposal to the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee in relation to seven vessels accused of violating UN sanctions against the DPRK. It seems that China and Russia put a hold on the request until mid-June.

Key Issues and Options

The Council is dealing with several issues on the DPRK file. The DPRK's ongoing development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which violates numerous Council resolutions, is a major concern. Sanctions evasion is also a problem, as is the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime, particularly given that the DPRK is

widely believed to have increased its nuclear arsenal since the sanctions regime was first introduced. The DPRK's continuing refusal to participate in denuclearisation dialogue and the humanitarian and human rights situations are also challenges for the Council.

In response, Council members could consider introducing a resolution that condemns the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, urges member states to comply with existing resolutions, and calls on the DPRK to return to dialogue. It could also consider updating and strengthening the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime, with a view to increasing pressure on the DPRK and actors involved in sanctions evasion.

The lack of a panel of experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is another major issue. Council members could consider using the MSMT to fill this gap, although some members appear to feel that the MSMT does not carry the same authority as an entity mandated by the Council. Given these concerns, Council members who are also part of the MSMT or who support its work could explore options for enhancing its credibility, such as expanding its membership and providing more information about the way in which it operates. These members could also hold an informal meeting to discuss how the MSMT's reports can be used to assist the Council and the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

UN agencies with relevant expertise, such as the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), could also be asked to brief the Committee regarding the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Council Dynamics

The Council is sharply divided over the DPRK, and this dynamic appears to have worsened as cooperation between the DPRK and Russia has grown. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded Council members generally favour using sanctions to help manage the threat posed by the DPRK and regularly call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the DPRK to engage in dialogue and abandon its nuclear weapons programme while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some have also called for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK's weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened the DPRK by blocking Council action on the file. Several of these members have strongly criticised the growing cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, including by highlighting evidence of arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia and noting that these transfers violate Council resolutions. Some have also called for the reinstatement of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US and its allies for heightening tensions and have accused the US of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. These two members have previously argued that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation in the country and have also repeatedly blocked attempts to issue a Council product responding to missile launches carried out by the DPRK in recent years.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

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